Women's Attendance Patterns in a Re-entry Program

by

David M. Guy

B.A. Hons, Victoria University of Wellington, 1967
M.Ed., University of Waikato, 1979

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Department of Administrative, Adult and Higher Education)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
June 1982
© David M. Guy, 1982
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Administrative, Adult and Higher Education

The University of British Columbia
1956 Main Mall
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1Y3

Date June 30, 1982
WOMEN'S ATTENDANCE PATTERNS IN A RE-ENTRY PROGRAM

ABSTRACT

Dropout from and low attendance at adult education programs have posed problems for individuals, institutions, and society. In this study a dropout was defined as a person who failed to attend a single session in the second half of the course after having attended the first session. A persister attended the first and at least one session in the latter half of the course. On the basis of the number of sessions they attended, participants were divided into three pre-determined rate of attendance categories: high, medium, and low.

The population consisted of 145 women enrolled in the New Start Program, a ten-session re-entry orientation course offered by three New Zealand universities in the spring term, 1981.

A demographic questionnaire and four standardized instruments were administered at the first session. Participants' characteristics were related to their attendance behaviour. Post-course interviews were conducted with 55 women randomly selected according to their attendance category.

Two research hypotheses were formulated to focus the study. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test both hypotheses. On the basis of their years of schooling, level of state anxiety, recent undesirable life events, level of self-esteem, and study orientation, it was predicted that there would be significant differences between persister and dropout groups on the five criterion variables when these were analyzed simultaneously. The first operational hypothesis showed the
characteristics of persisters and dropouts were relatively homogeneous. The second indicated that persisters and dropouts could not be separated as predicted.

The test of the second research hypothesis yielded similar results. Women in the three rate of attendance categories exhibited homogeneous characteristics. Their attendance category membership could not be predicted on the basis of the five variables listed previously with better than chance precision. Hence neither research hypothesis was accepted.

Interviews revealed that the level of social support and assessment made of progress toward their goals were considered by participants as important factors contributing to their remaining in the program.

Finally, the major limitations of this study are identified and implications suggested for practitioners and researchers.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: BACKGROUND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education In The Context Of Lifelong Education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education And Adult Development</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement Of The Problem</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale Of The Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Of The Study</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypotheses</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Of The Dissertation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: ATTENDANCE PATTERNS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence And Dropout</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rates Of Attendance</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Attendance Patterns</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: PSYCHO-SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONSTRUCTS</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Study Orientation ........................................... 99
Conclusion .................................................. 103

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY .............................. 105
Introduction .................................................. 105
Setting Up The Study ...................................... 105
Population And Sample .................................... 110
Data Collection .............................................. 111
Data Analysis ................................................ 123
Summary ....................................................... 125

CHAPTER V: CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTENDANCE BEHAVIOUR OF THE SAMPLE ........................................... 127
Introduction .................................................. 127
Demographic Characteristics ............................. 127
Psycho-social Characteristics ............................. 133
Attendance Set Data ........................................ 152
Summary ....................................................... 158

CHAPTER VI: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS AND PERSISTENCE AND DROPOUT .......... 161
Introduction .................................................. 161
Results ......................................................... 161
Summary: Correlational Statistics ........................ 172

CHAPTER VII: ACCOUNTING FOR PERSISTENCE AND DROPOUT THROUGH INTERVIEWS ........................................... 174
Introduction .................................................. 174
Interview Findings ......................................... 175
Comparing Persisters And Dropouts ..................... 223
Summary ....................................................... 232
LIST OF TABLES

1. Enrolments And Study Participants In The New Start Program ........................................... 110
2. Factors Accounting For Differences Between The Population And The Sample ............................. 111
3. Selection Of Interviewees From Persister And Dropout Groups .................................................. 118
4. Selection Of Interviewees From Each Rate Of Attendance Category ............................................. 118
5. Factors Thought Likely To Affect Attendance .............................................................................. 130
6. Participants' Anticipated Achievements .................................................................................... 131
7. State And Trait Anxiety Scores ............................................................................................... 134
8. Total Anxiety Scores .................................................................................................................. 137
9. Life Events Scores .................................................................................................................... 138
10. Desirable And Undesirable Life Events Scores .......................................................................... 140
11. Net Life Change Weighted Scores ............................................................................................ 141
12. Self-esteem Scores .................................................................................................................... 143
13. Scores On The Primary Scales Of The SSHA ........................................................................... 147
14. Scores On The SSHA Study Orientation Scale .......................................................................... 150
15. Comparative Mean Scores On SSHA Scales ............................................................................ 151
16. Attendance Of Women At Sessions Of The New Start Program .................................................... 153
17. Rate Of Attendance Categories .................................................................................................. 154
18. Membership Of The Attendance Rate And Persistence And Dropout Categories ...................... 156
19. Summary Of The Bivariate Relationships Between Each Of The Variables Used In This Study And Persistence And Dropout Using The Chi Square Statistic ..................162
20. Summary Of The Bivariate Relationships Between Participant Characteristics And Number Of Sessions Attended Using Pearson's Product-moment Coefficient ....236
21. Summary Of The Bivariate Relationships Between Participant Characteristics And Number Of Sessions Attended Using The Chi Square Statistic ..................237
22. Summary Of The Bivariate Relationships Between Each Of The Variables Used In This Study And Rate Of Attendance Category Using The Chi Square Statistic ..................238
23. One-way Multivariate Analysis Of Variance Design: Persistence And Dropout .....................323
24. One-way Multivariate Analysis Of Variance Design: Rate Of Attendance ..................................331
25. Sample In Ten Year Age Groups .........................404
26. Marital Status Of The Sample ..........................405
27. Participants' Child-caring Responsibilities .............406
28. Highest Level Of Formal Education .......................408
29. Years Of Schooling .....................................411
30. Family Income ........................................412
31. New Zealand Household Incomes, 1976 ..................413
32. Occupational Distribution ...............................415
33. Course Attendance In Last Three Years ..................416
34. Number Of Courses From Which Previous Withdrawal Reported ........................................418
35. Source Of First Publicity ........................................... 419
36. Time Between Enrolment And Course Commencement ........... 422
37. Partner’s Attitude To Participant’s Enrolment ................. 424
38. Means Of Transport .................................................. 425
39. Distance Travelled To The Course ................................. 426
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

One of the important findings of this study was that the attendance behaviour of participants in the program studied was enhanced if they could draw on identifiable sources of social support for encouragement and assistance. Undoubtedly, the completion of this dissertation was facilitated by the invaluable support and help this writer received from many people.

First, and foremost, my wife, Helen, whose practical assistance, tolerance, and encouragement contributed immeasurably to the completion of this study. My children, Sheralyn and Stephen, showed understanding which allowed me to devote my efforts to this task.

Members of my committee merit special thanks: Dr W. S. Griffith, my chairman, Dr W. Boldt, and Dr L. Woolsey.

I am grateful, too, to my colleagues in the centres for continuing education which offered the New Start Program in 1981 and who helped with the collection of data from participants. In particular, I acknowledge the cooperation of my friends at the University of Waikato, especially Linda Sissons and Bruce Hosking.

Finally, I owe thanks to my fellow students at the University of British Columbia, particularly MarDell Parrish, for their interest and assistance.
CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

Introduction

Demographic, social, technological, economic, and political factors are contributing to a reconsideration of the role of education throughout the life span. The concept of lifelong education implies the availability of opportunities to participate in education beyond the years of formal compulsory schooling throughout the remainder of the life span. Once such opportunities are available the phenomena of persistence and dropout as well as rate of attendance become prime concerns for policy-makers, national and local education administrators, and adult educators. Hence this study was planned to measure educational and psycho-social variables which may predispose an individual to persist in or withdraw from an adult education course. Concurrently, the relationship of the same variables to rate of attendance, the proportion of course offered which a person attended, was also considered.

The background for a study of attendance behaviour is provided by a brief consideration of several trends which have emerged in the last twenty years. In particular, changing technology has led to greater consideration being given to the role of adult education within the context of lifelong education. Increasing emphasis, too, has been given to the adult phase of the life cycle. Adult educators have become
interested in the relationship between education and life transitions. These changes have drawn attention to problems which have proven difficult to solve. Withdrawal from and low attendance at adult education courses pose problems for society, institutions, and individuals. These problems receive attention in this chapter from these three perspectives.

Following an explanation of the rationale for the research project, the design of the study is described. In that section the selection of the population and sample, the measurement of the main constructs, and the collection and analysis of the data are outlined. Direction to the study was provided by two research hypotheses, the first concerned with distinguishing between persisters and dropouts, and the second among the three rate of attendance categories formed for this study. The rationale for each of the hypotheses is argued.

Finally, in this chapter, the outline for the remaining eleven chapters of this dissertation is indicated.

**Adult Education In The Context Of Lifelong Education**

Despite the claims of some of its proponents, the notion of lifelong education is not new. For example, the landmark 1919 Report, commissioned by the Ministry of Reconstruction in the United Kingdom, argued that "adult education is a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and therefore should be both universal and lifelong" (Adult Education Committee of the British Ministry of Reconstruction 1956:55). In 1955, Grattan referred implicitly to lifelong
education in his historical review of adult education, *In Quest of Knowledge*, when he wrote that "no education that has a terminal point can ever fully meet all the needs of life, whether the terminal point is reached at fourteen, eighteen, twenty-two, or twenty-six" (1955:16). In 1965 UNESCO was asked by its Committee for the Advancement of Adult Education to endorse the notion of lifelong education as the "principle of the whole process of education regarded as continuing throughout an individual's life from his earliest childhood to the end of his days and therefore calling for integrated organization" (Molyneux 1974:108). Integration was seen to occur in two directions: vertically, that is, throughout individuals' lives, and horizontally to cover the diverse range of all the educational aspects of individuals' lives as they interact in societal activities.

A further significant contribution made by UNESCO was the report of its International Commission on the Development of Education, appointed early in 1971. Its report, *Learning to Be*, under the chairmanship of Edgar Faure, proposed "lifelong education as the master concept for educational policies in the years to come for both developed and developing countries" (1972:182). The Faure Report, issued in 1972, the same year as the Third World Conference on Adult Education, held in Tokyo, provided further focus for 'lifelong education'.

Within the organizational framework of lifelong education the notion of recurrent education is one strategy which has been propounded, particularly by member countries of the Organization
for Economic Cooperation and Development, to provide opportunities for disadvantaged adults to compensate for educational deficiencies, to allow for all citizens to update skills, to reduce educational inequalities between generations, and to enable all citizens the opportunity for social and personal development. In the post-compulsory education phase, in particular, alternation between educational and other activities is an integral notion. An alternative concept is the blended life plan (Cross 1981:12) in which work, education and leisure are engaged in concurrently rather than being alternated. There is recognition that educational provision which terminates for most people at the end of compulsory schooling is no longer adequate in an era of rapid social and technological change. When revised education strategies become widely adopted, and publicly or privately supported by paid educational leave, then persistence and dropout in adult education will become even more important public concerns than they are currently.

The increasing rate of technological change also serves as a major stimulus for the increasing regard being accorded education. Wroczynski (1974:464) points to the doubling of the body of information in physics and mathematics every eight to ten years. One consequence of this development is reflected in the growing phenomenon of occupational obsolescence, the threat of which is particularly acute in the most rapidly expanding jobs, especially those involving professional or technical competence. In medical knowledge, for example, Rosenow (quoted
by Schaie and Willis [1979:123] estimated the half-life to be five years. Further evidence of the rate of technological advancement is the fact that an increasing number of workers are engaged in specialized jobs that did not exist twenty years ago. Furthermore, intergenerational differences are exacerbated by the tendency for older adults to be employed in obsolete jobs or roles with limited futures, whereas younger employees are engaged in the newly developed technical or professional roles (Knox 1977:40-41).

A phenomenon related to occupational obsolescence is the increased number of occupations that an individual pursues during a lifetime. Training for second and subsequent careers typically occurs during adulthood, and generally involves participation in adult education, offered by an educational institution, government agency or private employer. Increasing technological specialization speeds up the number of occupational changes and reduces the life expectancy of each occupation. Therefore, it can be expected that an increasing number of adults will continue to return to a formal educational institution for retraining, updating skills, or preparing for a role transition. The next section considers the relationship between education and adult development.

**Education and Adult Development**

Intermittent phases of relative stability and change continue throughout the adult life cycle. Adults undergo many transitions during their lives. Developmental researchers see
transitions as a sign of growth, and growth in turn requires learning (Sheehy 1976:15; Havighurst 1972:1).

The association of transitions, development, and learning has been studied by Aslanian and Brickell (1980). They argued that life transitions challenged adults and required them to grow. They hypothesized that transitions prompt adults to engage in a learning experience to help them manage this transition (1980:52). Cross (1981:240) suggested that "the greatest opportunities for learning occur at transition points." Yet adjusting to a formal educational setting can be a difficult transition itself. Many adults have to cope with the original transition that precipitated the need to learn, as well as a second transition to the role of student. This latter transition may be impeded by a variety of psycho-social problems. As a consequence of this double transition the adult learner may not have the capacity to complete a formal academic program, and may either drop out or attend infrequently. The problems associated with both of these attendance behavior phenomena are considered in the next section.

Statement of the Problem

In 1962 the National Seminar on Adult Education Research in the United States gave highest priority to research on motivation, interpreted on that occasion as a desire to participate in adult education programs. Members of that seminar suggested linked enquiries into the twin problems of non-participation and dropout (Knox and Sjogren 1962.) Boshier
expressed a similar view when he stated, "dropout is in some ways an extension of non-participation; variables associated with one are associated with the other" (1973:256). Boshier's assertion is based on the notion that both participation and dropout must be studied in the context of an interaction between psychological and environmental variables. The former are internal to the participant whereas the latter are external.

More recently, drawing on a data base of 79,631 people 17 years of age or older who were not full-time students selected in 1975 by the United States Bureau of the Census for the National Center for Education Statistics, Anderson and Darkenwald noted

In terms of sociodemographic characteristics such as sex, race, schooling, and so on, it is fair to conclude that people who participate in adult education are not on the whole much different from people who do not participate, andpersisters are not very different from dropouts. Thus our understanding of the dynamics of participation and persistence, our ability to explain and predict these phenomena, is still very limited. Yet without a better understanding of why people participate or do not participate, persist or do not persist, there is little prospect for identifying ways to enhance access to adult education and to minimize the personal and social costs of attrition. (1979:7-8)

In their report, Anderson and Darkenwald defined adult education as "any organized educational activity, excluding self-education, engaged in by anyone 17 years of age or older who is not a full-time student" (ibid:15). A dropout was "any participant who responded, 'No, dropped the course' to the [survey] question: 'Did you complete this course?'" (ibid:15).

From a student's point of view, the process and consequences of dropping out may affect goal achievement, particularly if this occurs at a time when other life changes
are being experienced. Dropping out may induce a sense of frustration and helplessness at not being able to satisfy a valued objective. For example, by withdrawing from a course a participant may not meet the criteria for gaining entry to an occupation. Minimal course attendance is also required for some professions in the form of mandatory continuing education to enable individuals to continue to practise that profession. Volunteer positions in the community, too, can be denied to people who do not fulfil stated course attendance requirements. There are occasions, however, when dropping out of a course may not affect goal achievement either because the participant's goal was achieved before the course had concluded or because the program was optional and withdrawing had no negative consequences.

Low attendance rates or infrequent attendance patterns pose problems for participants as well as for adult educators and administrators. For the participant who attends irregularly, the benefits of an adult education program are reduced considerably because of the lack of continuity.

From an institutional perspective, attrition can have a serious effect on its operation and finances. Adult education program administrators and instructors have been paying serious attention to attendance behaviour. Hurkamp (1969:5) reported on her study of approximately 55 courses offered by a public school evening adult education program in a suburban New England town. She listed four adverse consequences of dropout. For example, where maximum limits to class size are set, participants who
subsequently drop out may have prevented others from attending who would have gained more from the course. Second, where the reverse situation applies, when a minimum number of enrolments must be maintained, dropout may lead to the cancellation of the course. Third, and sometimes as a related consequence of the previous outcome although not necessarily so, when dropout occurs in courses which are financed wholly or partly by state funding on the basis of average daily attendance, the providing institution suffers a loss of revenue. Finally, dropout can contribute to lower morale among those remaining, and thereby provoke additional dropout. In courses where skills are taught sequentially their development may be thwarted by absences. Likewise, evolving a logically sequenced instructional program can be disrupted. Other participants' progress, too, can be frustrated, particularly if it is necessary for instructors to have to spend a disproportionate amount of class time repeating instructions or if an instructor's attention is diverted by those whose attendance is irregular. Classroom morale may suffer as a consequence of any dissatisfaction.

Instructors, too, are likely to share the frustrations of those who attend regularly. Administrators see low or irregular attendance as inefficient and wasteful of resources. In administrative systems where financial allocations are made on the basis of average daily attendance, poor attendance means a reduction in financial grants to institutions providing programs.

Dropout from adult training programs represents a loss to
society, not only in terms of potential skills which are not developed but also because other applicants may have been excluded. In a study of the Canada Manpower Training Program, Truesdell (1975:149) noted that in the 1969-70 fiscal year, about 20 percent of the 150,000 individuals who enrolled in skills courses subsequently discontinued their training. In 1973, about 40,000 individuals who received financial assistance from the Training Program dropped out of their training courses. Furthermore, dropout from a training program increases the cost per trainee completing it.

Given the seriousness of the consequences of dropout, it is important to identify the personal, institutional, and social factors which either encourage or discourage persistence. Understanding the problem areas can assist program planners, instructors and counsellors take constructive action to reduce rates of attrition in adult education programs. Likewise, in view of the difficulties caused by low or infrequent attendance, it is worthwhile to investigate and account for either of these conditions. Identifying contributing factors may enable adult educators to take steps to increase rates of attendance.

Rationale of the Study

Dropout and persistence have been frequently researched topics in adult education, although most of these studies have been ex post facto. Early studies tended to focus on one or two variables, whereas it is now recognized that adult learner dropout has multiple and complex causes. Situational variables,
such as class location, demographic and social factors, and personality variables have been shown to influence dropout.

This study had a dual purpose. First, it aimed to show persisters and dropouts could be identified on the basis of educational and psycho-social factors known to contribute to dropout. Second, the study was designed to provide evidence that different rate of attendance category membership could be accounted for by the same variables that were predicted to influence persistence and dropout. It is suggested that the findings can be used as a basis for developing interventions which may enhance persistence on the one hand, and encourage sustained attendance on the other. The next section explains how the study was designed to achieve these objectives.

Design of the Study

In this section the selection of the population and sample, measurement of the concepts, and collection and analysis of the data are outlined.

Initially it was planned to conduct the study with a population of women in an adult education program in Vancouver, Canada (where the University of British Columbia is located) designed to prepare participants for a return to the work force. Disagreement between federal and provincial governments over the funding of the program threatened its being continued, at least to the extent it had been supported in previous years. Attempts were made to find similar adult education programs in the state of Washington, but administrators there were not able to
guarantee that programs held in previous years would be repeated because of budget cutbacks. Finally, the writer selected a program offered in his home country, New Zealand, which was designed to help participants make the transition from domestic or paid employment to full-time or part-time study. Women who enrolled in the New Start Program, the name adopted by the three universities who offered this ten session study skills and orientation course in the spring term, 1981, comprised the population for the study.

The study paid attention to the attendance behaviour of women in the three New Start Program courses offered in September-November, 1981. Two distinct phenomena were examined, persistence and dropout, and rate of attendance. Persistence and dropout were considered as a dichotomous variable, while rate of attendance was trichotomized into high, medium, and low categories. Previous attempts to conceptualize and operationalize these constructs are reported in chapter II.

In this study the attendance behaviour categories were decided prior to the beginning of the courses. The classification of participants was made after class records were examined at the conclusion of each course. At the first session of the program participants completed a demographic questionnaire and four standardized self-report instruments.

The principal statistical technique used in the study was multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) which dealt with persistence and dropout and rate of attendance in separate analyses. Based on previous research and established
theoretical propositions, five criterion variables were selected: years of schooling, state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem, and study orientation. These data were used to test the hypotheses. (The hypotheses and their rationale are explained in the next section).

In the four week period immediately after each course had concluded, interviews were arranged with 55 women randomly selected from each of the sets of attendance behaviour. The interviews were conducted to ensure that important characteristics or variables had not been overlooked in formulating the research hypotheses, as well as to ascertain whether there were other more important variables which might have accounted for the attendance behaviour of the subjects in the study. Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative means were used to collect and analyze data in this study.

Hypotheses

Two research hypotheses were formulated in which different attendance behaviour phenomena were predicted to be accounted for in terms of educational and psycho-social variables.

In this study a persister was a person who attended the first session and at least one session in the second half of the course. A dropout was a person who attended the first session but not even a single session in the second half of the course.

Hypothesis One

The first research hypothesis was concerned with the
difference between persisters and dropouts on the grouping of educational and psycho-social variables selected as criteria for this study. It was posited that persisters would be distinguishable from dropouts by the combined effect of having more years of schooling, lower state anxiety, fewer undesirable life events, higher self-esteem, and a more positive study orientation. The basis for proposing this hypothesis follows.

Rationale for hypothesis one

The proposition that those who persisted were likely to have more years of schooling was based on empirical evidence and was expected on the basis that those who continue to participate in adult education are more likely to have had greater educational experience, measured by years of schooling. For women returning to an educational setting, those who were likely to feel more comfortable were those who had experienced a greater number of years of schooling than other participants.

The assumption that dropouts were more likely to record high anxiety scores than persisters is supported by cognitive theorists who have argued that anxiety results from a breakdown in a tendency toward self-consistency. If a participant in an adult education course feels threatened by being in an unfamiliar setting or uncertain about expectations that might have to be met, then anxiety is a likely consequence. It has also been proposed that a feeling of threat results when a person experiences situations which are incongruent with self-structure. In such circumstances anxiety is the affective
response to threat. For women in the study who had not been involved in a formal educational setting for a number of years, the uncertainty or unfamiliarity of the situation was hypothesized to induce a feeling of anxiety. One means of resolving this feeling would be to eliminate its source, and that would be to withdraw from the program.

Social incongruity arises when changes demand an adaption, personal or social, that is either not made or inadequately made. Research has shown that events perceived as undesirable rather than changes per se are more important in accounting for maladjustment. Therefore, it was argued that women who dropped out would have experienced more undesirable changes in the previous twelve months than women who persisted.

Self-esteem has been defined as individuals' assessment of their self-worth. For women returning to a formal educational setting after an absence of five or more years and lacking study skills, information about the self may have been seen as threatening. It has been shown that women cope with this information according to their level of self-esteem.

Persisters were predicted to have high self-esteem with positive pictures of their self-worth. On the other hand, dropouts were predicted to have low self-esteem.

Deficient study habits and attitudes were suggested as being incongruent with the educational environment in which participants had enrolled. Dropouts were predicted to have more inadequate study skills and a less positive attitude to the value of education than persisters.
To sum up, it was argued that the difference between persisters and dropouts would be accounted for in terms of years of schooling, state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem, and study orientation. Although these variables were considered together in the MANOVA, each variable has been justified as contributing to the total overall difference between the groups.

Hypothesis Two

The second research hypothesis referred to differentiation among participants in the New Start Program on the basis of their rate of attendance. It was argued that years of schooling, state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem, and study orientation would be a function of attendance. In particular, it was predicted that individuals with higher rates of attendance would have experienced more years of schooling, recorded lower levels of state anxiety, suffered fewer undesirable life events, exhibited higher self-esteem, and showed a more positive study orientation than individuals with lower rates of attendance.

Rationale for hypothesis two

Those who had fewer years of schooling were thought to be at a disadvantage compared with women who had stayed in school for a longer period, and who as a result might have had higher educational qualifications. Remaining in school would have provided the opportunities for developing the skills which were
required to successfully complete the New Start Program in which the subjects had enrolled. Therefore, it was predicted that individuals with higher rates of attendance would be women with more years of schooling.

Anxiety levels have been shown to increase in circumstances in which subjects feel threatened or uncertain. Women who felt more threatened than others were likely to have recorded higher state anxiety scores. Individuals with lower rates of attendance were predicted to have higher state anxiety scores. By attending less frequently than the others they would attempt to cope with their feelings of uncertainty.

It was expected that the transition of becoming a student after being a non-student would be more difficult for women who had experienced more changes in their lives in the previous twelve months, particularly if those changes were judged to have been undesirable, than their counterparts who had experienced fewer of these changes. It was predicted that individuals with lower rates of attendance would have experienced the greater number of undesirable changes.

Self-esteem theorists have suggested that all adults have well-developed ideas about themselves as people. A potential conflict is involved when a person enrolls in adult education, particularly after having been absent from a formal educational setting for a number of years, arising from the fact that the act of enrolling can be interpreted as admission of deficiencies. If this attitude was prevalent among participants it was argued that those with the highest attendance would have
most self-esteem. Thus, it was suggested that women with a lower rate of attendance would be more likely to feel threatened by the uncertainties of returning to an educational setting and, therefore, would have been more likely to have attended less frequently than their higher self-esteem counterparts.

For similar reasons to those argued for years spent in schooling, it was suggested that women with higher rates of attendance would assess their study skills more highly than others in the program. Further, women with higher rates of attendance would have a more positive attitude to teachers and to the value of education.

In summary, the second research hypothesis argued that participants would be separable into rate of attendance categories on the basis of the five criterion variables taken as a whole. In effect, membership of the categories would be accountable in terms of years of schooling, state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem, and study orientation.

The next section of this chapter summarizes the content of the remaining eleven chapters of this dissertation.

Organization of the Dissertation

Following this introductory chapter, the next two chapters provide a review of the relevant literature. Chapter II focuses on research which is related to attendance behaviour, especially persistence and dropout, and differential rates of attendance. Chapter III examines the literature which deals with anxiety, social stress (as measured by life change units and weighted
life events scores), self-esteem, and study orientation. Arguments are made for the relevance of attendance behaviour to these constructs in the adult education courses studied in this research project.

Chapter IV outlines the various procedures which were taken to collect data from the study's population, test the hypotheses as well as to obtain additional information through interviews.

The findings of the study are reported in chapters V to X. In chapter V the demographic, educational, and psycho-social characteristics of the sample are described and, where relevant, comparisons are made with the New Zealand adult female population. (Additional information is provided in appendix D). Chapter V also reports on the attendance behaviour of women in the sample.

Chapters VI and VII report on the characteristics of and the differences between persisters and dropouts. In chapter VI the statistical relationships between demographic, educational, and psycho-social variables and persistence and dropout are presented. Interview findings provide the basis for the discussion in chapter VII.

The next two chapters, VIII and IX, follow a similar pattern in relation to rate of attendance category differentiation. Chapter VIII reports on the statistical relationships between the number of sessions attended and demographic, educational, and psycho-social variables, although the main focus is on the relationship between rate of attendance category membership and these variables. In chapter IX,
accounting for rate of attendance category membership through interviews is reported.

In chapter X the operationalization, testing, and discussion of the results of the hypotheses are reported and discussed. Finally, the major conclusions, the study's limitations, the implications suggested by this investigation, and areas for further research comprise chapter XI.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: ATTENDANCE PATTERNS

Introduction

In this chapter the literature relating to attendance patterns in adult education is reviewed. Five distinct patterns are noted, although particular attention is paid to persistence and dropout and rate of attendance. It is suggested that persistence and dropout may represent different attendance patterns from rates of attendance, hence a distinction is made between them. Persistence and dropout studies are reviewed according to the definitions which have been used in previous studies. Attention is then given to theoretical foundations which have been used in these studies. Data collection procedures and data analysis methods are critically examined before the findings of single factor and multi-factor studies are reported.

Other studies have considered rates of attendance and related these to demographic, educational, and psycho-social factors. Data collection procedures and the findings from attendance rate studies are also considered.

Persistence and Dropout

In reviewing the literature on attendance behaviour in adult education programs, the writer noted five distinct patterns. First, there are those studies which refer to
persistence and dropout as alternatives depending on whether or not a person remains in a program. Second, in order to take into account regularity or frequency of attendance some studies have used rate of attendance as either a continuous or discrete variable. Third, there are those programs which allow continuous entry and have intakes of new students as vacancies occur or at defined intervals. Fourth, there is the notion of average daily attendance which measures the proportion of enrollees who are present at successive sessions. Fifth, there is a non-attendance pattern exhibited by those who enrol but never attend. This study focuses on the first two phenomena as does most of the literature.

As indicated in chapter I, dropout is a serious problem for individuals and the educational institutions they attend. Furthermore, it is a problem which has long bedevilled adult education programs by affecting their continuity, morale, and funding. Consequently, dropout has been the focus of numerous research efforts but there has been little reduction in the magnitude of the problem. One reason for this lack of progress arises from the nature of much of the research. Researchers have used varying definitions of "dropout"; they have found differing attrition rates for similar programs; and they have reported inconclusive or conflicting findings.

Criticisms have been made regarding the lack of agreement on the criteria to define a dropout, in particular the point at which continuous non-attendance constitutes withdrawal. Arguments have been made against the use of bivariate analyses
to explain persistence and dropout in adult education on the grounds that the phenomena are complex, involve an interaction between an individual and the environment and, therefore, call for statistical analyses that deal with multiple variables. Several authors have also called for studies that are well-founded in theory to overcome the criticism that many studies are atheoretical.

The problem of dropout denotes different meanings according to the perspective from which it is viewed: societal, institutional, and personal. Given the complex interrelationships of the factors affecting program provision and participant attendance, multiple explanations have been offered to explain persistence and dropout phenomena.

From a societal perspective, dropout is regarded as an inefficient use of resources, hence classes are often cancelled when the number of participants falls below a fixed limit. Similarly, it is also seen as wasteful to have denied places in courses to those who may have benefitted when some of those whose enrolment is accepted subsequently withdraw.

From the providing institution's viewpoint, a dropout represents the loss of a registration, the reimbursement of full or partial enrolment fees with a consequent loss of revenue, a lowering of morale among remaining students, and a lessening of enthusiasm by the instructor. Furthermore, funds are spent to attract students, to pay for teaching and counselling, as well as to cover the overhead costs of the providing agency. Dropout can be regarded as a wasteful drain of the funds committed for
these purposes. Other explanations have also been offered for students' withdrawal. Marked decline in attendance has been interpreted as reflecting poor instruction, yet research evidence has shown that dropout has not been significantly related to the length of experience instructors have had with adult classes or to whether or not they have qualifications or certification to work as instructors of adults. Within institutions dropout has been attributed to inadequate admission policies, manifested in the fees charged for courses or in educational prerequisites which might have been required for entry. It has been argued, for example, that where no or low fees have been charged participants lack the sense of commitment that is exhibited by those paying high fees. Where the advice given by a program planner about a course is at variance with the presentation made by an instructor, participants who took the advice of the former may become disenchanted with the program and withdraw.

The student, too, may feel a sense of loss at dropping out, in a psychological as well as a financial sense. Failure to achieve goals, or to complete a program may leave a student with a lack of fulfilment. Yet a self-assured student may withdraw after experiencing a disappointing level of instruction, or an individual may decide that another agency is offering what appears to be a more relevant program. For either of these or for other reasons an individual may decide to withdraw from the program. A student who drops out incurs direct costs in enrolment fees, course materials, and travel to the course, as
well as the opportunity costs of lost earnings. In most cases where dropout occurs, it is a result of the interaction between external environmental and internal psychological factors. The causes are almost invariably complex and relate to the individual's life experiences.

Definitions

Most studies concerned with dropout have focused on distinctions between completions and dropouts (Verner and Davis 1964; Zahn and Phillips 1961; Hurkamp 1969); or between perseverers and nonperseverers (Londoner 1972a), or more generally persisters and dropouts. Surprisingly, several researchers, while making this distinction, fail to state the point at which a participant is deemed to have become a dropout or they neglect to distinguish operationally between those who do not complete a program and those who do. Londoner, for example, did not make this distinction clearly. Perseverance was marked by "persons who enroll and complete the program" and nonperseverance was denoted by "persons who enroll, attend a few classes, but fail to complete course requirements" (1972a:179).

It appears from this definition that both attendance and course-associated work may be required to fulfil the perseverance condition, although the study itself pointed to only the attendance component. Even if this were the case attendance could be irregular, or it could be limited but regular and sustained throughout the program. In either case it would seem that such behaviour would be classified as nonperseverance. A
more clearcut definition would have reduced the possibility of confusion.

Like Londoner, Knox and Sjogren failed to clearly define the distinction between those who completed and those who withdrew. The former were referred to as those "who completed the semester and received a grade" while the others were "those who withdrew during the semester" (1965:82). From this description it is difficult to conceive in which group those who attended most, if not all, of the semester but did not receive a grade would be placed. Similarly, those who completed most, but not all of the course work, and who had attended most sessions would appear to have been considered to have withdrawn. In other words, failure to meet either course or attendance requirements seems to have placed a student in the withdrawn category.

In Zahn's study, failure to complete a class was defined as "not attending any of the last three meetings of the class, and not making any arrangements with the instructor to make up the work" (1964:36). In an earlier study by the same researcher and Phillips, a similar definition was used (1961:232). Two preconditions appear to have been set in Zahn's study, one related to physical presence and the other to completing work that had been set. It seems that if people were absent but compensated by undertaking set assignments they would have been classified as having completed. No indication was reported of the length or number of sessions of the classes in the study so it is not possible to calculate the proportion of time a
participant may have been absent yet was assumed to have completed the course.

Enrolment in each course in Zahn's study was also unconventional. Regulations allowed participants to attend the first session without enrolling. Withdrawal after the first or second session was readily permitted and a full enrolment fee refund was made. Students in the study were "present and enrolled at the third meeting of the class" (1964:36). By this stage of the course participants had time to adjust to the demands and dynamics of attending. Those who decided to enrol in the program had built up some investment in their commitment through paying their enrolment fees, buying books, and spending time. That study did not account for the behaviour of those who attended one or two sessions, with or without enrolling, or those who were absent at the third session.

To summarize, the dropout definitions reviewed so far have been characterized by three serious deficiencies. First, several studies were not specific about the point at which withdrawal from the program constituted dropout. Withdrawal may have been formalized or it was simply noted as the last time in the course register that attendance was recorded. Second, some researchers have combined course work and attendance requirements in the operationalization of their definition of dropout. Consequently, students whose attendance had been irregular or rare may have been considered to have completed the course if they fulfilled the course work requirements. Alternatively, participants who attended most sessions could
have been classified as nonperseverers if they had not completed all assignments. Finally, the session at which instruments were administered to participants has not always been the first. Researchers who have collected data at second or subsequent sessions have not adequately accounted for the attendance behaviour of those who had withdrawn early in the program in which they enrolled.

Persistence, in the study by Jones, Schulman, and Stubblefield was related to continued enrolment. "A student's enrolment was considered to end on the last day he attended class unless he attended the eighteenth or a later session. In this case he was considered to have remained enrolled for the entire twenty-session period of the study" (1978:51). While this definition allows for continuous or intermittent attendance, it does award a bonus for the person attending eighteen sessions by considering that number of sessions to be the equivalent of attendance at all sessions. Further, those who attended any of the last three sessions even after having been absent from almost all of the previous ones would still have been counted as enrolled. Other studies have considered students as dropouts after having been absent for three consecutive sessions. Cunningham (1973) defined persistence in terms of whether students continued to attend, the regularity of their attendance, and by the proportion of time they attended in relation to the number of days the course was offered.

Other studies which have investigated dropout and persistence have made an arbitrary decision whereby if an
individual no longer attends after a predetermined point in the course, then that person is deemed to have dropped out. Boshier defined a dropout as "a person who, after being present for session [sic] 1 and 2, was absent for the mid-point session and four successive sessions of a continuing course" (1973:264). Boshier justified his definition on the grounds that a search of course records for two studies he conducted showed that a person who was absent from the sessions specified "rarely returns for the latter part of the course" (ibid:264). Boshier's definition requires a dropout to fulfil two conditions, non-attendance at five sessions beginning at the mid-point of the course and attendance at both of the first two sessions. While the former condition may hold for the majority of dropouts, Boshier's definition would have been more defensible if he had reported on the proportion of cases he had observed when absentees did not return. Of greater concern, however, is the stipulation that a person must have been present at the first two sessions. Boshier does not justify setting this condition. Yet, it is common in practice, particularly in adult basic education classes, for enrollees not to return for the second session after having attended the first.

In other studies presence in a class at a fixed date is deemed to represent persistence, and absence is seen as dropout. Fixing a date for administrative convenience in this way obscures attendance patterns and is vulnerable to peculiar local circumstances such as weather and an alternative attraction. Novak and Weiant's study, for example, set a date in March, six
months after the classes had commenced. In that study a dropout was "an individual who has paid the registration fee, attended sessions of evening school, and left before March 1. The persisting students were those who were in attendance after March 1" (1960:37).

Another definition of dropout influenced by institutional administrative policies is evident in Ulmer and Verner's study in which "a student is discontinued involuntarily if he has been absent 15 percent of class time in any semester" (1963:154).

Borgstrom defined dropouts as "participants who have started a course (i.e. attended at least one lesson) but have discontinued their studies before the conclusion of the course" (1980:98). This definition allowed for participants to be classified as dropouts if they were absent from the last session after having attended all previous sessions. Borgstrom's definition, unlike Boshier's, did not specify attendance at the early sessions of the course. Instead, attendance for at least one session was all that was required.

In his study of 142 adult high school completion students in a ten-week program, Wilson considered a student "to be a 'dropout' if he formally withdrew, or if he missed more than three of the weekly sessions in any four week period and was thus removed from the official class list" (1980:177). Although the effect is the same, Wilson made a distinction between those who formally acknowledged their withdrawal and those who drifted out of the class. His definition of a persister embodied two criteria, "if he completed 10 weeks of instruction and/or
successfully passed the GED tests during that period" (1980:176). This definition is similar to that used by Zahn in that it allows for recognition of academic work, so that passing the relevant tests prior to the completion of the course counted as persistence. Such a definition of persistence lacks conceptual consistency because two discrete criteria are encompassed, successful test completion which is a measure of academic achievement, and continued attendance which more accurately conveys the notion of persistence. The former criterion applies to those whom Hibbert described as "early completers," that is, those who "derive all the benefit they require" (1978:151).

In contrast to some writers, Hurkamp clearly stated her definitions of dropouts and completers. The former were "Students who discontinued attendance--the third consecutive absence marking the point at which a student was 'dropped'--and students who were not present at either of the last two class meetings" (1969:5). By 'dropped' Hurkamp meant that such a student was considered as a dropout for the purposes of her study. On the other hand, completers were "Students who finished the term having had at no time more than two consecutive absences and who were present for at least one of the last two class meetings" (ibid:5). These definitions were applied to 55 courses offered by a public school in a suburban New England town for ten weeks each term, for two terms. While these definitions are undeniably clearcut, consistent, and relate only to attendance or non-attendance, they are among the
most stringent encountered by the writer in reviewing the literature.

Dickinson and Verner, in their study of 2075 persons enrolling in 98 courses in a public adult night school program in a suburban district near Vancouver, defined dropouts as "those who had enrolled in a course but did not attend the final two sessions" (1967:25). In that study such a definition did not take into account the length of courses which varied from three to forty-five sessions, with a median of twenty sessions. Given the voluntary nature of enrolment and participation in adult education, and the competing activities which adults have to choose among in their multiple life-roles, it is inevitable that longer courses will place greater strains than shorter ones on an adult's continuing attendance. This proposition was, in fact, confirmed by Dickinson and Verner's study in which they noted "length of course alone would appear to be an important factor influencing the rate of discontinuance" (ibid:28), yet their definition invited higher dropout rates to be recorded in longer rather than shorter courses. Hence this definition was clear but conceptually weak.

A summary of the definitions used in previous studies is pertinent before reviewing the theoretical foundations, data collection and analysis procedures, and findings of previous studies. It has been noted that previous studies have not been specific about the point at which withdrawal has constituted dropout; course work and attendance have been dual requirements; and the session at which participant data have been collected
has not always been the first, thereby excluding those who had dropped out early in the course.

Most studies which have defined clearly the point in the course at which non-attendance constituted dropout have selected a continuous period of non-attendance, or have followed the administrative practice of the providing institution (not a conceptually sound basis where attendance or absence on a specific date is the means used to determine a participant's attendance status), or have decided arbitrarily on non-attendance at a predetermined and subsequent sessions. While these definitions take account of the deficiencies noted in other studies, their lack of consistency makes for difficulty in comparing dropout rates, even with similar populations.

Wilson's (1980) study was an exception to other studies in that he made a distinction between formal withdrawal and absence over consecutive sessions. In many studies researchers have invoked their definition to classify participants as persisters or dropouts after reviewing course attendance records. A problem arising from most definitions of dropout which have decided on non-attendance at particular sessions as their basis for determining a participant's attendance status has been an inability to take into account variations in course length. For example, absence from three consecutive sessions or from the final three sessions represents a different proportion of the time a course is offered if it is of eight or ten sessions' duration compared with one 45 sessions in length.

The definition established for this study took account of
the criticisms made of the definitions reviewed. As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, for the purposes of this study a distinction is made between dropouts and persisters. A further differentiation is made among participants depending on their rate of attendance.

Because the instruments were administered at the first session, only those individuals who attended that session and completed the instruments were included in the study. Such a condition also takes account of the criticism that was made of Boshier's definition which required attendance at the first two sessions. It also takes account of the criticism that was made of definitions which combined work requirements and attendance, and those which included attendance for all but the final sessions of the course. Women whose first attendance at the course was the second or subsequent session were excluded from the study irrespective of their attendance behaviour.

Theoretical Foundations

Few studies on dropout and persistence have been theoretically based. Exceptions to this general tendency are investigations by Zahn and Phillips (1961); Boshier (1972; 1973); Irish (1978); Rubenson and Hoghielm (1978); and Zeigler (1980).

Zahn and Phillips drew on a theory of risk-taking behaviour in a study of 72 adults enrolled in three introductory psychology courses offered by University Extension, University of California, Berkeley. The theory postulated that if
students' motives to avoid failure are stronger than the need to avoid success, they are likely either to attempt a very simple task where there is a strong likelihood of success, or they will attempt a task so difficult to achieve that the embarrassment of failure does not exist. The hypothesis in the study linking low academic aptitude to a tendency to dropout was sustained. The statistical relationship in the second hypothesis linking high anxiety to dropout did not reach the prescribed level of significance. However, it is possible that this finding can be attributed to the fact that the anxiety measure was taken several sessions after the class had begun, hence participants had had time to adjust. Another possible explanation for the result of testing the second hypothesis may lie in the fact that most dropout had occurred by the time the instrument was administered, leaving the researchers having few anxiety scores for those who withdrew. (Only seven out of 24 who dropped out completed the anxiety-measuring instrument). Having collected these data from so few of the sample represents a major deficiency in that study's research design.

In his study of 134 adults in adult high school, Londoner (1972a) argued that the importance a participant attaches to the goals for educational involvement predicts perseverance behaviours. The theoretical basis for that study was Parsons' instrumental-external model for classifying action orientations. In this model the actions of individuals are classified according to the timing of the reward received when participating in these activities. Some activities yield
immediate reward while others postpone it until the future. Parsons, according to Londoner (1972a:181), called the latter the instrumental orientation of his schema. This dimension has two future-oriented functions. Londoner argued that perseverers "participate in adult education to achieve future tangible goals which strengthen their external orientations to the work and social environments" whereas nonperseverers "enroll in adult education to satisfy personal inner directed needs which would result in a more integrated, stable, and self-assured person in the vocational and social environments" (ibid:181).

Using the chi square test Londoner found no statistically significant differences between the two groups in regard to age, sex, marital status, and annual income. However, he found that those who rated the externally oriented goals higher rather than lower in importance tended to be perseverers. On the other hand, proportionately more nonperseverers rated the internally oriented goals higher than lower in importance. These findings led Londoner to the tentative conclusion that "the greater the personal responsibilities vested upon the adult learner through his changing social roles the more likely he is to complete his educational program" (ibid:194).

Although that study had limitations in terms of the lack of a definitive distinction between the two groups, and the use of a sub-sample of only 26 of 108 perseverers, it was based on an established sociological model, drew attention to the importance of participants' goals in enrolling in adult education, and tentatively suggested some implications for practitioners to
reduce the occurrence of dropout.

A follow-up study by Londoner (1972b) measured how perceptive teachers of adults were of the differences in the reasons given by completers and dropouts for enrolling in adult education. Using the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient, he found significant associations between teachers' and completers' assessment of the importance of the goals and between teachers' and dropouts' assessment of goal importance. Londoner claims that his "data suggest teachers need to provide opportunities for adult students to express their reasons and goals for participating" and further that "Unresolved or misunderstood goals, expectations, or personal anticipations by teachers and students may lead to withdrawal" (1972b:280).

Irish explored the utility of reinforcement theory and the functional analysis of behaviour to explain dropout in adult education. She argued the

Net reinforcement of the criterion behavior of class attendance is the sum of four vectors: positive reinforcement, which is more frequent occurrence [sic] of valued events; omission [sic], which is less frequent occurrence of valued events; negative reinforcement, which is less frequent occurrence of disvalued events; and punishment, which is more frequent occurrence of disvalued events. Positive and negative reinforcement make the criterion behavior more probable; omission and punishment make it less probable. (1978:6)

To apply the theory, Irish developed an instrument designed to measure reinforcement for class attendance according to "information on the relative power and frequency of occurrence of selected potential reinforcers for each subject" (ibid:6).
To test the instrument, the researcher selected a population of women enrolled in seven-session evening business education classes at Forest Hills High School, U.S.A. during the summer term, 1977. Despite her thorough instrument development, Irish's final results claiming that 64.3 percent of the persisters and 84.2 percent of the dropouts were correctly predicted (ibid:109) have to be accepted with reservations. Total enrolment included 152 women. The sample was drawn from women in attendance at the second session of the course, presumably after some dropout had occurred. This fact was not acknowledged but can be deduced from the figures presented. All women in attendance at the second session who subsequently dropped out were included, as well as 41 (of 56) persisters who were randomly selected, yielding a total sample of 76. The first mailing produced a response rate of 61.8 percent, and included 68.3 percent of persisters and 54.3 percent of dropouts. Hence the scale was tested on 47 women whose characteristics in regard to the remainder of the sample were not reported. Despite these caveats, one finding reported by Irish of relevance to this study was "Among women who discontinued attendance, attending class was relatively poorly reinforced" (ibid:110).

For his study of persistence in credit courses offered by the Office of Continuing Education at the Ohio State University, Zeigler (1980) based his research on expectancy theory. Three hundred and forty-four students enrolling for the first time were the target population, but because many students declined
to allow access to information relating to them and others supplied illegible or faulty addresses and telephone numbers, the sample was reduced to 145, approximately 42 percent of the newly registering students. The generalizability of the results from the study are limited by the researcher's not being able to compare his findings with data for other students, either those newly registering or those returning. The study was further limited by only 38 percent (N = 55) of the sample completing both administrations of the survey instrument, although he had sufficient data from 113 to test some of his hypotheses.

According to Zeigler

Expectancy theory, which is often referred to as instrumentality theory or valence-instrumentality-expectancy (VIE) theory, is founded on the belief that individuals hold certain expectancies in terms of behaviors and outcomes resulting from those behaviors. (1980:26)

In order to test his hypotheses based on this theory, Zeigler (ibid:41) computed a Motivational Force score using an instrument adapted from three expectancy theory models: those of Vroom, the Michigan Organizational Assessment Package, and Lawler and Suttle.

One of Zeigler's findings was "there was no significant difference between a chance prediction and the ability of the expectancy theory model to predict persistence at the .05 level" (ibid:81), a result which the researcher considered might have been due to the limited sample size and to the relatively small number of dropouts (N = 20).

Earlier, Rubenson and Hoghielm (1978) had also applied
expectancy valency theory. This theory postulates that people's choice of an activity reflects a product of the value they attach to the result of their actions and of their expectations of being able to carry out that action. The researchers' model implied that the strength of participants' power to continue studying was a function of the product of valency and expectation. The former construct was used to refer to the value placed on participation to meet certain needs. The expectation of being successful is the other component of the model. If either expectation or valency should drop to zero, the model predicts that participation will follow suit, and dropout will ensue.

Adult education has a history of borrowing and reformulating research from other disciplines. The work of social psychologists who have developed the notions of cognitive dissonance theory, consistency and congruence, and psychologists who have been concerned with self-esteem, stress and anxiety is pertinent to this study.

Cognitive dissonance

From a psychological perspective two theories of relevance to the relationship between self-esteem and persistence or dropout are the theories of dissonance and consistency. The claim that people who have experienced success in the past or who are confident of their ability will succeed in the future is supported by several theoretical perspectives and case studies. In adult education, for example, people with a higher level of
formal education are more likely to enrol than those with a lower level. Similarly, once enrolled, the former tend to continue longer than the latter. However, the view that people who hold a low opinion of themselves or who have failed in the past will tend to fail in the future is less tenable.

Research carried out to test the latter proposition is ambiguous in its findings. Some of this research has been conducted to test dissonance theory as formulated by Festinger (1957). Simply, if a person expects to fail, the experience of success will be dissonant. In order to reduce dissonance, an individual will avoid success. Applied to adult education this theory would suggest that a person with a history of limited academic achievement in the formal educational system or previous experience of dropping out may do so again to avoid success.

People experiencing dissonance in an adult education context can reduce the psychological tensions they feel by decreasing the importance of the elements causing them discomfort, or they may increase the value of the benefits to be gained by persisting, or they may drop out of the program.

Incongruence

A similar notion to dissonance is that of incongruence. The concepts of congruence and incongruence are central to understanding cognitive processing. They are used to explain a particular interpretation of harmony and disharmony in cognitive elements. These elements may be described as congruent when
they have common attributes on a schema describing the same person, object or event. Conversely, these elements are seen as incongruent when they have discrepant characteristics on the same criterion. The latter state is exemplified when a person is judged as "hard-working" and "lazy" on the same schema.

Boshier's model for assessing the adult's ability to participate successfully in adult education invoked the latter notion. He suggested that "participants who enroll for 'deficiency' reasons manifest more intra-self (and thus self/other) incongruence than participants enrolling for 'growth' reasons" (Boshier 1973:261). Incongruence with the self and the learning environment tends to induce self-rejection, and dropout may follow. Conversely, a person experiencing congruence with the self and with the learning environment is more likely to persist.

Boshier tested his congruence model on data collected from 1372 participants enrolled in adult education programs in four New Zealand institutions. Using three semantic differential scales, self/other adult education student, self/my adult education lecturer, and self/myself as I would like to be, he calculated total discrepancy scores representing the degree of incongruence reported by his subjects. Boshier found that the correlations between these scores and dropout accounted for over 30 percent of the variance in the dependent variable (ibid:275). He argued that "high or large self/other discrepancy scores are associated with dropout behavior, whilst low or small discrepancy scores are associated with persistence behavior"
(ibid:275). However, it should be noted that the data were collected from those participants present at the second session of the programs in which they had enrolled. People who attended only the first session or who were absent from the second, but subsequently completed the course, were apparently excluded from consideration although their exclusion was not discussed.

In a study of adults returning to a college setting, Clarke (1980:93) noted that positive and negative forces produced contradictory tensions. While adults may be prompted to enrol to reduce an educational deficiency in their lives, the presence of the deficiency itself may undermine their effort to improve. Such a view is supported by the research of Morstain and Smart (1974:85-88) who found that many adult learners participate in adult education to overcome deficiencies in their lives. Clarke found many adults returning to college to reduce or eliminate deficiencies in their educational experience or qualifications which contributed to the reduction of the range of choices available to them in adult life. Zahn (1969), too, noted negative perceptions and feelings of powerlessness among adults which she linked to learning difficulties, particularly for those engaged in role transition.

Consistency

According to consistency theory individuals who have high self-esteem will react more favourably to those who evaluate them positively than to those who evaluate them negatively. Conversely, those whose self-esteem is low are postulated to
prefer negative evaluators. The rationale offered for this preference lies in people with low self-esteem being more comfortable with information which does not create dissonance.

Schlenker, Soraci, and McCarthy (1976) suggested that individuals with high self-esteem are used to experiencing personal success, prefer favourable feedback, and are likely to reject negative feedback. On the other hand, individuals with low self-esteem are used to experiencing failure, are willing to accept negative feedback, and can reject favourable feedback. Other studies support this finding. It is reasonable to infer from the research that individuals with high self-esteem generally expect success, while those with low self-esteem typically expect failure, although this perception is modified when there are prospects of being successful.

**Self-enhancement**

Self-enhancement theory, on the other hand, asserts that individuals attempt to maximize their self-esteem. Accordingly, individuals need to view themselves as favourably as possible. Doing so may result in an increase in or the preservation of feelings of satisfaction, worth and competence with respect to the self. While the consequence of positive feedback to those with high self-esteem is predicted to be the same as for consistency theory, a major difference between the two theories is the predicted reaction of people with low self-esteem to positive feedback. These individuals are presumed to have a need for enhanced self-perceptions and will, therefore, react
favourably to positive evaluations. As far as negative comments are concerned, self-enhancement theory indicates that people with low self-esteem would be anticipated to respond negatively to failure, otherwise they would not be acting to increase their self-esteem. Hence this theoretical position appears to support the desirability of providing positive feedback in adult education programs.

Sigall and Gould (1977:13) argued that low self-esteem people will try to succeed when they believe they will be able to succeed. Their data did not support the argument that individuals seek to fail because they want to be consistent. For adult educators that study suggests that even if participants have a low self-esteem because of life (and educational) experiences they may well persist in attendance provided that they believe they have a chance of being successful in a particular course. Bandura (1977) provided a useful explanation of task-specific failure. He suggested that persuading an individual that some action was useful would have no effect unless that person also believed that he could perform it successfully. Hence participation in an adult education course may continue if a person is convinced that progress is being made successfully.

As a consequence of the fact that relatively few studies have been soundly based theoretically, data collection has been not been influenced by well-established theoretical propositions. Instead demographic and social background data have been predominant. Data collection procedures are reviewed
Verner and Davis (1964) classified existing studies as either "reactional" or "comparative." The former category included those studies which tried to ascertain from dropouts their reasons for withdrawing from a program, often attempting to distinguish between course and non-course factors. In her review of retention and withdrawal on American college students, Knoell (1960) labelled similar research "autopsy studies" because of their attempts to identify the reasons for attrition by asking dropouts why they had withdrawn. Several researchers have pointed out the limitations arising from seeking participants' reasons for persisting in or dropping out of a course. Knoell also expressed the view that "A moratorium might well be declared on what have been called 'autopsy studies'" (1966:70) arguing that future research could more profitably focus on environmental press and action programs. Boshier argued that "dropouts are inclined to dwell on one incident, the last in a long series of dissatisfactions, and are defensive in telling the truth" (1973:261). A serious drawback in this type of research is that interviewees may provide rationalizations for their attendance behaviour. Further, by trying to distinguish between course and non-course reasons for withdrawal, researchers may artificially create a distinction whereas in reality the reasons for withdrawal are invariably complex.
Comparative studies, the second category identified by Verner and Davis, have drawn distinctions between persisters and dropouts on numerous criteria, including demographic data, such as education, age, sex, and socio-economic status. Course-related experiences, whether in-class variables, such as instructor characteristics or learner achievement, or extra-class factors, for example, transport difficulties or spouse support, have also been the focus of comparisons. Finally, contrasts have been made on personality variables, such as need achievement and self-acceptance.

The definition of a dropout used by Novak and Weiant (1960) was referred to earlier. However, the application of their definition to their data collection was faulty. Even though 99 women were eligible to be contacted as dropouts, only 70 received questionnaires because the others "had registered, but never came to class, or attended only the first week, or attended sporadically during the first month" (1960:38). A deficiency is their failure to identify the numbers in each of the three categories excluded from the study of dropouts. Somewhat surprising is their dismissal of these women as representing "the unstable, curious, or drifter types of individuals so often encountered in adult evening schools" (ibid:38). Even then, replies were received from only 36 of the 79 women contacted, and no attempt was made to distinguish the characteristics of those who replied from those who did not. The subsequent findings, therefore, have to be viewed with considerable caution.
Post-course surveys, apart from being criticized for the likelihood of dropouts providing rationalizations for their withdrawal, suffer limitations when data are collected from a proportion of the sample whose representativeness is either not known or not stated (e.g., Novak and Weiant 1960; Glynn and Jones 1967). In the latter study the researchers mailed 1049 questionnaires to participants who had dropped out of courses at the City Literary Institute in London, England. In response 472 replies were received, so again the findings must be viewed conditionally.

Concerned with the high dropout rate in municipal adult schools in Sweden, Borgstrom conducted interviews with 115 dropouts (17.4 percent of those in this category) whose means of selection were not specified. Overall, approximately two-thirds of those who enrolled did not complete the courses which were a year long. (As Dickinson and Verner showed, length of course contributed to an increase in the rate of dropout). Borgstrom, while acknowledging that dropping out should be regarded as the result of several factors combined, reported "the dominant factors are those connected with experience of the teaching situation" (1980:102).

Limitations in data collection methods in reactional and comparative studies have been identified. In the former rationalizations for attendance behaviour may preclude soundly based interventions to reduce the problem of dropout. The latter type of study has tended to be descriptive rather than analytical, and has not been suggestive of actions to control
problems associated with dropout. Data collected after the first session have often resulted in inadequate representation of all groups of participants, particularly dropouts. This deficiency has been exacerbated when the representativeness of those who provided data has not been established. The findings and conclusions from these studies, as a consequence, must be viewed with caution. The next section examines some of the techniques which have been used to analyze data once they have been collected.

Data Analysis

In their review of research on completers and dropouts, Verner and Davis (1964:163) reported that 23 of the studies they considered did not provide evidence of their authors' having tested the validity of the data presented. The reviewers concluded that marital status, education, age, occupation, and the rate of social participation seemed to be related to the persistence of attendance, although they claimed that in none of those studies was the research sufficiently sophisticated to establish the nature and extent of the relationship conclusively. Many of the studies considered by Verner and Davis reported frequencies without testing for statistically significant differences. Other studies (e.g., Ulmer and Verner 1963) have used t-tests to measure differences between mean scores on selected variables forpersisters and dropouts. The most common statistical techniques used to distinguish between persisters and dropouts have been chi square and product-moment
correlations.

One of the first studies to use a statistical design in which several factors were considered simultaneously was that conducted by Sainty whose sample consisted of 104 male adults undergoing academic upgrading at the Alberta Vocational Centre in Calgary. The researcher used the multiple linear regression technique to measure relationships between selected predictor variables and dropout or completion. He found the three best predictors "were age, number of grades repeated, and the number of changes of employment in the previous twelve months, which yielded a multiple R of 0.656" (1971:227). Men who dropped out were younger, had repeated more grades in school, and had changed jobs more often in the previous twelve months than persisters. Unfortunately, Sainty did not define the key terms, completion and dropout.

Boshier (1969; 1972; 1973) in a series of articles on dropout used several statistical techniques, among them factor analysis, multiple regression, and chi square analyses, to develop an instrument and test congruence theory for the prediction and diagnosis of dropout. The limitations of Boshier's definition of dropout (omitting to note the proportion of participants not returning after the mid-point of the course and, more seriously, only collecting data from those present at the second session of the courses studied) were pointed out earlier in this chapter and could have affected his findings.

Truesdell (1976) also used multiple regression analysis and found that of the variables he considered, the most influential
was place of residence (defined on the basis of the Canadian province of residence), a broad category which in turn reflected economic conditions within the unit of territory selected. In order of importance in accounting for the total variance, place of residence was followed by pretraining occupation, attitude toward the course, pretraining labour force status, unemployment rate, and the number of months employed in the previous three years.

Discriminate analysis was used by Jones in his study of 172 adult students in ABE/GED classes in western Kansas after he had tested 30 bivariate hypotheses by the chi square statistic and t-tests for socio-demographic, educational and course-related variables as well as participants' scores on Rotter's Internal-External (I-E) Scale. The sample was reduced to 108 for the discriminate analysis procedure because of missing data. Eight variables: ethnic group; sex; distance to class; whether there had been health reasons for leaving school; I-E Score; income level; whether enrolment had been suggested by a person from a service agency; and age at leaving school were entered into the analysis. Only the first two variables were statistically significant at the .05 level of probability. Caucasians were more inclined to persist than members of minority groups, and women had higher rates of persistence than men (Jones 1979:48). Using the discriminate technique, Jones' study predicted 75.7 percent of persisters (N = 74) and 64.7 percent of nonpersisters (N = 34). Overall, 72.2 percent of cases were correctly classified (ibid:49). These findings, however, must be viewed
with caution because of the researcher's acknowledged limitation that inactive students were classified as nonpersisters, a dangerous assumption in view of the fact that 29.1 percent of the sample were in this category.

Wilson combined two statistical procedures, principal component analysis and multivariate analysis of covariance, to test his single null hypothesis. Using the Hotelling's $T^2$ procedure, Wilson found the Adjective Check List scale score differences between persisters (defined in terms of course completion or successfully passing the GED tests, a conceptual confusion that has been criticized by this writer) and dropouts to be significant (1980:179).

Some studies have focused on variables which are consequent upon the decision to withdraw from an adult education program. In reactional or autopsy-type research, non-class factors are frequently reported by dropouts to explain their withdrawal from courses. Determining the validity of such professed reasons as illness, transportation difficulties, child care problems, or inclement weather, in the research conducted is difficult. Nevertheless, these are factors which have been considered. Findings from dropout studies are summarized in the next section.

Findings

The findings from several studies have already been referred to in previous sections where the focus has been on other aspects of these studies. As the evidence which follows
shows, the findings from studies of dropout and persistence are often contradictory. Several factors contribute to this problem, including use of different definitions of "dropout" and "persistence," varying characteristics of populations studied and the samples selected, unsatisfactory data collection procedures which bias samples, and limited statistical techniques. Despite the complexity of the problem of dropout, many studies use only single variables to assess the likelihood of withdrawal. Yet it has been shown that single variable studies adopt an oversimplified approach to the problem. There are many factors which operate simultaneously to moderate, reinforce, or emphasize the factors which contribute to persistence or dropout.

However, because many studies have focused on bivariate relationships, the findings from this type of research are summarized under their following headings: demographic factors, personality variables, mental ability, goal achievement, classroom factors, and societal conditions. The findings from multi-factor research are also considered.

**Demographic factors**

In five of the studies reviewed by Verner and Davis (1964), young adults dropped out more frequently than older adults. This finding has subsequently been confirmed by Killian (1969), Dickinson and Verner (1967:28) and Boshier (1973:266). The last-mentioned researcher linked the finding of this association to theoretical foundations when he drew on self theory and the
research of life cycle psychologists. Yet in other studies, age was not significantly related to continuity of attendance (e.g., Ulmer and Verner 1963:156; and Jones 1979:42). However, most studies have shown an inverse relationship between age and dropout.

Verner and Davis (1964) reported five studies in which those with more education were found to be more persistent in attendance than those with less education, yet these studies did not use tests of significance. However, Truesdell (1976:157) did so and found those with fewer years of schooling were more inclined to drop out than those with more years. Earlier, Dickinson and Verner (1967:30) found no significant relationship between years of schooling completed and dropout.

A related, though distinct, background variable to years of schooling is extent of prior adult education experience which was measured by Brown, Knox, and Grotelueschen as the number of previous courses attended. These researchers found the relationship between this variable and withdrawal was significant for only a sub-population "consisting of young adults with less than one year of college and with lower verbal intelligence and family income" (1966:111). Dickinson and Verner reported a lack of previous participation in adult education (operationalized as not having attended courses within the previous three years) was related to discontinuance (1967:30). However, they noted a trend in percentage terms rather than indicating a level at which the relationship was statistically significant. Boshier's (1973:266) study reported
a similar and statistically significant relationship. Most research evidence, therefore, supports the generalization that participants who have had more years of formal education are more inclined to persist than those with fewer years. Similarly, those who have recently participated in adult education courses are more likely to persist than those who have not had this experience.

Only Jones (1979:28) reported marital status had no significant influence on continuity of attendance. On the other hand, Dickinson and Verner (1967:28) and Boshier (1973:266) found higher persistence rates among married than single participants. In her review of previous dropout research, Irish (1978:12) reported a significant relationship between marital status and persistence in eight out of ten studies. Few studies have attempted to explain what has often been shown as a statistically significant relationship. Yet most evidence has shown that married participants were more likely to complete a program than those who were single or divorced.

Dickinson and Verner (1967:29) found a positive and significant relationship between the number of children a participant had and persistence, a finding they noted was somewhat at odds with the studies cited by Verner and Davis (1964). Boshier's research (1973:266) supported the review summary of Verner and Davis. As has been the case with much of the dropout research, the findings for the relationship between number of children of a participant and persistence in an adult education program have been contradictory.
A similar conclusion can be drawn using income as a variable. Although Preston (1958) and Ewigleben (1959) found a positive relationship between low income and dropout, their findings were contradicted by Truesdell. He found "higher income groups are more likely to withdraw from training compared to a lower income group" (1976:156). Hence, the evidence of the effect of a participant's income on attendance behaviour is contradictory.

Whereas Pattyson (1961) and Killian (1969) reported no relationship between occupation and dropout rates, Preston (1958) found a relationship. The latter's finding was supported by Dickinson and Verner (1967:31), Boshier (1973:266), and Truesdell (1976:156). These studies have shown that participants from lower socio-economic groups have been significantly more inclined to drop out than people from other groups. Hence, a participant's occupation has been shown as a more consistent predictor of persistence than most other demographic variables.

Ulmer and Verner (1963:156) found the relationship between distance travelled to class and continuity of attendance was not significant. Similar findings were reported by Dickinson and Verner (1967:32) and Bennett (1968), although the latter two studies related time spent travelling to class and dropout rather than distance. In contrast, Boshier (1973:266) reported that having to depend on public rather than private transport was significantly associated with dropout. Corroboration from other studies would be required before a firm generalization
could be made about the relationship between means of transport and dropout. It appears, though, that neither distance travelled nor time spent travelling to class is a significant predictor of dropout.

Of the demographic variables reviewed, none was consistently found to be significantly associated with dropout. Older adults, married participants, having more formal and adult education experience, and middle or upper socio-economic group members tended to persist to a greater extent than younger adults, single or divorced participants, and those from lower socio-economic groups. The relationships between number of children, income, and travel time and distance to class were either inconclusive or not significant. The next section reviews studies which have related personality variables to persistence and dropout.

**Personality variables**

Several researchers (e.g., Heilbrun 1962; Scharles 1966; Killian 1969) have used instruments to measure dimensions of personality which have been related to persistence and dropout. Killian (1969), who used the California Test of Personality, found that persisters scored significantly higher than dropouts on the "social adjustment" and "total adjustment" scales. Using the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, Scharles (1966) found persisting females showed a higher need for abasement and a lower need for achievement than females who dropped out.

For her study among an adult basic education population in
Chicago, Cunningham developed her own instrument to measure self-esteem because she argued that it was important to develop a technically adequate instrument which took account of the backgrounds of the participants in her study. She found "In all cases, persistence in any form, is positively associated with both esteem and utility (1973:153).

On the Adjective Check List (ACL), Wilson (1980) found significant differences between persisters and dropouts on eight of the individual scales. Dropouts scored significantly higher than persisters in Autonomy, Change, Succorance, and the Number of Unfavorable Adjectives checked, while persisters scored higher in Self-control, Nurturance, Endurance, and Deference. These scores were interpreted as reflecting personality differences between the two groups. Wilson suggested these findings called for more support and understanding, particularly by teachers, to cater for the personality characteristics of dropouts.

Compared with other variables, especially demographic factors, personality characteristics have been less commonly used to explain attendance behaviour. Persisters have been shown to have had higher self-esteem, been better adjusted, and exhibited greater endurance than dropouts. With the exception of Scharles' study, persisters have also been shown to have a greater need for achievement than dropouts. Although researchers have found these differences, they have been tentative in offering explanations for them and have not provided sufficient guidance for practitioners to counter the
effects of negative personality characteristics.

**Mental ability**

Most recent dropout studies have excluded the mental ability of participants from consideration after Zahn (1964), Whinfield (1966), and others had found no significant relationships between intelligence and dropout. In her study, Zahn found no significant relationship between these two variables in all classes, but when the analysis distinguished between credit and non-credit classes, those with less ability were more significantly inclined to drop out in the former classes. However, Zahn did not have data to explain this phenomenon.

A study by Donnarumma, Cox, and Beder related the student's style of learning and cognitive functioning, as measured by field dependence-independence using an embedded figures test, to attrition among 40 adult enrollees in a New Jersey General Educational Development (GED) Test preparation program. These researchers (1980:227) found that twelve out of eighteen participants who dropped out were field dependent while only one-third of the dropouts were field independent. Using the chi-square statistic the relationship between the score on the Group Embedded Figures Test and GED total score was significant, p<.01, for those who dropped out, failed, or passed. However, the authors acknowledged that the emphasis on math and reading in GED would suit those who were inclined to be field independent. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that field
dependence per se contributed to dropout. Rather difficulty with or frustration over the subject matter which called for a learning style that was incongruent with the student's cognitive functioning was a more plausible explanation of dropout for this group.

Further research is required before it can be concluded that cognitive style is consistently and significantly associated with persistence and dropout. Research evidence suggests that by itself, intelligence is not an important factor in accounting for dropout.

Thus far the review of previous findings has focused on internal or personal situational factors. The next section summarizes the evidence for the importance of achieving goals before considering the effects of external factors, in the classroom and society.

Goal achievement

Reference was made earlier to Londoner's studies which showed that externally oriented goals tended to be rated highly by perseverers, whereas nonperseverers rated internally oriented goals as being more important. In his review of research of nonpersistence in adult basic education programs, Jones noted "The degree to which students believe their efforts will lead to goal attainment may be a factor in their persistence" (1979:14). An explanation for this generalization was offered by Phares who claimed that "behavior is determined by the degree to which people will expect that their behavior will lead to goals, as
well as by reinforcement through goal achievement" (1976:13). This view is in agreement with the arguments presented in the theoretical foundations section of this chapter where reference was made to studies, particularly based on self-enhancement theory, that showed people will continue to seek to achieve a goal if they believe they will be successful.

Irish (1978:21) noted the specificity of students' motives appeared relevant to persistence as did compatibility between their motives and course content. Furthermore, "in many instances, participants enroll in a course as a means to an end, and persistence is related to the extent to which the course is perceived as contributing to attaining that end" (ibid:22).

The evidence clearly suggests that goal orientation is significantly associated with persistence. While participants continue to believe they will be successful in achieving their goals; they will remain in the program, a finding which has theoretical and empirical support. Consideration is now given to factors which are essentially external to the participant.

**Classroom factors**

In their review of research Verner and Davis (1964) found, not surprisingly, that dropouts reported less satisfaction with their instructors than persisters. Yet instructors' professional qualities, such as whether or not they had undergone training in leadership and the amount of their previous experience of teaching adults did not significantly influence dropout. In a study of classroom factors linked to
dropout, Davis found that only "instructor talked to the students as an equal" (1966:40) was significantly associated with dropout in a negative direction, and consequently suggested that the instructor should talk to participants as equals to help maintain their attendance. Lam and Wong found that "approachability of the instructor" (1974:140) was significantly and positively related to attendance. Three studies, those by Ferguson (1968), Linnon (1971), and Borgstrom (1980:104), as well as the review by Verner and Davis, concur that a change of instructors during a course increases the likelihood of dropout occurring. These studies focused on change per se rather than assessing the qualities of the instructors.

The evidence from studies which have examined classroom conditions suggests that of all the factors that have been considered few, except for a change in instructor, have been significantly associated with dropout. Finally, in this review of bivariate relationships the influence of societal conditions is examined.

Societal conditions

Few studies have attempted to quantify societal conditions which may have an influence on whether or not participants remain in adult education programs. Training programs, in particular, are sensitive to economic conditions, especially job opportunities. Truesdell took these into consideration and found that in Canadian provinces in which the unemployment rate was low there was greater dropout than where the rate was
higher. Truesdell (1976:155) speculated, although he did not provide substantive data, that trainees dropped out to take advantage of greater employment opportunities. Despite the increasing emphasis which is being given to retraining and re-entry programs, most studies have not taken into account societal factors likely to affect attendance in adult education programs.

The next section considers the findings of studies which have used statistical techniques to consider the concurrent influence of more than one factor on persistence and dropout.

Multi-factor research findings

Political efficacy, manifest anxiety, occupational status, worker (or homemaker) satisfaction, age, level of education, years since last attending school, and verbal ability were the eight independent variables used by Knox and Sjogren (1965) in a discriminant analysis for each of five institutions. The dependent variable was completion/dropout. The highest statistically significant multiple biserial coefficient was .35 which indicated that the eight measures selected accounted for only 12 percent of the variance in the criterion variable.

The results failed to show any consistent pattern. Years that had elapsed since engaging in a previous educational experience was a factor negatively related to completion, -0.09 and -0.13, for two of the three institutions in which the coefficients were statistically significant, the only variable to be significant twice in the same direction (1965:85).
Anxiety, measured by fifteen items from the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale, was negatively related to completion at one of the institutions. Studies by other researchers (e.g., Sainty 1971; Boshier 1973; Truesdell 1976; and Jones 1979) which were multi-factor in their statistical analysis have been referred to in previous sections.

Although these studies have used more sophisticated statistical techniques than those using bivariate methods, the amount of variance of the dependent variable accounted for has been disappointingly low, usually less than 20 percent. Furthermore, no single variable has accounted for a sufficiently large proportion of the variance to encourage program planners to take steps to ameliorate the problem of dropout. As has been noted, in many studies these deficiencies arise from faulty conceptualization, and atheoretical foundations.

The next section reviews the research which has been conducted focusing on rates of attendance.

**Rates of Attendance**

The discussion in this section follows a similar order to that for persistence and dropout. A review of the definitions used to define the construct is followed by consideration of the means of data analysis in and findings from the pertinent studies.

**Definitions**

Most previous attendance studies have dichotomized
persistence and dropout as alternatives. This study, while maintaining that distinction, also examines the patterns of persistence more closely by establishing three groups (high, medium, and low) on the basis of rate of attendance. Those who attended between 10 and 30 percent of the total number of sessions were classified as low attenders; participants attending 40 to 70 percent of the program formed the medium attenders' group; and those attending 80 percent or more of the course made up the high attenders' group. Such a classification, based on a ten session course, yields three groups each with approximately similar numbers of sessions: three, four, and three respectively for the low, medium, and high attendance groups. In studies of programs with a different number of sessions the percentage figures may be varied to take account of the program length. It should be noted, too, that after the third session none of the providing institutions normally allows for even a partial refund of enrolment fees to those who withdraw. This administrative regulation may cause some participants to withdraw after the third session and thereby receive some reimbursement of their enrolment fee.

The justification for trichotomizing attendance rates follows the work of Cunningham (1973), and others, particularly those who have conducted research among adult basic education (ABE) students. Cunningham, for example, cited a United States study where the average daily attendance was reported as 67 percent and median dropout rate was 40 percent. It is apparent, then, that in some adult education programs attendance for some
participants is irregular. At the same time others attend very few sessions, while the remainder attend frequently and regularly, thereby recording high rates of attendance.

The notion of attendance rate, defined as the proportion of sessions a person attends in relation to the total sessions offered, is emphasized in this study for two reasons. First, such a notion provides a continuous variable which allows a greater range of statistical techniques to be used. Second, it takes account of the fact that some participants may continue to attend but infrequently, while others will attend regularly and frequently.

A consideration in distinguishing between persistence and dropout and attendance rate categories is that quite distinct phenomena may be operating for those participants who terminate their attendance abruptly compared with those whose registration continues but whose attendance is irregular. In their study on adult basic education in the United States, Mezirow, Darkenwald, and Knox (1975:66) stated that ABE teachers reported irregular attendance as a major factor interfering with a student's learning. Grouping both types of behaviour together may obscure the fact that there are distinct reasons for the different actions. Treating both as the same pattern is likely to obscure unique phenomena.

Jones, Schulman, and Stubblefield (1978), whose definition of persistence was referred to earlier, created five persistence categories based on a combined measure of a student's length of enrolment and regularity of attendance. The criteria for
defining each of these categories was not pre-determined, but was drawn up after graphing the attendance data for each student on a two-dimensional grid, on which the "Percentage of classes attended while enrolled" was shown on the horizontal axis, with "Number of classes enrolled" on the vertical axis.

Data Analysis

In their study, Lam and Wong (1974) also used attendance rate as a variable, the meaning of which was not defined. For one group in the study the mean frequencies of attendance is 5.70 [presumably sessions] and for the other 7.34, although the difference was not significant. Where non-parametric statistical analyses were called for, attendance rates were collapsed into three categories: low 1-4; medium 5-8; and high 9-12. Otherwise attendance was the sole dependent variable and was treated as a ratio scale. Nevertheless, the study's value is limited by the researchers having failed to explain or define the nature of the attendance rate variable.

Findings

Although they did not use the length of time a student remained in a class as either a dependent or independent variable, Ulmer and Verner drew attention to differential rates of attendance when they noted that "Nearly one-fourth of those students who discontinued attendance did so during the first week of classes" (1963:157). This finding suggests that of those participants who do not complete courses many withdraw in
the early stages of the program. It would appear that many students soon decide whether the program in which they have enrolled is likely to meet their expectations.

In addition to the commonly used t-tests and chi square, Lam and Wong (1974) used correlational analysis to assess the relationships between content and structure measures, and between these and attendance rates. A step-wise multiple linear regression analysis used to measure the relative weights of the seven variables, found significant relationships with attendance rate. Nearly 27 percent of the variance was accounted for by these variables, of which "the amount of informal interactions and the approachability of the instructor ranked foremost in explaining attendance rates" (1974:140).

In her study Hurkamp distinguished among early dropouts, those whose first of three consecutive absences occurred during the first five sessions of the class; late dropouts, those who withdrew after this point; and completers. Subsequent analysis showed differences between the first two groups in their attitudes to selected aspects of the adult education program provision. For example, compared with completers early dropouts were less prepared for the course in which they had enrolled; they were more concerned about arrangements for child care; and they had to make more changes in their living routine because of their attendance in the educational program. Late dropouts were less certain about their choice of course; were more concerned about foregoing television; and had a more unfavourable impression of the classroom.
To predict persistence in a study of 163 ABE students enrolled in GED preparatory classes, Jones, Schulman, and Stubblefield (1978) used socio-demographic and personality variables in addition to selected social support variables. Included in the first category were age, sex, race, and time since last school attendance. Personality factors consisted of self-confidence, achievement need, and affiliation need, and were all measured by administering the Adjective Check List. The social support group of variables was obtained by asking each participant the level of support given by family, work, and church sources, according to Social Climate Scales designed by Moos (1974).

Using the multiple regression technique, the researchers found that social support accounted for 32.0 percent of the variance for persistence, while the socio-demographic group of variables accounted for 10.4 percent. The contribution of the group of personality variables was negligible. However, the authors acknowledged that persistence variance was inflated because of the large number of variables they used, twenty in total, in relation to the sample size. Further analysis using the best subset from each group of measures resulted in six predictors (sex, time since last school attendance, family achievement, work autonomy, church leader support and church expressiveness, the last four being separate social support measures) accounting for 22.2 percent of persistence variance. A subsequent analysis using the number of classes attended as the dependent variable yielded similar results, a finding which
was not surprising in view of the high correlation ($r = .97$) between the five persistence categories and the total number of classes attended.

Darkenwald (1975) reported a study in which the effects of the teacher's race and an intervening variable of subject matter emphasis were related to dropout among black students in large city ABE programs. Darkenwald acknowledged that in his study categories such as age, sex, and the teacher's professional training and experience were insufficient to account for the lower dropout rates in classes taught by black teachers. Instead he pointed to possible socio-cultural identification, with the minority teacher providing a positive role model, and to candid open communication between teacher and student who shared a cultural affinity.

Studies using rate of attendance as a dependent variable, while much less common than those using the dichotomous persistence-dropout alternative, have produced findings which are similar. For example, recency of educational experience, being older, and level of formal education were positively related to persistence. Demographic factors were commonly used and generally accounted for more of the variance than personality variables. Generally, classroom circumstances have been found to be not significantly related to dropout.

**Other Attendance Patterns**

Three other attendance/non-attendance patterns are conceptually possible, although they are not the focus of this
study. First, there are participants who may miss the first session, but attend later ones. In programs which allow continuous entry a different set of conditions operates compared with those courses which have a defined starting date for all participants. Second, there are people who register but do not attend any sessions.

Third, a different index of participant attendance is that of average daily attendance (ADA) which was used by Verner and Neylan (1966) and Dickinson and Verner (1967) to measure the proportion of registrants present at each session of the courses in their studies. The latter pair of researchers noted that for all courses, the peak ADA was 87 percent at the second session from which it declined to 38 percent by the forty-fifth session. The biggest single decrease was between the sixth and seventh session. Dickinson and Verner also used the ADA measure to compare courses in different subject areas and of different lengths, but they limited their analysis of ADA to these variables.

Conclusion

In reviewing studies of persistence and dropout in adult education programs, this writer has noted that the majority of studies vary in their definitions; lack theoretical foundations; frequently have collected data after dropout has occurred; and often statistical analysis of the data has involved bivariate rather than more complex techniques which more accurately reflect the reality of human experience.
Most of the variables which have been related to persistence and dropout are demographic, although some studies have also drawn on psychological and educational data. Some studies have not tested for statistical significance, while others report findings which are inconsistent with other research.

In addition to persistence and dropout, other attendance patterns have been studied, particularly rates of attendance. Generally, similar criticisms can be made of these studies as were directed at dropout research. Rates of attendance as a variable has the potential to reflect the regularity and frequency of attendance behaviour in adult education programs, most of which are voluntary.

In this study a distinction was made between persistence and dropout and rate of attendance category membership because it was believed that distinct behavioural phenomena may have been involved. In particular, some participants may have continued to attend but irregularly. Dropouts were those participants who did not attend even a single session in the latter half of the course, whereas attendance category membership was decided on the basis of the number of sessions they attended.

The next chapter focuses on psychological, social psychological and educational variables which have relevance to the attendance behaviour of participants in adult education programs. In particular, the constructs of anxiety, social stress, self-esteem, and study orientation are considered. The
procedures used to collect attendance behaviour data are set out in chapter IV.
CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:
PSYCHO-SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONSTRUCTS

Introduction

In this chapter the theoretical propositions and the major research findings which relate to the social psychological, psychological and educational constructs which have been selected for this study are discussed. State and trait anxiety, social stress, and self-esteem are related to the constructs which were discussed in the previous chapter, persistence and dropout, and rate of attendance. In addition, an educational construct, study orientation, is considered.

In Chapter II the theoretical foundations of these constructs were discussed briefly, particularly as they might pertain to people participating in a formal educational setting. This theme is maintained in the present chapter. The relevance of anxiety, social stress (as measured by experiencing life events), self-esteem and study orientation to adult education is presented in this chapter. In particular, the application of these constructs to adults returning to formal education after an absence from it is justified.

Anxiety

The importance of anxiety has been widely argued. Hall, for example, claimed that "Anxiety is one of the most important
concepts in psychoanalytic theory. It plays an important role in the development of personality as well as in the dynamics of personality functioning" (1954:59-60). Spielberger, too, argued "The importance of anxiety as a powerful influence in contemporary life is increasingly recognized" (1966:3), and "Anxiety is found as a central explanatory concept in almost all contemporary theories of personality" (ibid:4).

Although anxiety is an internal condition, it underlies and is used to account for behavioural events, despite the fact that its existence and nature remain hypothetical and inferred. Yet its presence is accepted because, like other theoretical constructs, it allows some explanation for what might otherwise be inexplicable behaviour.

A feeling of anxiety is a manifestation of the tension or discomfort that people returning to a formal education setting experience after having been away from it for a number of years. Spielberger described it as "an unpleasant emotional state or condition which is characterized by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, and worry, and by activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (1972b:482).

Lazarus and Averill, after reviewing research on anxiety, defined the construct as

an emotion based on the appraisal of threat, an appraisal which entails symbolic, anticipatory, and uncertain elements. These characteristics, broadly conceived, mean that anxiety results when cognitive systems no longer enable a person to relate meaningfully to the world about him. (1972:246-7)

This definition of anxiety suggests a complex process that includes stress, a cognitive appraisal of stress, a reevaluation
of the situation, mechanisms available for the individual to cope with stress, and an emotional reaction which includes physiological and behavioural manifestations, although it is a process in which cognitive reactions predominate. Cattell’s view "that anxiety is an experience sui generis, which is generated directly by experience of motivational uncertainty" (1966:50) is supported by other writers on anxiety. Uncertainty may have multiple causes. An individual re-entering an educational institution after an absence of several years may wonder: Can I cope? What will happen? Will my children be all right in my absence? Will I be asked questions that I cannot answer? Will I be able to complete the assignments?

In whatever way anxiety is defined, there is consensus in emphasizing its unpleasantness as a phenomenological and personal condition and that feelings of tension associated with it arise out of the uncertainties of the person-environment interaction which the individual experiences. In fact, Lazarus and Averill (1972:246) express the view that nearly every theorist who has considered anxiety has emphasized the role of uncertainty in the build up of that condition.

Epstein (1976:193) suggested that anxiety, as with other emotions, can be either constructive or destructive, according to its intensity in relation to an individual’s ability to cope with it. Anxiety provides a warning to individuals when their self-esteem is threatened. This information can be used to cope effectively when a new or threatening situation arises provided the successful solution of the challenge posed does not require
the use of more resources than the individual possesses. Similarly, anxiety can be experienced when a person tackles an unfamiliar situation. In fact, Epstein (ibid) argued that people who risk growth must risk experiencing anxiety. Hence, it seems reasonable to assume that women returning to an educational setting are likely to feel anxious, either because it will be a new experience for them or because they are risking part of the 'self' as they undergo personal development.

While acknowledging the importance of anxiety in personality and behaviour, many researchers accept the conceptual distinction between state and trait anxiety. The importance of the distinction between them and their relevance to adult students returning to an educational institution is considered in the next section.

State and Trait Anxiety

As Spielberger has pointed out (for example, 1976:4), a problem in anxiety research has been the failure to distinguish between transitory anxiety states, anxiety as a complex psychobiological process, and individual differences in anxiety proneness as a personality trait.

Credit for initiating a methodological distinction between state and trait anxiety is claimed by Zuckerman (1976:155) who had earlier developed the Affect Adjective Check List (AACL) (1960) which included an anxiety scale with two forms: one to measure anxiety as a temporary arousal state and the other to measure the construct as a general disposition.
Returning to an educational setting may present a challenge to many, particularly after an absence of a number of years. The extent to which this situation is seen as threatening will depend on such factors as an individual's experiences in previous schooling, level of educational qualifications, expectations of the reactions of other people, and future goals. Some may cope well with this situation; others may feel threatened.

Spielberger's distinction between stress and threat has been supported by Holtzman who suggested that Spielberger made it possible to develop a theory of anxiety and to measure the construct (1976:175). Holtzman also concurred with the conceptualization of state and trait anxiety. The former condition prevails when a situation is seen as threatening, irrespective of whether or not others view the objective stimulus conditions of the situation as stressful. The subjective feeling of uneasiness which accompanies such a perception of threat is known as state anxiety. When such anxiety is experienced with high frequency, and particularly in situations which do not appear to be very stressful to observers, then it can be inferred that the individual is more anxiety prone than others. Such an individual is considered to be high scoring in trait anxiety. Hence an anxiety-prone person is one who has a noticeable increase in feelings of anxiety on a relatively large number of occasions, in a larger number of different situations and under more circumstances than other persons.
Spielberger suggested

State anxiety (A-State) may be conceptualized as a transitory emotional state or condition of the human organism that varies in intensity and fluctuates over time. This condition is characterized by subjective, consciously perceived feelings of tension and apprehension, and activation of the autonomic nervous system. (1972a:39)

Enrolling and participating in an adult education program generally involves no objective danger, yet individuals may feel anxious about being so involved because they are apprehensive, or uncertain, or perceive a threat to their self-esteem in an ambiguous situation. Whereas state anxiety tends to measure an individual's anxiety feelings in particular situations, trait anxiety is a more persistent condition, explained by Spielberger as referring to

relatively stable individual differences in anxiety proneness, that is, to differences in the disposition to perceive a wide range of stimulus situations as dangerous or threatening, and in the tendency to respond to such threats with A-State reactions. (ibid:39)

Spielberger, Gorsuch, and Lushene noted that

whether or not people who differ in A-Trait will show corresponding differences in A-State depends upon the extent to which a specific situation is perceived by a particular individual as dangerous or threatening, and this is greatly influenced by an individual's past experience. (1970:3)

One of the difficulties in dealing with state anxiety has been pointed out by Levitt (1980:13) who noted that there was a convincing body of evidence which suggested that inconsistency characterizes scores obtained when the construct is measured. Such results are indicative of how individuals react and feel according to circumstances currently being thought about or
faced. The instrument selected to measure anxiety in this study is reviewed next.

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory

Spielberger, Gorsuch and Lushene developed a self-report inventory as their method for yielding information on an individual's reactions to stress, inner feelings, life situation, and bodily sensations. An advantage of a self-report instrument for literate individuals is that scores can be obtained quickly and with little training for individuals who administer the instrument. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) is an instrument which provides two scores from two lists of 20 items, measuring anxiety-trait and anxiety-state. Questions on the former scale ask respondents how they "generally feel" and the degree of that feeling: Almost always; Often: Sometimes; or Almost never; for such statements as: I feel pleasant; I tire quickly; and I wish I could be happy as others seem to be. The state scale asks respondents how they "feel right now" and the extent to which that feeling is experienced: Very much so; Moderately so; Somewhat; or Not at all; for such statements as: I feel calm; I feel secure; and I am tense. The correlation between the two dimensions was reported as being about .50. Research conducted by Hodges and Spielberger (1969), Stoudenmire (1972), D'Augelli (1974) and others has shown the conceptual distinction between state and trait anxiety.

Spielberger (1966; 1972b) has stated that the difference in
state anxiety for high trait-anxiety individuals compared with low trait-anxiety people will be greater when the former see situations as more threatening to the ego and hence more anxiety arousing. In situations which are perceived as neutral or nonthreatening, the differences in state anxiety between high and low trait scoring individuals are less. In other words, ego threatening situations emphasize the difference in state anxiety between people with high and low trait anxiety dispositions.

Spielberger (1976:8-9) has explained that the STAI was developed to provide relatively brief, homogeneous measures of both conditions of anxiety. The authors of the instrument sought items which were characterized by high internal consistency, as measured by item-remainder correlations and alpha coefficients. In addition they strove for ease and brevity of administration with their instrument.

The STAI was normed on a range of populations including 982 college freshmen, 484 college students enrolled in an introductory psychology course, 161 general medical and surgical patients, and 212 prisoners. The norms are presented separately for male and female students. Alpha reliabilities for the normative samples (high school juniors, college freshmen and introductory psychology students) range from .83 to .92 for state scores and from .86 to .92 for trait scores.

High retest reliabilities for the STAI trait scale of between .70 and .90 are reported. Test-retest reliabilities for the STAI trait scale for female college undergraduates over a 104 day period of .77 indicate that the trait measure is quite
stable. On the other hand, test-retest reliabilities for the state measure are low (a median of .32 is reported), as might be expected, because the state scale conceptually does not measure a persistent characteristic of the individual. However, measures of internal consistency of this scale range from .83 to .92.

Validity for the trait score has been sought by correlating scores with the Institute of Personality and Ability Testing (IPAT) Anxiety Scale, Taylor's Manifest Anxiety Scale and Affect Adjective Check List. For 126 college women, coefficients of .75, .80 and .52 respectively were obtained.

Elsewhere Spielberger suggested that these "scales seem to measure anxiety proneness in social situations" (1972:490). Further, he argued that individuals who record high anxiety trait scores are more likely to experience an increase in this measure in circumstances which pose a threat to self-esteem, particularly when personal adequacy is seen as being evaluated in interpersonal relationships. Returning to an educational setting after having been absent from such an environment for a number of years may be regarded as a situation in which personal adequacy is being assessed, by the person concerned or by peers or by course coordinators.

The nature of self-esteem, its relationship to adults in an educational setting, and its measurement are considered next.

**Self-esteem**

Self-esteem is one of the most important and heuristic
concepts in the study of personality. Wells and Marwell (1976:5) noted that it has been employed to explain a broad variety of behavioural phenomena in psychology, as well as psychiatry and sociology. They also observed that it has been used in a wide range of theoretical perspectives and has been an important idea in many studies.

People with high self-esteem see themselves as capable, significant, and worthy. They feel that they are important and valuable persons deserving respect and consideration. On the other hand, those with low self-esteem scores tend to hold negative views of themselves and feel that they are not very important. Such people lack self-confidence and faith in their own ability.

In a review of literature describing the self, Brundage and MacKeracher make a distinction between its cognitive and emotional elements.

The cognitive element is called the self-concept and is the individual's description of himself. The emotional element is called the self-esteem and is the way the individual feels about himself in comparison with others and some ideal. (1980:23)

Other writers and researchers agree that the self-esteem is an individual's self-evaluative attitude. Coopersmith, who developed the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, referred to self-esteem as

The evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself: it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy. (1967:4)
Coopersmith explained that an individual's self-evaluation is likely to vary in different areas of one's life, depending on activities engaged in and roles assumed. Nevertheless, in appraising their abilities individuals, in Coopersmith's view, "would presumably weight these areas according to their subjective importance" (ibid:6), thereby arriving at a general level of self-esteem, which most writers agree is a relatively enduring estimate.

As a consequence of the distinction between those with high and low self-esteem, it is generally thought that the former is associated with "healthy" behaviour in that it is more socially and psychologically functional. For example, those with high self-esteem are assumed to be more readily able to make adjustments in their lives. This view is found in the developmental theories of Rosenberg and Coopersmith; it is a basic tenet of those writing from a self-acceptance perspective, and is also a finding in sociological studies in which self-esteem is related to role transition. Wylie (1974), for example, cites several studies in which the writers placed considerable importance on self-esteem in human adjustment. Hence in making the transition from non-student to student it is reasonable to expect that the adjustment would be more readily accomplished by those with high self-esteem than those with low self-esteem. Because of its central place in personality development self-esteem is considered to be an important variable linked to attainment or attendance behaviour, yet its ability to explain these outcomes or its function as a dependent
variable by no means has been confirmed.

After reviewing research on these relationships, Bachman and O'Malley concluded, "although there are theoretical bases for expecting positive associations between self-esteem and attainment, the empirical evidence to date has not been entirely persuasive" (1977:367). However, a more recent study by Brockner (1979) provided evidence that positive feedback for low self-esteem individuals results in significantly improved performance on subsequent tasks. In that study subjects were divided into those with high and low self-esteem. Each group was divided into those who were given positive and negative feedback on a task. Whereas those with high self-esteem performed equally well on a subsequent task irrespective of the feedback that they received, there was a significant difference between those low self-esteem individuals who were given a positive rating and those who were evaluated negatively. The former performed significantly better than the latter and as well as those with high self-esteem. This finding confirms other research and theoretical propositions referred to in the previous chapter which suggested that if individuals with low self-esteem believe they can be successful they will strive to do so rather than failing to and thereby maintaining self-consistency.

Rosenberg, whose Self-esteem Scale is that chosen in this study, defined self-esteem as "a positive or negative attitude toward a particular object, namely the self" (1965:30). Rosenberg's prime concern was with self-image as a global
property of the personality. In his view all self-attitudes have an evaluative dimension. This emphasis on self-assessment is supported by Burns who argued that

self esteem to be operationalised for measurement purposes is best regarded as self evaluation, with a phenomenological orientation implied, the evaluation being subjective whether involving one's own assessment of performance or one's interpretation of the assessment of oneself made by others, both in relation to self-appointed ideals and culturally learned standards. (1979:56)

Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale

Rosenberg's Scale is a ten-item Likert-type instrument offering four choices, one through four (from strongly agree to strongly disagree). Of the ten statements, five are phrased in a positive direction with the other five in a negative direction to control for acquiescence. Self-acceptance scores are obtained through a summation process. Scores range from ten to forty, with the higher score indicating a higher level of self-acceptance. Silber and Tippett who were responsible for much of the early research validating this instrument, which has since been used widely, obtained a two-week test-retest reliability coefficient of .85 (1965:1042). Validity was also tested by the same researchers. Their reports on construct validity determined by correlations with other tests and interviewers' ratings prompted Wylie to note, "These convergent validities are among the highest we have observed in cross-instrument correlations" (1974:185).

The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale was devised to achieve a unidimensional index of global self-esteem based on the Guttman
model. It has a reproducibility index of 0.93 and an item scalability of 0.73. Wylie stated that a coefficient of reproducibility "of .90 or more has been taken as an arbitrary minimum for a possible inference that one is dealing with a satisfactorily reliable, unidimensional scale" (ibid:182), although she added that such a figure could not alone be accepted as a sufficient criterion. Face validity of the instrument is generally accepted because the items allow for disclosure of a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the self.

In her summary of her review of Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale, Wylie wrote "It is impressive that such high reliability is attainable with only 10 items and that such a short scale has yielded relationships supporting its construct validity" (ibid:189). Burns commented that "the scale is worthy of high commendation in view of its very acceptable reliability coefficients attained on only 10 items and considerable evidence for its construct validity derived from the relationships studied" (1979:103). Further support for this instrument was given by Wells and Marwell (1976:194).

Thus, the definition of self-esteem selected for this study is that it is a construct which refers to the degree of self-worth and self-acceptance that individuals experience according to their own standards and values.

During the course of their lives, all individuals experience a range of life changes or events which may be considered as potential stressors. These happenings may require
considerable adaptation and readjustment. The nature and impact of these changes are considered in the next section.

**Stress**

Life changes provide sources of stress which all individuals face. In studying life changes and their consequences social scientists have assumed that constantly altering life conditions are potentially troublesome for the individual. To varying extents, life changes require individuals to make adaptations in personal outlook and behaviour to adjust to the demands of the altered circumstances.

Stress theory has been used to explain that environmental agents, or certain experiences and life conditions (stressors) affect the structure and functioning of an individual as well as the individual's responses to such agents (stress). Stress has generally been conceptualized as the organism's response to altered conditions or agents in the physical, psychological, or sociocultural environment (Rabkin and Struening 1976). Lazarus suggested that stress has "physiological referents, as in Selye's 'adaptation syndrome'" (1971:53). He also suggested that stress has sociological referents, for example, the pressures which result when an organization or social system is disturbed. Furthermore, stress has psychological connotations which apply, for example, when an individual perceives danger or harm, real or threatened.

There are interactions between the physiological, sociological and psychological systems. For example, returning
to a formal educational setting may cause psychological discomfort to an individual. Such a threat may have the effect of upsetting an individual's physiological balance.

Lazarus (1966) suggested that internal demands which challenge or overwhelm one's ability to adapt to these demands are likely to result in their being seen as stressful. The point at which an individual feels overwhelmed is important because in such circumstances the individual cannot cope successfully. How an individual perceives a stressor will depend on a number of factors, such as experience in handling it, attitudes toward it, awareness of its impact, and an estimate of its likely costs.

Thus the stress experienced when an adult returns to an educational institution will depend on previous educational experience, how schooling is valued, what other opportunities are available to fulfil a goal, and the individual's cost-benefit assessment. Whereas some people will see educational re-entry as a challenge, others will see it as a threat. The former group are likely to have confidence in their ability to cope with the challenges of the transition and will react accordingly, while others will view returning as more threatening. Baum, Singer, and Baum (1981:9) suggested that these differences are linked to self-esteem and motivational states as well as to other processes.

Lazarus (1971:54) and Groen (1971:95) agreed that one of the fundamental features of stress as a concept is that it arises out of a change in the relationship between an organism
and its environment. They stated that stress can be induced by physical, chemical, viral, bacteriological, or social causes. According to Lazarus (1971:54) the key feature of psychological stress is that it depends on how an individual interprets the significance of a challenging, threatening or harmful event, whereas for physiological stress the condition of the tissues determine noxiousness. Lieberman referred to the notion of stress in similar terms when he defined it as "environmental demands placed on the organism requiring adaptive behavior" (1978:119). Lieberman acknowledged that life events impinge on the individual and they required an adaptational response. Eisenstadt (1971:80) identified several different stress-inducing social situations which would include returning to an educational institution after an absence of a number of years because these individuals find themselves in situations which are potentially ambiguous and undefined as well as threatening to their identity and status image.

It is the social cause of stress which is of particular relevance to this study in which the emphasis is on social stress defined by George as

a social situation that poses an adaptive challenge or problem to the individual. Social stress does not necessarily lead to a negative outcome, but it requires negotiation by the individual. (1980:140)

Groen had a similar view and saw social stress as a situation

caused by social circumstances or cultural rules which frustrate or threaten to frustrate an individual or group . . . [and which] . . . prevents him or it from developing or acting according to inborn, or acquired, gratifying behaviour patterns. (1971:95)

Cox (1978), who argued for a transactional approach to the study
of stress, viewed it as a reflection of a lack of 'fit' between a person and the environment. Such a view is consistent with the theory of cognitive dissonance and the notion of congruence which were discussed in chapter II. This view is further supported by LaRocco, House, and French (1980:203) in a study of social support, occupational stress, and health in which they regarded social stress as perceived incongruence or a lack of fit between a person and the environment. Stokols argued for a congruence model of human stress, central to which "is the concept of environment-behavior congruence, or the extent to which an environment accommodates the needs and goals of its users" (1979:35-6). In a transactional paradigm, stress is studied in terms of its antecedent factors and its effect. Cox also pointed out (1978:24) that the social background of a stress experience is a crucial factor and one which is often forgotten in laboratory studies. Laboratory studies tend to dominate the psychological research on stress, yet generalizations from them to real-life situations are very difficult. Another artificial component of laboratory stress experiments is that most give subjects final control over the intensity and duration of their stress experience. Real-life situations do not allow the same degree of control.

The effects of social and psychological stress on physical and mental health have been documented in psychological and psychiatric literature. Numerous studies have shown a relationship between an individual's accumulation of life events (for example, divorce, change of residence, loss of job) and the
onset of physical illness (e.g., Melick 1978; Rahe 1974) or emotional dysfunction (e.g., Allen, McBee and Justice 1981). Social scientists following a similar research approach have shown that an accumulation of negative life events is detrimental to one's mental health. Many of the studies which have demonstrated the effects of life events on physical and mental illness share a conceptual framework which links life events with a condition of stress. The view that life changes generate stress is consistent with the notion of stress being perceived as a condition of imbalance between environmental demands and the capability of individuals to meet those demands. An instrument that has been used widely in social stress research was selected for use in this study.

Social Readjustment Rating Scale

The Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS), developed by Holmes and Rahe (1967), has been used extensively in studies of the effects of life changes. This instrument is based on the theory of social incongruity, a condition which arises when changes demand an adaptation which is either not made or inadequately made. The SRRS consists of a checklist of 43 life events. Each of these events is one "whose advent is either indicative of, or requires a significant change in, the ongoing life pattern of the individual" and as such "evoked, or was associated with, some adaptive or coping behavior" (Holmes and Masuda 1974:46). In responding to the SRRS, subjects are asked to identify the personal events which they have experienced in
the past twelve months. Each subject's score is based on the sum of the weights previously assigned to the events identified. The total score is claimed to represent an index of the amount of change an individual has experienced in the time period fixed. These weights (referred to as life change units) are the mean ratings of the relative degree of readjustment of the event which were obtained from ratings made by large samples of subjects when the instrument was being developed. The authors found a high level of agreement concerning the relative order and the magnitude of the means of items.

Further evidence was provided by the high coefficients of correlation (Pearson's product-moment coefficient) between life events and the onset of illness for discrete groups in the sample. A ratio scale is generated by the SRRS enabling the highest forms of statistical analysis to be conducted on data gathered. Replications of the original study developing the SRRS have confirmed the results obtained. The reliability of the SRRS has been demonstrated using the test-retest method and a correlation of 0.90 was obtained for a two-week period. The validity of the SRRS, particularly its predictive validity, has been demonstrated often. A number of these studies are cited by Johnson and Sarason (1979:170-1). In a variety of adult populations, those people who have experienced a greater number of life events in a designated period of time, usually twelve months, have been shown to be more susceptible to disease or illness than those who have experienced fewer life events. Researchers have also found life stress scores to correlate with
measures of anxiety (Vinokur and Selzer 1975), and with measures of academic performance and work performance. These findings support the view that life stress is related to various dimensions of personal effectiveness. When investigated in a study of adult continuing students, life change was found to be a significant predictor of dropout (Garry 1975).

Initial research focused on selected life changes, while more recent studies have more critically examined the nature of these changes and mediating variables. Recent research on these aspects of social stress is considered in the next section.

**Desirable and undesirable life events**

Vinokur and Selzer and others (e.g., Mueller, Edwards, and Yarvis 1977; Kessler 1979) have argued that it is primarily undesirable events which determined the relationship between life events and psychological impairment. The first-mentioned researchers described the purpose of their study, using a revised version of the Social Readjustment Rating Scale, as "to find out whether stressful life events should be conceptualized in terms of life change per se or in terms of their undesirable quality" (Vinokur and Selzer 1975:330). Drawing on two samples, one of 1059 male drivers above 20 years of age (mean age 31 years) and the other of 285 respondents who included alcoholic drivers undergoing inpatient treatment (mean age 42 years), these researchers found the correlations between undesirable life events and psychological impairment were higher than those based on the total score of all events. Further, they found
that the same correlations based on desirable events alone were relatively small or negligible (ibid:332).

Brown (1974) and Mechanic (1975) have also challenged the logic of combining positive and negative events in one scale. These writers have argued that desirable and undesirable events may have quite different effects on the individual with the latter having the greater, albeit detrimental, consequences. Mirowsky II and Ross (1980:297) argued that incorporating ratings of the undesirability of events which have occurred is important because it involves an evaluation of the consequences of events. They suggested that very often undesirable events represent a transition to circumstances with fewer resources, less support, or lower esteem. Thus accompanying a feeling of failure or loss is the demand of a new social position, which can cause considerable distress. On the other hand, frequency of occurrence of desirable life events has been identified as a significant predictor of an individual's sense of well being.

Sarason, Johnson, and Siegel (1978) conducted a study with 100 undergraduate psychology students who completed the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory; the Life Experiences Survey (LES) which, like the SRRS, measures life changes, yet allows respondents to distinguish between positive and negative changes; and several other instruments. These researchers also used Grade Point Average (GPA) scores for 75 of the students in the study. The negative changes were correlated significantly in a positive direction with both state and trait anxiety, but the score for positive changes was not significantly related to
either measure. Negative change was also significantly correlated with GPA which suggested that undesirable life changes are related to poorer academic performance. Again, there was no significant relationship between desirable changes and GPA. The researchers also considered that positive changes may offset some of the stress brought about by negative experiences, so they subtracted positive from negative scores for each respondent and correlated that with both of the anxiety measures and with GPA. Yet in no case was this derived score more predictive than the score for negative events, a finding that suggested that positive events did not function as a corrective for the deleterious effects of negative events.

One of the difficulties that researchers face when measuring stress is that any given stressor may have major negative consequences for one individual, and negligible, or even positive consequences for another. Further, the same stressor which may have caused a stressful reaction in a subject on a particular occasion may have a weaker or stronger effect on a subsequent occasion. Antonovsky noted that "if anything has been learned in the study of stressful life events, it is that what is important for their consequences is the subjective perception of the meaning of the event rather than its objective character" (1974:246). This view is supported by Cornelius and Averill who, after they had conducted an empirical investigation, affirmed that "if a person believes that he or she has some control over a stressful event, then that person is less likely to be affected adversely" (1980:503).
Kiretz and Moos (1974) pointed out that several factors mediate the impact of stressors, including how recipients view the adjustment required, their perceptions of their control over a stressor, the magnitude of the adjustment required, and its valence. The last-mentioned factor refers to the fact that some events are stressors in that they require an adaptive response, although they are not loss experiences. Conversely, they may be regarded as gain experiences, like beginning a new job, or acquiring a financial windfall. Holmes and Rahe's Scale does not allow for this distinction, hence modifications to it have been suggested by Dohrenwend (1973), Sarason, Johnson, and Siegel (1978), Vinokur and Selzer (1975), and others.

Other studies have identified personal and situational factors which have mediated the relationship between life changes and negative outcomes, illness or task performance. The term "social support" has been used to describe the degree to which individuals have access to social resources, in the form of relationships, on which they can rely, especially in time of need, but at other times as well. These resources might include spouse, family, friends, neighbors, community groups, and social institutions. (Johnson and Sarason 1979:155)

For such a condition to exist it is not sufficient for others to be present. Rather as Cobb (1976) argued, the relationship must be such that the individual believes that he or she is valued, cared for and loved. This view is supported by the research conducted by Myers and his colleagues (1974) in New Haven, to examine the relationship between life events and psychological impairment. The authors concluded that the extent of one's integration within the social system is a critical factor
mediating the impact of life events.

Conceptually and empirically it has been shown that stress can be induced by causes both within and external to the individual. The capacity to respond to a stressor depends on an individual's previous experience of dealing with it, the magnitude of it, and an individual's perceived ability to cope with it. Life changes have been shown as stressors which have been associated with several forms of physical and mental illness as well as with different levels of human performance. More recently researchers have distinguished between events which are perceived as desirable or favourable and those which are undesirable or unfavourable. Such a distinction is consistent with the view that individual perception of an event is a fundamental tenet of a cognitive appraisal perspective on the impact of life changes. Given the evidence that experiencing life changes, particularly those seen as unfavourable, has negative consequences for human performance, it can be reasonably expected that those who have encountered life events perceived as undesirable will perform less efficiently in an adult education program than those experiencing fewer events of this kind. Dropping out or attending spasmodically may be a manifestation of inefficient performance.

Study orientation is another variable which is relevant to an individual's ability to perform efficiently in an educational program. One's attitude toward education and instructors as well as one's study habits and skills affect educational
outcomes. The influence of study orientation is considered next.

**Study Orientation**

In a review of research that had been conducted prior to his study of adult students who had returned to school, Houle (1964:226) stated that low basic academic aptitude was one reason that students withdrew from an educational activity. Houle's study was conducted two months after the beginning of the term. Data were collected from 470 students in six different settings of the 1200 students who were sent mailed questionnaires, a 39 percent response rate. No explanation was given by the investigator for this low response rate. Furthermore, most of those who responded were still actively studying in the program in which they had enrolled. Writing about the respondents, Houle noted that it was "not known to what extent they are typical either of the whole group of adult students or of those who successfully pursue their courses of study" (ibid:228). The major obstacles reported by the respondents as they resumed study related to study skills. Houle noted "The problems of personal adjustment to the learning process were stated in many different ways" (ibid:230). He further observed "The belief that the adult student must learn or re-learn how to learn receives support" (ibid:231) from the evidence that he collected. Because of the nature of these findings an instrument was selected for this study to measure attitudes to education and participants' assessment of their own
study skills at the commencement of the program.

Most studies concerned with relating study habits and attitudes to dropout have been made with reference to higher education students rather than those in adult education. Clarke (1980) used the Brown-Holtzman Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (SSHA) to derive measures of congruence with the college setting among 261 academically-deficient college freshmen ranging from 17 to 65 years of age. He believed that this instrument would measure intra-self congruence because students with a negative appraisal of their own habits face incongruence. The originators of the instrument have shown that a composite score derived from its four scales has a .40 correlation with academic achievement (Brown and Holtzman 1966). Thus, as Clarke (1980:95) indicated, the composite score may reflect the degree of congruence between the individual and the college environment. The validity and reliability of the SSHA and the empirical evidence reported for other studies in which it has been used are considered next.

Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes

The SSHA is a 100 item instrument to which respondents indicate the frequency or extent to which each statement applies to themselves. Five possibilities are offered: rarely (0% to 15%); sometimes (16% to 35%); frequently (36% to 65%); generally (66% to 85%); and almost always (86% to 100%). Questions are designed to measure respondents' study methods, their motivation for studying, and some of their attitudes toward scholastic
activities which are important in an academic setting. Among the statements are: "In preparing reports . . . I make certain that I clearly understand what is wanted before I begin work;" "Difficulty in expressing myself in writing slows me down on reports, themes, examinations, and other work to be turned in;" "I keep all the notes for each subject together, carefully arranging them in some logical order;" and "I feel confused and undecided as to what my educational and vocational goals should be."

Form C of the SSHA, which is that appropriate for adults, has four basic scales, two sub-totals, and a total score. The four basic scales are: Delay Avoidance; Work Methods; Teacher Approval; and Education Acceptance. The first two combine to produce a score for Study Habits, while the latter two form the Study Attitudes score. The overall total yields the Study Orientation score. In completing the instrument respondents are not aware of any sub-scale differentiation as the statements are completed sequentially from 1 to 100.

The SSHA was standardized after collecting data from 3,054 college freshmen. The Manual reports "The correlations between SSHA scores and grade-point averages . . . for . . . 1,118 women in ten colleges varied from . . . .26 to .65" (Brown and Holtzman 1966:8). The Manual also lists subscale intercorrelations and reports weighted averages ranging from .49 to .71 (ibid:11), and suggests that the use of subscales has real value in counselling, which is an intervention which could be considered to help identify and overcome study skill
weaknesses or attitudes of those considering a return to a formal educational institution.

Internal consistency and test-retest reliability data for the four basic scales are reported. The internal consistency measure of the SSHA was computed using the Kuder-Richardson Formula 8. Reliability coefficients ranged from .87 to .89. Test-retest coefficients with a four-week interval ranged from .88 to .93 for the four subscales; while a fourteen-week interval resulted in coefficients ranging from .83 to .88 for college freshmen. The Manual argues that "These two studies indicate that the four subscale scores are sufficiently stable through time to justify their use in predicting future behaviour" (ibid:11).

In a study of the influence of study habits on academic performance, Levine (1976) found significant correlations for both white and black students. Wen and Liu (1976) also found significant correlations for three SSHA scales and course examination scores for females. Other studies have investigated the relationship of the SSHA with GPA. Most support the authors of the instrument who recognize that such correlations are significant although not high. However, it is the authors' claim that the SSHA should improve predictions made from measures of academic ability. Some studies have supported this contention. Similarly, it seems reasonable to assume that the instrument may add to the ability of researchers distinguishing among levels of attendance or differentiating between persisters and dropouts, particularly if the composite score derived from
the SSHA indicates the extent of congruence between an individual and an academic environment.

Conclusion

This chapter, like the previous one, focused on the literature which reviewed research findings and theoretical orientations directly related to the study of attendance behaviour in adult education. Self-esteem is a central construct in the study of personality. Those with high self-esteem see themselves as worthy and capable individuals, and they behave accordingly. As was noted in the previous chapter, self-esteem has been associated with dropout, with those more inclined to withdraw from adult education programs being those having lower rather than higher self-esteem.

Considerable emphasis in social and community psychology has been placed on the effect of stressors on behaviour. Changes in domestic, employment, and other personal circumstances have been shown to be related to physical and mental illness, emotional dysfunction, and effective performance. Research linking life events to dropout was also reported. More recent research on social stress has drawn attention to moderator variables, such as individuals' perception of an event, their previous experience of dealing with it, and the network of social support they can draw on to ameliorate the effect of stressful events.

Anxiety is an important construct in personality functioning. The distinction that has been made between state
and trait anxiety is accepted in this study. Level of state anxiety rises in circumstances where individuals are uncertain, feel threatened, or face the possibility of being judged by others. Re-entering an educational institution after an absence is likely to induce state anxiety which, unless coped with, may contribute to withdrawal. Research conducted to measure the effect of anxiety on participants in adult education has shown it to be associated with withdrawal.

Likewise, there is evidence from other research studies to show that adults with inadequate study skills are more likely to withdraw from programs than those who are relatively competent. Study skills have also been linked to achievement, with a positive relationship being found between study skills and grades. Similarly, the other attribute measured by the SSHA, study attitudes, has also been shown as being positively correlated with achievement. The overall score produced by this instrument, study orientation, has been used as a measure of congruence between individuals and the educational institution they attend.

The next chapter outlines the steps which were taken to measure the constructs explained in the previous two chapters. It describes the procedures by which anxiety, social stress, self-esteem, and study orientation, in addition to other demographic and educational variables were obtained from the sample in this study.
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter the procedures followed to conduct the study are explained. A sample was selected from a population in New Zealand. After this introductory section, the steps which were taken to set up the study are outlined. Subjects in this study were 145 women who had enrolled in the New Start Program at three universities offering this course in the spring term, 1981. Background information about and the reasons for selecting participants in this program are explained in this chapter.

Following a description of the selection of the population and sample, data collection procedures are reported. At three different points of the writer's involvement with the program data were collected. The final section in this chapter provides details of the means of data analysis used in this study.

Setting Up the Study

Following an explanation of the program in which participants in the study had enrolled, steps taken to obtain data are reported.

The New Start Program

The centres for continuing education in New Zealand
universities have traditionally played a major role in the provision of the country's adult education. Within the last five years most of these departments have begun offering courses designed to help adults return to a formal educational setting after they have been absent from it for a number of years. Each department has used the name New Start Program for these study skills and educational re-entry orientation courses. The objectives of the programs at each institution are identical: to provide advice on educational opportunities available for adults; to assist the development of study skills, particularly note-taking in lectures and from books, reading critically, and essay writing; and to create a supportive climate for adults who might be apprehensive about returning to an educational institution.

The courses were conducted weekly for ten weeks. Each session was of two hours' duration. In addition participants were expected to complete assignments which increased in difficulty as the course progressed. Course coordinators believed that increasing the academic pressure in this way helped each participant identify an educational institution at which she would be most likely to cope successfully. Such decisions were often made with the assistance of course coordinators who acted as educational counsellors.

This program was selected for study for several reasons. First, although all centres for continuing education offer a range of spring courses and seminars, the New Start Program has received more attention than most other programs in regard to
the time and effort spent by program planners and course coordinators in each of these university departments. Second, the New Start Program has been somewhat unique in that it has had as a major objective a role transition for participants whereby they are given the skills to switch from a life pattern that does not include any formal study to one that encompasses either full-time or part-time study. Third, in previous years many of the participants have had little or no recent adult education experience yet they have often been attracted to the program prior to enrolling in higher education, even though many have not had the formal entry qualifications to study at this level. Fourth, the New Start Program has been seen by some of the universities as a recruitment device (Davis 1979). Finally, the success rate of the New Start Program has tended to have been judged by the proportion of university courses passed by students who have participated in it compared with students of a similar age who did not take part in the program.

The higher pass rate of the former group has been used to justify the success of the program. Morrison (1979:16) reported that those who had participated in the New Start Program in 1976 passed 91 percent of their papers in the following year. The 1977 participants passed 89 percent of their papers. In comparison, adults who enrolled in university credit courses without having taken part in the New Start Program passed 59 percent of their papers. However, the study by Davis (1979) overlooked the implications of the selection procedures adopted for the New Start Program. Faced with an excess of applicants,
those most likely to succeed in university credit courses were selected. More importantly for this study previous research has not focused on the dynamics of the New Start Program itself, particularly rates of attendance and persistence and dropout which received this investigator's attention.

Although program planners associated with the course had been concerned about participants who had withdrawn from the New Start Program in previous years, they had made no particular effort to quantify the extent to which dropout had occurred. In fact, none of the providing institutions operationalized attendance behaviour in the terms that this investigator has adopted. Some attendance records for the New Start Program held in previous years were available. For 1978, 1979, and 1980, dropout rates (using the definition applied to this study) were 28 percent, 24 percent, and 26 percent respectively. (The rate for the year in which the study was conducted was 21 percent). An administrative factor which may have influenced a participant's decision to withdraw was the granting of a partial refund of the enrolment fee if withdrawal occurred before the third session. A check by the writer on the course records showed that only one person had made application for this refund.

The next section describes the steps which were taken to initiate the study.

Initiating the Study

As noted previously, if the notion of lifelong education is
to become a practical reality then adults must be able to return to an educational institution and factors which contribute to their dropping out must be identified so that persistence can be enhanced.

All three New Zealand universities offering the New Start Program in the spring term, 1981, when this study was undertaken, cooperated in the research project. The heads of each of the other two departments were approached personally by the acting head of the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Waikato who acted on the investigator's behalf. They gave their permission to conduct the study subject to the approval of the course coordinators and the participants. Following detailed verbal and written instructions, course coordinators were contacted by telephone; and the aims and the boundaries of the study were explained by the acting head of the Centre at Waikato. The cooperation of all course coordinators was gained. Subsequently, detailed procedures were sent to each course coordinator outlining the exact steps which had to be followed. Particular emphasis was given to the need for instrumentation to be completed at the first session of the course and for accurate course attendance records to be kept.

At the beginning of the first session course coordinators gave a brief explanation on behalf of the investigator of the purpose of the study that was being conducted and asked the cooperation of participants in completing the packages of instruments which were distributed. A covering letter from the investigator (see appendix A) explained to participants the
reasons for conducting the research and the procedures to be followed.

After the first session of each course the packages of instruments were sent to the investigator. At the end of the course a copy of the course attendance records was made available as requested.

**Population and Sample**

Women who enrolled in the New Start Program offered by the Universities of Auckland, Waikato, and Otago in the period, September-November 1981, comprised the subjects for this study. Table 1 shows the number of women who enrolled at each university, and the number who took part in the study.

**TABLE 1**

ENROLMENTS AND STUDY PARTICIPANTS IN THE NEW START PROGRAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Number of enrolments</th>
<th>Women in study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waikato</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otago</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>159</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The discrepancy in numbers between the population and sample was accounted for, and is shown in table 2.
TABLE 2

FACTORS ACCOUNTING FOR DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN THE POPULATION AND THE SAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for not participating in the study</th>
<th>Auckland</th>
<th>Waikato</th>
<th>Otago</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at first session</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at any session</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient data</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample was limited to those present at the first session of the course.

Data Collection

Three sets of data were collected at three different stages of the study. First, each participant present at the first session of the New Start Program was asked to complete a biographical questionnaire and four standardized self-report instruments. Second, course attendance records were examined at the end of each program to calculate the number of sessions each woman in the study attended. According to the criteria previously explained she was then classified in a rate of attendance category depending on the number of sessions at which she was present. She was also deemed to be a persister or a dropout on the basis of the definition set out in chapter II. The third stage of data collection occurred two to four weeks
after the course had concluded. Interviews were arranged with 55 women, 29 randomly selected according to their rate of attendance category, and 26 whether they persisted or dropped out.

Instrumentation

Biographical information was collected by questionnaire. (See appendix B). In particular, questions were asked to ascertain the following details: the source of publicity which first attracted the woman's attention to the New Start Program; the length of time prior to the commencement of the program that she enrolled; the means of transport used to attend the course; the distance from her home to the location of the course; years of schooling; the highest level of formal education completed; the number of courses or seminars attended in the past three years; the number of courses from which she had previously withdrawn; age; marital status; the number of children cared for; family income; occupation; partner's attitude, if applicable, to the participant's enrolling in the program; the factors or circumstances which she thought might possibly affect her attendance in the program; and achievements that she hoped for as a result of participating in the program.

In order to quantify the responses to the last two questions, two judges, both of whom were experienced practising adult educators, were asked to assist the writer with the establishment of categories of reasons for possible non-attendance. The categories agreed upon are reported in chapter
V. Once agreement had been reached, participants' responses were sorted into the defined categories. The level of inter-judge agreement was set at .90 for this allocation. Once this level of agreement had been attained among the judges' ratings, the responses were coded and later computed.

The responses to the question asking participants what they hoped to achieve as a result of attending the program were scored in a similar way to the previous one. That is, all the responses were listed, the judges (the same two as for the previous question) agreed on the categories for classifying the statements, inter-judge agreement of .93 was reached on assigning statements to categories, and these statements were later coded and computed.

Social stress, or life events which women in the study had experienced in the previous twelve months, was measured using the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS). In this study, several minor changes were made to the original scale to make it more relevant to contemporary conditions. First, changes in some financial limits were made to take into account the rate of inflation which has occurred since 1967 when the SRRS was published, and the prevailing mortgage rates in New Zealand. Second, and of more significance, each participant was asked to rate on a five-point scale the extent to which each event which had occurred was desirable or undesirable. (See appendix C).

In this study in addition to using the weightings of life events as proposed originally by Holmes and Rahe, a revised scoring system was used whereby each event reported as being
"highly undesirable" scored two points, while those rated as
"undesirable" resulted in one point being added to the score.
Events seen as "highly desirable" and "desirable" also scored
two and one points respectively. The events to which a
respondent had a "neutral" attitude were not scored. This
scoring approach was similar to that adopted by Dohrenwend
(1973:170), although she computed a score of undesirability by
assigning each negative event as "plus one" and each gain as
"minus one." In her study each ambiguous event was assigned a
zero score. The measure of undesirability was derived from the
sum of how all the events were assessed. Because previous
research had shown undesirable events to have been more
influential than desirable ones in requiring individuals to make
psychological or social adjustments, a weighted life events
score was also calculated by deducting the score for desirable
events from the score for undesirable occurrences. Hence four
measures were derived from the administration of the original
and the revised SRRS: the score based on the value of the events
which were reported to have occurred using the original version
of the Scale; the weighted score for undesirable life events;
the weighted score for desirable events; and the score derived
from deducting the weighted desirable life events score from the
weighted undesirable life events score.

All of these measures were correlated with each of the sets
of attendance data. That is, scores from the original and the
modified SRRS were correlated with the number of sessions
attended, the rate of attendance categories, and persistence and
dropout.

Self-esteem was measured using the ten-item Self-esteem Scale developed by Rosenberg (1965). No modifications were made to the original instrument. Study habits and attitudes were measured by the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (SSHA) (Brown and Holtzman 1966).

Attendance Set Data

Course records were examined after the conclusion of each program to provide the three sets of attendance data which were defined and explained in chapter II: number of sessions attended; classification into high, medium, or low rate of attendance category according to the number of sessions attended; and designation as a persister or dropout depending on whether or not a participant had attended a session in the latter half of the course.

Women selected for interview were asked to comment on the number of sessions they had attended and their pattern of attendance as a validity check on course records. No discrepancies were found which might have suggested that subjects had been classified in the wrong attendance behaviour category.

Interviews

The interviews were the third step in the data collection process. Following a statement on the purpose of the interviews, steps taken to obtain explanations for participants'
Purpose of the interviews

The major reason for including interviews as a means of data collection was to verify the factors in the conceptual framework which provided the basis for the hypotheses which gave direction to this study. The semi-structured nature of the interviews gave an opportunity for subjects to explain the reasons for their attendance behaviour. Within the framework of the interview subjects were able to discuss and account for their reasons for persisting or dropping out and for attending all or a proportion of the sessions in the course. The interviews were thus organized to supplement and complement the statistical data collection procedures.

Conducting the interviews

For each university the identification numbers (I.D.) of participants were used in making the random selection of individuals to be interviewed. First, I.D.'s were drawn from the persister and dropout groups. Then the remaining I.D.'s were divided into their attendance rate categories and random selection was used once again to draw the numbers of the women to be interviewed. Altogether, 55 interviews were conducted: 24 with women from the program at Auckland, 25 from Waikato, and six from Otago.

For women who had attended the New Start Program offered by the Universities of Auckland and Otago, an eighth of those in
the persister and dropout groups, and an eighth of the total number in each of the three attendance rate categories were selected for interview. Allowing for numbers to be rounded off, about one-quarter of the women in the program at both of these universities were interviewed. At the University of Waikato the proportion interviewed was a quarter of the number in each of the attendance sets: persister and dropout; and high, medium, and low attendance. Hence approximately one-half of the participants were interviewed at the University of Waikato. The higher proportion of interviews conducted at this institution reflected the writer's being based there; the layout and smaller size of the city made access to participants more economical than in the other cities; and most importantly, colleague assistance was obtained to arrange for some interviews to be conducted by the writer at the University, thereby saving the writer time travelling to and from interviews. The distribution of the women interviewed according to university attended and persistence and dropout is shown in table 3.
TABLE 3
SELECTION OF INTERVIEWEES
FROM PERSISTER AND DROPOUT GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Persisters</th>
<th>Dropouts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waikato</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otago</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the 26 interviews drawn from the persister-dropper dichotomy, another 29 were selected from the three rate of attendance categories, making a total of 55 interviews. The attendance set data and the university attended for the latter differentiation are shown in table 4.

TABLE 4
SELECTION OF INTERVIEWEES
FROM EACH RATE OF ATTENDANCE CATEGORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>High attendance</th>
<th>Medium attendance</th>
<th>Low attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waikato</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otago</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the relatively small number of participants
involved in the University of Otago program and its distance from the two northern universities, it was not economically feasible to conduct face-to-face interviews with women who were enrolled in that program. Therefore, the six interviews conducted with women from that institution were carried out by telephone. This method of interviewing was also used with three other participants, two from Auckland and one from Waikato, who had been selected randomly and later had moved to another town after beginning the course.

In preparing the questions that were asked in the interview, the investigator obtained the assistance of two professors, one in adult education and the other in counselling psychology, a doctoral student in adult education who was conducting research on a similar topic, and two adult educators experienced in working with the population selected for this study. A draft of the list of questions was submitted to each of these people for comment and advice. After each had made suggestions on the applicability and phrasing of the questions the list was revised and resubmitted to the panel for final comments before the interviews were conducted.

Interviews varied in length from 25-40 minutes. Forty-three interviews were recorded on audio-cassette tapes. Where participants were reluctant to be recorded in this way, notes were made during the interview and elaborated immediately afterwards. Interviews were conducted at the university, in participants' homes, or in several instances, at their place of employment.
The interviews consisted of two main parts. The first sought an elaboration of responses given in the questionnaire which had been completed at the first session of the course. In addition, the implications and effects of factual information were sought. For example, participants were asked in the questionnaire how many children they cared for. In the interview information was sought on the ages of the children, their attitudes to their mother's returning to an educational setting, the impact of child-care arrangements which might have been made, and the changes in household responsibilities which were necessary to allow the participants to carry out work that was to be done out of class. Another example was the item in the questionnaire seeking information on the factors or circumstances which participants had indicated might have affected their attendance in the program. The women were asked whether any of the factors that they had predicted had, in fact, been an influence on their rate of attendance; what unexpected circumstances had arisen during the course; and conversely, what factors had been important in encouraging their continued attendance, if such a question was applicable.

Confirmation of the scores on the standardized instruments was also sought. Several questions were asked of participants to ascertain whether they saw themselves as being anxious, particularly in comparison with others in the course. Similarly, participants were asked to comment on how they valued themselves as individuals. This question was asked to see the extent to which self-esteem scores, as measured by the Rosenberg
Self-esteem Scale at the first session of the course, matched their oral ratings of themselves.

The second part of the interview explored perceptions and impressions which were not directly connected with the questionnaire. Questions in this section were related to experiences in and during the course, answers to which participants could not have known with certainty at the first session when the questionnaire was completed. For example, participants were asked the extent to which they had been able to influence the objectives or contents of the program, and whether they appreciated or resented being given or not being given (as they perceived their involvement) the opportunity to influence the development of the program. Women were also questioned on whether they had formed friendships with other members of the class, and whether or not such an association or lack of it had affected their attendance. They were also asked whether any friendships had been encouraging or discouraging in terms of their retention in the class. Other questions sought an indication of whether close associations with other course members had helped with clarifying future study options or in undertaking assignments which were set as class exercises.

A further key question asked participants whether they had considered at any time withdrawing from the course (if they had not done so) and what comments or events had encouraged them to keep attending. Conversely, for those women who withdrew, an explanation was sought for their decision and whether their ultimate decision had been preceded by earlier doubts about
continuing. A similar approach was adopted to encourage participants to comment on the reasons for their having attended the number of sessions that they had, and whether they had been tempted to miss sessions which they had eventually attended (if such circumstances were applicable) or if they could have been persuaded to attend more sessions (if their record showed absences for some sessions).

The two adult educators who had acted as judges for the categorization of responses to the two open-ended questions on the demographic questionnaire and who had also reviewed the list of questions asked of subjects in the interviews were asked to randomly select audio-cassette tapes recording these interviews. In listening to these tapes the judges were asked to check that the pertinent questions had been asked as planned. Further, the judges were consulted on their interpretation of the comments made by participants and on the observations made by the investigator on subjects' responses. The judges' views were taken into account when the findings of the interviews were reported.

The interview findings are discussed in chapters VII and IX. In the former chapter circumstances which made for dropout or enhanced persistence are discussed. Attention is also given to the differences between persisters and dropouts. Chapter IX accounts for rate of attendance category membership characteristics and also highlights the apparent differences among participants in each of the three attendance rate categories. Unique characteristics of the individual programs
are commented on where appropriate.

**Data Analysis**

Two statistical packages were used to analyze the data gathered at the first two stages of the collection process, that is, at the first session of the course and from attendance records after its conclusion. The *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) (1980) was used to compute the frequencies for each of the variables which are set out in appendix D. It was also used to calculate the bivariate relationships which are explained in chapters VI and VIII. The multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was computed using a program adapted from Cooley and Lohnes (1962).

Listed below are the variables and a description of their respective levels.

1. Source of first publicity had seven categories.
2. The number of days from enrolment to course commencement was treated as a continuous variable.
3. The means of transport used to travel to the course had five categories.
4. Distance travelled to the course was a continuous variable.
5. Level of formal education was divided into nine categories.
6. Years of schooling was a continuous variable.
7. The number of adult education courses or seminars attended in the previous three years was a continuous variable.
8. The number of courses from which previous withdrawal had occurred was treated as a continuous variable.

9. Age of participants was a continuous variable.

10. Marital status had five categories.

11. The number of children cared for was treated as a continuous variable.

12. Family income consisted of six income level options.

13. Occupation had eight categories.

14. Partner attitude, for those to whom the question was applicable, had five categories (as is shown in table 37).

15. Factors likely to affect attendance and achievements that were hoped for were categorized and the frequency of mentions calculated. Both of these questions were open-ended. The ways in which they were processed were described earlier in this chapter.

16. All the scores from the standardized instruments, that is, state anxiety, trait anxiety, total anxiety, life change units, undesirable and desirable, as well as the sum of the life changes, self-esteem, delay avoidance, work methods, study habits, teacher approval, education acceptance, study attitudes, and study orientation were treated as continuous variables.

17. The number of sessions attended was regarded as a continuous variable.

18. There were three rate of attendance categories: high, medium, and low.

19. Finally, the women in the study were divided into a persister or dropout category in accordance with the definition
adopted for this study.

When the correlational analyses were being computed and related to the last two variables listed, rate of attendance category, and persistence and dropout, continuous variables were collapsed into categories and chi square was used as the statistical test to indicate whether or not there was a significant relationship between the two variables.

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses formulated for this study. This statistical technique was chosen for several reasons. First, the study had five criterion variables. Second, the comments of Tinto (1975), who conducted attrition research in higher education, were noted. He argued that since multiple regression analyses fail to deal with interaction effects between dependent variables, multivariate analyses are often more appropriate. For both research hypotheses there were five criterion variables: years of formal education, state anxiety, score for undesirable life changes, self-esteem, and study orientation. For the first research hypothesis two groups, persisters and dropouts, were compared. Three levels of attendance were used to test the second hypothesis.

Summary

Of the 159 women who enrolled for the ten-week course which required two contact hours per week for ten weeks and out-of-class assignments, 145 took part in the study. Data were collected from them at three distinct periods. A questionnaire
which sought biographical information and four self-report instruments were administered at the first session of the course. The second phase of the data collection process involved calculating the attendance record for each participant. On the basis of the number of sessions attended, each woman was assigned to a rate of attendance category: high, medium, or low. A further distinction was made between those classified as persisters and dropouts. The third phase involved 55 participants who were randomly selected for interview. The interviews were designed to ascertain whether there were factors other than those which were hypothesized which may have accounted for attendance category membership and persistence or dropout.

Two statistical programs, SPSS (which is on file in the library of programs at the Computing Centre of the University of British Columbia) and Cooley and Lohnes (1962) were used to analyze the statistical data. The former was used for bivariate relationships and the latter for multivariate analyses. The results of these procedures as well as the findings from the interviews are reported in the next six chapters.
CHAPTER V

CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTENDANCE BEHAVIOUR OF THE SAMPLE

Introduction

In this chapter the demographic and psycho-social characteristics of the sample as well as participants' attitudes to education are described. Women in the study completed a questionnaire to provide demographic data, to suggest factors that they thought might affect their attendance, and to indicate the goals they hoped to attain. Other characteristics were measured using standardized instruments. Attendance set data are also reported.

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the sample are described briefly. More detailed information, including the anticipated relationship of these characteristics to attendance behaviour, is presented in appendix D.

Women in the sample ranged from 20 to 66 years of age. Fifty-seven percent of them were married, twenty-five percent single, thirteen percent separated and five percent divorced. Forty-two percent had no child-caring responsibilities, either because they were childless or their children were old enough to have left home. Somewhat surprisingly, 26 percent of participants had gained sufficient educational qualifications to enable them to enrol directly into a New Zealand university
without taking part in a re-entry program. Women's years of schooling ranged from six to fifteen years, with a mean of 11.9 years.

Eleven percent reported a family income of less than $5,000 and 20 percent of $20,000 or more; the other 69 percent of the sample were evenly divided among the intervening $5,000 categories. Fifty-six percent reported being engaged in paid employment; most of the remainder were housewives. Thirty-three percent reported that they had not attended any adult education courses or seminars in the previous three years, while eight percent had been to eight or more programs. The mean number courses attended was 2.1. Seventy-nine percent indicated no previous withdrawal from courses, while the remainder had withdrawn from some programs.

Human contact sources accounted for 60 percent of the sources of first publicity, while the remainder noted public advertising as their first source of information about the New Start Program. While some women enrolled immediately before the course began, others had done so three months prior to its commencement. The mean number for the time between enrolment and course commencement was 29.8 days. Only four percent of participants felt that their partner was opposed to their enrolling in the program. Most reported travelling to the course alone; nineteen percent travelled by private car with another course member. The mean distance travelled was 14.1 km., while the range was from less than one kilometre to 63 kilometres.
Before psycho-social characteristics are described, factors considered likely to affect attendance and hoped for achievements are reported.

Factors likely to affect attendance

Participants were asked an open-ended question which required them to state the factors or circumstances which they thought were likely to affect their attendance. The way in which responses to this question were processed by the writer and two judges was explained in chapter IV. The judges reviewed all the factors listed and agreed upon four general categories. The first was for participants who stated "Nothing" or "I cannot foresee any reason for my not attending all sessions." This category was distinct from a "No response." Second, there were those factors which directly related to the individual herself, such as illness, transport difficulties, tiredness, or financial concerns. Third, there were factors which were deemed to involve others as well as the participant. Illness of other family members; having to meet other commitments, such as in a community or service organization; or employment-related demands, were all examples of this category. Finally, course-related reasons were seen as possibly affecting attendance as in the case of the course not meeting the participant's expectations or the level of work exceeding the individual's capacity to cope with it. A participant's reasons were then allocated to these categories. The factors seen as likely to affect attendance are set out in table 5, for which each
participant could have up to two factors listed.

**TABLE 5**

**FACTORS THOUGHT LIKELY TO AFFECT ATTENDANCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Frequency of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal: illness</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transport difficulties</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiredness</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial difficulties</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitments to other people:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illness of others</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other responsibilities</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employment commitments</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course-related factors</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty-five women (25 percent of those who responded to the question) indicated that they could not foresee any circumstance affecting their attendance in the program. Clearly, there was a core group of participants who were determined to attend most, if not all, sessions in the course. The factor thought most likely to affect attendance, personal illness, was problematic and could not have been counted on. Women's multiple life roles are reflected in the frequency with which their other responsibilities were seen as possibly affecting attendance. By comparison with most other items, course-related factors were not expected to be a major factor limiting attendance.

**Hoped for achievement**

The final question in the first section of the
A questionnaire completed at the opening session of the New Start Program asked participants to state briefly what they hoped to achieve as a result of participating in the program. This question, like the previous one, was open-ended. It was also scored in a similar way, as was explained in chapter IV. The outcome is shown in table 6.

**TABLE 6**

**PARTICIPANTS' ANTICIPATED ACHIEVEMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater awareness of educational opportunities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test self-capabilities</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess workload</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquire study skills</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare for change in vocation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social; meet people</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorientation in life pattern</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The category, 'Greater awareness of educational opportunities', covered the responses of a general exploratory nature in which participants expressed the hope that they would learn what avenues were open to women with their background. 'Assess workload' reflected knowledge of opportunities but uncertainty about whether it would be possible to combine the demands of study with current or expected commitments in domestic or paid employment. 'Test self-capabilities' included references by women wondering whether they had the ability to tackle course requirements in a tertiary educational
institution. In this category women had doubts in regard to what might be considered their technical abilities, whereas in the previous category the doubt tended to be expressed in terms of time management and organizational capacity. 'Acquire study skills' implied the development of skills expected to be important in post-secondary education, note-taking, effective reading, and essay writing.

'Personal development' referred to such statements as "to improve my confidence," "to improve my self-esteem," or "to broaden my horizons." 'Prepare for a change in vocation' included those who were in full-time employment and were seeking a change in occupation as well as women who described themselves as housewives and were planning to re-enter the labour force. A broader change in lifestyle was envisaged by those in the 'Reorientation in life pattern' category, many of whom appeared to be attracted by the title of the course, "New Start Program," and accordingly made reference to broad social goals, often by citing marital separation and the desire to be self-supporting.

The social aspect of adult education, which is a feature of most participation typologies or motivational orientations, was recognized with its own category.

The most frequently mentioned responses, as table 6 shows, were categorized under the heading 'Assess workload.' The women in the study were keen to judge whether they could manage to combine their expected responsibilities with the demands of study. Many also wanted to take advantage of being exposed to a variety of subjects, topics, and content as well as study
skills, as is reflected in the response to the category, 'Personal Development.' Responses indicating a desire to acquire study skills and to find out whether academic study was feasible received an almost identical number of mentions. They were followed in order by references to seeking new directions in life, meeting other people, preparing for a change in occupation, and exploring educational opportunities.

The achievement that subjects predominantly hoped for was an opportunity to assess whether they would be able to combine academic study and their other commitments. Hence it can be concluded that at the outset of the course more women were concerned about managing their time than with their technical ability, as represented by their wish to acquire study skills.

Psycho-social Characteristics

Three psycho-social characteristics of participants were selected for measurement in this study after the relevant theoretical and empirical literature had been reviewed. A description of the participants' anxiety levels is followed by their reported life events and self-esteem scores.

State anxiety

The first of the standardized psychological instruments to be completed by participants was the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. As was explained in chapter III, state anxiety measures how respondents "feel right now." Applied to women in this study, the instrument was used to measure how they felt in
an adult education course, a setting that many (33 percent) had not experienced in the preceding three years. The state scale, like its trait counterpart, yields a minimum score of 20 and a maximum of 80. The higher the anxiety score recorded, the higher a participant's anxiety level.

In the sample (N = 144) state anxiety scores extended from 23 to 66, a range of 43. Table 7 groups the state and trait anxiety scores into divisions, each of which includes five scores.

### TABLE 7
STATE AND TRAIT ANXIETY SCORES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score range</th>
<th>State Anxiety</th>
<th></th>
<th>Trait Anxiety</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

State anxiety: Mean 37.4 S.D. 8.6 Median 35.3 Mode 35.0
Trait anxiety: Mean 41.1 S.D. 8.3 Median 40.5 Mode 38.0

Almost half (49 percent) of participants scored between 30 and 39 on the state scale. There are no published norms available for this instrument in New Zealand. Yet the STAI
Manual (1970:8) reports a mean of 39.39 (S.D. = 8.62) on this scale for female freshmen (N = 648) and a mean of 35.12 (S.D. = 9.25) for female college undergraduates (N = 231). The mean score for the sample in this study is midway between the two means reported in the Manual. Therefore, even though the sample was involved in a different educational setting from the normative population reported in the STAI Manual, its level of state anxiety was similar.

More importantly, it was anticipated that those who recorded high state anxiety scores would attend less frequently than women who were less apprehensive in an adult education setting.

**Trait anxiety**

Whereas the previous anxiety score refers to a particular time, the trait anxiety measure asks participants to report on how they "generally feel."

In the sample trait anxiety scores (N = 144) varied from 22, two above the minimum possible, to 68, a range of 46, 3 more than on the state scale. Table 7 reports the scores recorded on this scale.

On the trait scale half of the respondents scored between 35 and 44. A recent study by Wheeler on a stress management program within industry in New Zealand used the trait scale on the STAI as a dependent variable. He reported a pre-course mean of 42.82, with a standard deviation of 10.71 for the 28 men and women in the program (1981:9). The Manual for the STAI (1970:8)
reports a mean of 38.22 (S.D. = 8.20) on this scale for female freshmen (N = 644) and a mean of 38.25 (S.D. = 9.14) for female college undergraduates (N = 231). The mean score for the sample in this study is exactly halfway between the mean of the New Zealand group in Wheeler's study and mean scores of the normative post-secondary school groups reported in the STAI Manual. Therefore, although the mean trait anxiety score of the sample was higher than that reported for North American-based populations, it was less than that recorded by another New Zealand sample, although participants in Wheeler's study may have been attracted to the program he described because of their anxiety levels.

**Total anxiety**

Total anxiety scores were calculated by combining the two previous measures. The minimum possible score is 40 and the maximum 160.

Respondents' scores (N = 144) in this study varied from 47 to 134, a range of 87. Table 8 shows the distribution of scores when both scales are combined.
TABLE 8
TOTAL ANXIETY SCORES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score range</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-109</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110-119</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 120</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 78.4 S.D. 15.1 Median 75.3 Mode 73.0

On the individual scales half of the subjects' scores were within a range of ten. The same pattern applies on the combined scale, although the range is twenty. Total anxiety scores for half of the women in the study were between 69 and 89. The quartile scoring lower than 69 were more compressed in their range of scores than those above 89. The spread of scores for the uppermost quartile points to there having been some highly anxious women in the sample.

In view of previous research which showed that such people were significantly more prone to drop out than less anxious individuals, the continued attendance of the former group in this study appeared doubtful. One way of coping with their anxiety would have been to withdraw from the program unless they were able to draw on coping strategies.

Social stress, as measured by four different life events
scores, is considered next.

Life events

Several instructions were given to participants to yield different information from a modified version of the Social Readjustment Rating Scale developed by Holmes and Rahe (1967). First, participants were asked to indicate from the list provided, those life events which they had experienced in the preceding twelve months. Those events were then scored using the values assigned by Holmes and Rahe.

In this study (N = 142), the minimum score was 27 and the maximum 654, a range of 627. Table 9 summarizes and groups the life events scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score range</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-150</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151-200</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-250</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251-300</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301-350</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>351-400</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401-450</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>451-500</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-550</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>551-600</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 600</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>145</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 243.4  S.D. 131.8  Median 231.8  Mode 264.0
Table 9 shows a considerable range in the life change units, that is, the "value" of the events experienced in the previous twelve months, for women in the study. The distribution pattern shows scores on this instrument are spread over a much greater range for those above the mean than below it, indicating that some women in the study had experienced many changes in their lives in the previous twelve months.

Reference was made in chapter I to the difficulties people face dealing with life changes as well as the transition of returning to an educational setting. In view of the numerous changes some participants in the study appear to have experienced in the previous twelve months, it could have been expected that further strains placed on them by the demands of an adult education course would have affected their attendance. However, this supposition was modified, as the next four paragraphs report, when the individuals' assessment of these changes was considered.

Participants were asked to rate each of the events which they had experienced according to their attitude to that event. Possible options were: Highly Undesirable; Undesirable; Neutral; Desirable; or Highly Desirable. Two points were assigned to those events at either extreme of the continuum, that is, those deemed to be "Highly Undesirable" or "Highly Desirable." Those assessed as "Undesirable" or "Desirable" scored one point. Events considered "Neutral" were not scored.

The weighted undesirable life events scores ranged from 0 to 17. The range for weighted desirable life events was from 0
to 35. Table 10 shows the distribution of scores for weighted undesirable and desirable life events.

**TABLE 10**

**DESIRABLE AND UNDESIRABLE LIFE EVENTS SCORES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score range</th>
<th>Undesirable events</th>
<th>Desirable events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Undesirable events: Mean 4.1 S.D. 3.7 Median 3.4 Mode 4.0
Desirable events: Mean 7.0 S.D. 5.1 Median 6.3 Mode 2.0

The women in this study considered that more desirable than undesirable events had occurred to them in the previous year. Table 10 clearly shows these differences. Hence, it could be concluded that these women saw the events on the SRRS which they had experienced as tending to be positive or beneficial for them. Viewed in this light, the impact of the changes experienced was likely to have been less deleterious than if they had been viewed negatively.
The final calculation on the life events questionnaire took heed of previous research which had suggested that undesirable rather than desirable events had a greater impact on the individual and consequently called for more difficult adjustments to be made. For this reason scores for desirable changes were subtracted from those for undesirable changes to yield a net life change weighted score. These scores ranged from -30 to 13. Table 11 shows the distribution of net life change weighted scores.

### Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score range</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than -15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-11 to -15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-6 to -10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean -2.7  S.D. 6.1  Median -2.0  Mode -2.0

Table 11 shows that more women in the study had experienced
changes they viewed positively than those whose overall changes were assessed negatively. In fact, a minus value was recorded by 70 percent of the subjects. Thus for most women in the study changes in the previous twelve months had been regarded positively.

Accordingly, for the majority of the sample returning to an educational setting with the opportunity for further positive outcomes may have been viewed in the same light as their recent life experiences. Rather than life changes contributing to performance deficiency as some research has suggested, changes viewed favourably may be associated with effective performance. In this study such performance would have been reflected in persistence and high attendance category membership. For those women who had experienced predominantly negative changes, dropout was more likely than for those whose net life change weighted scores were positive. This eventuality would have been consistent with previous life change research.

The final psycho-social measure was self-esteem scores which are reported next.

**Self-esteem**

Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale was used to measure this psychological trait. The Scale has a minimum score of 10 and a maximum of 40. Higher self-esteem is attributed to those who score at the upper levels of the Scale.

In this study scores varied from 16, recorded by three women, to 40, scored by one woman who could be considered as
having very high self-esteem. Table 12 shows how self-esteem scores were distributed.

**TABLE 12**

**SELF-ESTEEM SCORES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score range</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 29.4  S.D. 4.6  Median 29.8  Mode 28.0

In the absence of published New Zealand norms for this instrument, mean scores in other studies have to be used to make comparisons. In his study, Harper (1980:3) referred to six studies, including his own, in which the mean scores for the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale ranged from 26.1 to 32.7. Most of these samples were college students. Although the mean score for this sample is precisely at the mid-point in the range of the means referred to in Harper's summary, any conclusions drawn must be treated with considerable caution because of the differences in age, sex composition, educational background, and nationality of the New Zealand sample. So, it appears that while there was a wide range in the level of self-esteem for women in this study, the mean score for the sample was comparable with other research populations. As low self-esteem
had been shown previously as being related to dropout, then a similar finding might have been expected for this sample. On the other hand, those who viewed themselves as having high self-worth were thought likely to have attended all or most sessions in the program.

The final standardized instrument administered at the first session measured participants' attitudes to education and teachers as well as their assessment of their study habits and attitudes. Scores for these variables are reported and commented on in the next section.

Study orientation

The Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes, as was explained in chapter III, consists of four primary scales, the first (Delay Avoidance) and second (Work Methods) may be combined to yield a fifth score (Study Habits); while the third (Teacher Approval) and fourth (Education Acceptance) produce a sixth score (Study Attitudes). The seventh gives the total, or Study Orientation, score.

For the SSHA, 118 usable forms were returned. Seven women who did not complete this questionnaire explained to course coordinators, and later to the writer, that they considered the instrument to be inappropriate because of the length of time since they had been in an educational institution or because they found too many questions to be unrelated to their experience. Several participants felt that the results from this instrument may in some way affect their application to
enrol as a student in degree-credit courses in the university and, therefore, declined to complete it. The wishes of all participants who had objections to the instrument were honoured in keeping with the covering letter of explanation giving details of the research project, its rationale, and safeguards for participants.

Subsequently an analysis was conducted to see whether those who completed the SSHA were different from those who had not done so on other items for which there was commonality. No statistically significant differences were found. It was noted that non-completers had lower formal educational qualifications than completers. Family income was also lower. Despite the explanations made by those who did not complete the instrument, there were no significant differences in the age or the years of schooling between them and those who completed the SSHA.

The maximum score on each of the primary scales is 50, and the minimum 0. The distribution of scores on these four scales is shown in table 13. Scores for Delay Avoidance (promptness in completing academic assignments, lack of procrastination, and freedom from wasteful delay and distraction) varied from 5 to 44, a range of 39. Scores on Work Methods (use of effective study procedures, efficiency in doing academic assignments, and how-to-study skills) extended from 8 to 40, a range of 32.

For the Study Habits scale, which combines the results of the previous two scales to give a measure of academic behaviour, the maximum total is 100. Scores from respondents varied from 16 to 81, a range of 65. The importance of these scores is
discussed after scores for the four primary scales are presented in table 13.

The Teacher Approval scale, the third of the primary scales, is designed to measure respondents' opinions of teachers and their classroom behaviour and methods. The minimum score on this scale was 11, and the maximum 43, a range of 32. On the Education Acceptance scale, the lowest score was 9 and the highest 40, a range of 31. This scale is designed to measure approval of educational objectives, practices, and requirements.

When the Teacher Approval and Education Acceptance scores are combined they yield the Study Attitudes score, a measure of beliefs about and attitudes toward study. The maximum total on this scale is 100. For the women who completed the SSHA, scores varied from 21 to 82, a range of 61. An interpretation of the relevance of these data is considered after scores on the primary scales are presented in table 13.
### TABLE 13
SCORES ON THE PRIMARY SCALES OF THE SSHA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score range</th>
<th>D.A. Number</th>
<th>D.A. %</th>
<th>W.M. Number</th>
<th>W.M. %</th>
<th>T.A. Number</th>
<th>T.A. %</th>
<th>E.A. Number</th>
<th>E.A. %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D.A. Delay Avoidance  
W.M. Work Methods  
T.A. Teacher Approval  
E.A. Education Acceptance

D.A. Mean 24.7 S.D. 7.4 Median 25.9 Mode 28.0  
W.M. Mean 25.0 S.D. 6.4 Median 25.6 Mode 28.0  
T.A. Mean 32.1 S.D. 6.2 Median 32.8 Mode 35.0  
E.A. Mean 29.2 S.D. 6.1 Median 29.8 Mode 35.0

The results in table 13 illustrate participants' scores combined into groups with a range of five on each of the scales of the SSHA. Scores are highest on the Teacher Approval scale, followed by Education Acceptance, both of which produced higher scores than either of the two Study Habits scales.

As the SSHA is a self-report instrument, participants assess their own study abilities, skills, and application, as well as their attitude toward authority figures in formal educational settings, teachers, and the value placed on education. The results for participants in this study can be
interpreted to suggest that the women were acknowledging, in effect, that it had been some time since they had taken part in any form of academic study. Hence, on their own admission, their scores on the first two scales were lower than on the second two. Nevertheless, the women who responded had a positive attitude toward teachers and to the value of education. By taking into account results on other instruments, for example, hoped for achievements, it seems reasonable to conclude that women in the study saw education as a means for personal growth and greater job opportunities, and they perceived the New Start Program as important to them in promoting these goals.

Given the emphasis in the New Start Program on the development of study skills and the evidence from studies referred to in chapter II which showed the difficulties which adults returning to school encountered with this aspect of re-entry, it was expected that women with deficient study skills would have most difficulty coping with the demands of the program in which they had enrolled. Hence it was expected scores on the Work Methods scale, in particular, would point to those who would experience difficulty with the academic requirements of the program. As evidenced earlier, some low scores were recorded for this scale. One way of coping with the level of difficulty imposed by the demands of the course would have been to withdraw. On the other hand, women whose study skills were adequate were expected to cope with the assignments set as part of the course requirements.

While the first two primary scales on the SSHA measured
participants' assessment of their study skills, scores on the other two scales reflected their attitude to education. It was anticipated that women with the most positive attitudes, as reflected by high scores on these scales, would be more inclined to persist than women whose attitudes to teachers and the value of education were less favourable. Remaining in the program and attending most or all sessions would be consistent with high scores on these scales. Therefore, given the wide range in the scores on these scales, as was reported earlier, it was expected that persisters and dropouts would be differentiated on the basis of these scores.

When the scores on the four primary scales are added together they yield the total score forming the Study Orientation scale, a measure of study habits and attitudes, with a maximum of 200. In this study scores varied from 58 to 162, a range of 104. Table 14 shows the distribution of scores on this scale.
TABLE 14
SCORES ON THE SSHA STUDY ORIENTATION SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score range</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60- 79</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80- 99</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-119</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-139</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140-159</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 159</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 111.1  S.D. 21.1  Median 111.7  Mode 108.0

The scores on the Study Orientation scale show a wide range, highlighting considerable variation in the self-assessed abilities and attitudes toward study of the participants in the New Start Program.

There are no published norms for the SSHA for New Zealand populations. To provide some comparability for the scores for subjects in this study, the mean scores and standard deviations for the four primary scales and the Study Orientation score of the SSHA were compared with other published data. The results are shown in table 15.
TABLE 15
COMPARATIVE MEAN SCORES ON SSHA SCALES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3058</td>
<td>Delay Avoidance</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work Methods</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher Approval</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Education Acceptance</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Study Orientation</td>
<td>114.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.P. Not Published

The sample for the SSHA Manual was 3054 male and female freshmen drawn from nine United States colleges. Clarke's study included a sub-population of 73 men and women 23 years of age and older who were re-entry students at an eastern university in the United States. This study consisted of women only. Therefore, the samples are not identically matched in terms of age, sex, or educational background.

Nevertheless, there are common patterns in the SSHA scores. For example, the mean scores on the first two scales are lower than on the second. The scores for this study more closely resemble those reported in the Manual than do Clarke's. For example, mean scores are lowest on the Delay Avoidance scale and highest for Teacher Approval. The spread, as represented by the standard deviation, was greatest on the first-mentioned scale in both studies. Therefore, it seems that the distribution of SSHA
scores for women in this study was typical of other research findings. In view of the comparability of scores on the SSHA between this sample and other populations, it seems justifiable to have expected similar results. For example, those with low Study Orientation scores would feel incongruent in an educational setting because of their self-assessed poor attitude to education and their limited study skills. In these circumstances it is likely that dropout would ensue. On the other hand, those whose scores on this scale were high were thought likely to be classified in the high rate of attendance category because their attitudes and abilities were consistent with the qualities which made for successful course completion.

The results reported so far in this chapter were obtained from standardized instruments administered at the first session of the course. The attendance set data, which are reported next, were obtained from course registers after each program had concluded.

**Attendance Set Data**

Course registers were examined to provide three sets of information. The first simply consisted of the number of sessions which participants attended. The second grouped women into three rate of attendance categories depending on the number of sessions that they attended. The third distinguished between persisters and dropouts according to the definition adopted for this study, that is, a dropout was considered to be a woman who failed to attend even a single session in the latter half of the
course after having attended the first session.

Sessions attended

There were ten sessions in each of the New Start Programs studied. Table 16 shows the number of sessions attended by the participants in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sessions attended</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sessions attended: Mean 7.2  S.D. 2.9  Median 7.9  Mode 10.0

From table 16 it is evident that most sessions were well attended and that one-third of participants were in attendance at all sessions. There was no evidence of an early withdrawal of as many as 30 percent of enrollees as has been reported in other studies.

It was noted earlier that the three universities made a partial refund of enrolment fees if withdrawal occurred up to
the third session of the course. However, this administrative regulation cannot be held accountable for the number of women who attended three sessions in the course because a check of course records showed that for only three women was this number of sessions attended consecutively. Further, only one application was made for a refund of fees.

Attendance rate categories

The justification for forming three attendance rate categories to allow for continued but irregular, frequent and regular, as well as terminated attendance was explained in chapter II. Three attendance rate categories were formed: low for those women who attended from 10 to 30 percent of the sessions; medium for women attending 40 to 70 percent of sessions; and high for those attending 80 percent or more sessions. The results are shown in table 17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low (10-30%)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (40-70%)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (80-100%)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the high attendance category to contain more than half (N = 83, that is, 57 percent) of women in the study shows that
for many of them attendance was frequent and regular. A further quarter continued to attend although they were absent from more than three sessions. The low rate of attendance category contained the fewest number of participants. When the attendance records of these women were examined in the course registers it was apparent that their attendance terminated early in the course rather than continuing spasmodically throughout it. Only one woman in the low attendance category attended a session in the second half of the program and was, therefore, classified as a persister. All other women in the low attendance categories were dropouts. Overlap between membership of the two attendance sets, including details of persisters and dropouts are discussed in the next section.

Persistence and dropout

Applying the definition of dropout adopted in this study, there were 30 in this category, 21 percent of the sample. Persisters numbered 115.

There was considerable overlap in membership of the dropout and low attendance categories, with 30 in the former group and 27 in the latter. When course registers were examined, it was noted that four women did not attend even one session in the second half of the course after having attended four sessions in the first half. Therefore, these women were classified as dropouts and as being in the medium attendance category. One other exception to the general pattern was one woman who attended three sessions and was, therefore, placed in the low
attendance category, but she attended at least one session in each half of the course and was, therefore, classified as a persister. There was also considerable overlap between those women in the high and medium attendance categories and those defined as persisters. The five exceptions to this pattern have been noted and their attendance records explained. The implications of the attendance behaviour distinctions made in this study are considered after table 18 is presented.

The dual and overlapping membership of the attendance rate and the persistence and dropout categories are shown in table 18.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance rate category</th>
<th>Persisters</th>
<th>Dropouts</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data presented in table 18 suggest there may have been little practical value in making a distinction between dropouts and those in the low attendance category in this study because of the considerable overlap in membership of the groups. Clearly, most dropouts attended only a few sessions in the course, whereas the definition employed in this study allowed
them to attend up to five sessions. Distinguishing between persisters in the medium and high rate of attendance categories appeared justified numerically, and later when participants were asked to account for their attendance behaviour. Chapter IX reports on this distinction.

Summary

Given the findings of previous research which provided the rationale for the questions asked in this study's demographic questionnaire, it was expected that women whose remaining in the program was less likely were those who were youngest, single, had limited educational qualifications and little or no recent adult education experience, were from low socio-economic groups (as measured by income and occupational criteria), had previously withdrawn from courses, travelled farthest to the course, and lacked partner support in enrolling and participating. Persisters and those in the high rate of attendance category were expected to be those women whose characteristics and background were the reverse of those just listed.

Two open-ended questions concluded the questionnaire. The first related to factors that were likely to affect attendance. The most commonly mentioned factor was personal illness. The multiple life roles played by women was reflected in the numbers who indicated commitments to others might affect their attendance. Finally, achievements that were hoped for most commonly included assessment of the workload involved in coping
Statistics presented in this chapter for the psycho-social variables and study attitudes and habits were obtained at the first session of the course using standardized self-report instruments. No New Zealand norms have been published for scores on the instruments used to measure state and trait anxiety, life events, self-esteem, and study orientation, therefore, comparisons with other published results for these characteristics were made.

Two trends emerged when the data were analyzed. First, there was a considerable range in the scores on each of the standardized instruments. Hence there was much variation in the psycho-social characteristics of participants in the study. Second, the distribution of scores for each of the measures used was comparable with other published studies. Therefore, similar findings may have been expected.

Women who were highly anxious were thought more likely to withdraw than those whose anxiety levels were low at the first session. Unfamiliarity with participating in an adult education program was predicted to be reflected in high anxiety scores. Dropouts were expected to be those with these anxiety levels. Persisters, on the other hand, were thought unlikely to exhibit these characteristics.

Before the data were collected it was expected women in this study who had experienced many life changes in the past twelve months would be more likely to withdraw than those who had experienced few changes. Further, it was anticipated that
most changes would have been viewed negatively and these changes would adversely affect attendance behaviour. Although many women had undergone significant changes in their lives in the previous year, 70 percent of them assessed these changes positively. Hence it was suggested that the majority of participants were undergoing a period of development in their lives and continuing to attend the New Start Program was consistent with their recent experiences. For the minority who had experienced many changes, particularly those they viewed negatively, their persisting was considered to be in doubt.

Persisters were expected to be women with high self-esteem. This expectation was based on previous attendance behaviour research and other studies which linked functional behaviour and high self-esteem. Conversely, dropouts were anticipated as being women with low self-esteem.

In a re-entry program like the one selected in this study academic skills and study habits are emphasized. Attitudes to education and instructors are also important. The SSHA was selected to assess participants' characteristics on these attributes because it was felt that those who had low scores on these measures would be most likely to drop out. Such scores could be interpreted as indicators of incongruence between these participants and the educational setting in which they had enrolled. On the other hand, those with high scores seemed likely to persist because remaining in the program would have been consistent with their skills and attitudes.

At the end of the program three sets of attendance data
were calculated: number of sessions attended, rate of attendance category, and persistence and dropout. Those who dropped out tended to do so early in the program. Therefore, there was considerable overlap between membership in the dropout and low rate of attendance categories, suggesting that unless correlational data pointed to important differences there was limited benefit in having made that distinction. For participants who persisted there were sufficient numbers in each of the medium and high rate of attendance categories to warrant having formed separate groups.

The relationships between the variables for which data were collected at the first session of the course and attendance set data, obtained from course records after the conclusion of each course, are considered in the following chapters. The next chapter focuses on persisters and dropouts, while chapter VIII examines rate of attendance category membership.
CHAPTER VI

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS
AND PERSISTENCE AND DROPOUT

Introduction

In this chapter the results and findings of the study as they apply to the correlational statistics between participant characteristics and persistence and dropout are discussed. Bivariate relationships between demographic, educational, and psycho-social variables and persistence and dropout were calculated using the chi square statistic. An alpha level of significance of .05 was set for statistical analyses in this dissertation. Probability levels are reported for each relationship.

Results

Table 19 summarizes the relationships between each of the 29 variables and persistence and dropout. Comments on each relationship are made in the order in which the variables are listed in the table.
### TABLE 19

SUMMARY OF THE BIVARIATE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EACH OF THE VARIABLES USED IN THIS STUDY AND PERSISTENCE AND DROPOUT USING THE CHI SQUARE STATISTIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sample number</th>
<th>Chi square</th>
<th>D.f.</th>
<th>Level of probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children cared for</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational qualifications</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of schooling</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>8.39</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous course attendance</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous withdrawal</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity source</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment-course start</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner's attitude</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means of transport</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to course</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>6.47</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State anxiety</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait anxiety</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total anxiety</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life change units</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesirable life events</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desirable life events</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net life change scores</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delay Avoidance</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Methods</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Habits</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Approval</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>16.10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.007**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Acceptance</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>9.97</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Attitudes</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Orientation</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D.f. = Degrees of freedom

** = Highly significant

### Age

To correlate age with persistence and dropout, age categories were formed by collapsing the ages of the participants into decades (see table 25). As table 19 shows,
age was not significantly associated with persistence and dropout in this study. This result can be attributed to the fact that for each group (by decades) 81.0-82.4 percent were persisters. This rate dropped marginally, to 75 percent, for those in their twenties. This result does not support the findings of several previous studies as reported in chapter II which showed that dropout was significantly greater for younger rather than older age groups. However, this sample contained only 13 women below 25 years of age and it has been the youngest adults who have been reported as the most likely to drop out in previous research.

Marital status

In correlating marital status, the categories of 'Separated', 'Divorced', 'Widowed' were combined because there were only eight women in the latter two categories. Although 90 percent of separated, divorced and widowed women, 79 percent of those married, and 72 percent of single women persisted, the relationship between marital status and persistence and dropout was not statistically significant. The relationship between marital status and other measures of attendance behaviour is further discussed in chapter VIII where statistical significance between marital status and the number of sessions attended and between it and attendance category membership is reported and discussed.

Children
When the number of children cared for was correlated with persistence and dropout, the relationship was not significant. Women who had no child-caring responsibilities were slightly more inclined to drop out than those with children.

**Educational background**

The relationship between educational qualifications and persistence and dropout was not significant. It appeared that educational qualifications gained a decade or more prior to their participation in the New Start Program had little influence on women's persistence or withdrawal. In fact, the interviews revealed that older women, many of whom were less educationally qualified than their younger counterparts, expressed determination to offset their apparent disadvantage.

No significant relationship was found between years of schooling and persistence and dropout. This finding is consistent with the previous one regarding level of formal educational qualifications as is to be expected given the close association between years spent in formal schooling and the qualifications obtained. Hence, persistence in the New Start Program was not significantly related to years of schooling.

**Family income and occupation**

At the lower income levels (below $15,000) dropouts and persisters were represented in proportion to their percentage of the sample. The income group which departed most markedly from this pattern was the $20,000-$24,000 group from which 46.7
percent dropped out. This category included, as was ascertained from the interviews, women who withdrew for work-related reasons. Yet overall family income was not significantly related to persistence and dropout.

The relationship between occupational category and persistence and dropout was not significant. Of those women who were employed there was a trend, although not a statistically significant one, for women in occupations ranked lower on the Elley and Irving scale (see appendix D) to be more inclined to drop out. However, only 12 percent of the sample were in these categories, not enough to have an impact on the overall relationship between occupation and persistence and dropout.

**Previous course attendance and previous withdrawal**

The number of courses attended in the previous three years was not significantly related to persistence and dropout in the New Start Program. Therefore, women who had attended more courses in the previous three years were neither more nor less inclined to persist in the courses studied than women who had attended fewer courses in that time.

For the relationship between persistence and dropout the frequencies of previous withdrawal from two or more courses were coalesced because only eleven respondents were involved. The percentage of persisters and dropouts for nil, one, and two or more courses from which withdrawal had previously occurred almost identically reflected the proportion of each category in the sample. Hence past withdrawal behaviour did not predict
similar behaviour in this course. Having withdrawn from courses previously was not associated with withdrawal on this occasion.

Publicity source

It had been anticipated (as discussed in chapter V) that information about the course from a person with direct or indirect experience of the course would provide a participant with a better insight into the program than what could be inferred from public advertising. However, each form of publicity was reported as the first source of information for persisters and dropouts according to their percentage of the sample as a whole. Hence source of first publicity was not significantly related to persistence and dropout.

Time from enrolment to course commencement

In calculating the relationship between the time from enrolment to course commencement and persistence and dropout, the number of days was collapsed into five groups. Withdrawing or persisting was not significantly related to the length of time prior to the course's commencement that a woman enrolled.

Partner's attitude

As is shown in table 37, five options were available for women in the study who considered this question was applicable to their life situation. A partner's attitude was not significantly related to a participant's remaining in the program or withdrawing from it.
Means of transport

In relation to their proportion of the sample, dropouts were overrepresented in the category for those who travelled to the course alone by private car. Twenty-six percent of those who used this means of travel dropped out, whereas they comprised 21 percent of the sample. However, the means of transport used to travel to the course was not significantly related to persistence and dropout.

Distance to the course

For the relationship between distance to the course and persistence and dropout, the number of kilometres travelled was collapsed into six groups. There was a tendency shown for those living further away from the course location to be more inclined to drop out. Yet the relationship between distance travelled and dropout and persistence was not significant. In any case, as was noted in chapter V, the distances involved were relatively short for the majority of women who travelled by car.

State anxiety

The anxiety scores were collapsed into five categories. The proportion of dropouts in the categories containing the highest state anxiety scores (36 percent) was greater than their proportion in the sample (21 percent). At the other end of the scale there were 29 percent of dropouts in the category containing the lowest scores, also more than their percentage in the sample. Thus at both ends of the continuum of state anxiety
scores, dropouts exceeded their proportion in the sample. Hence the relationship between state anxiety and persistence and dropout was not significant.

**Trait anxiety**

As for state anxiety, the relationship between trait anxiety and persistence and dropout was not significant. Accordingly, those who scored highly in trait anxiety were neither more nor less inclined to drop out than those who had low scores on this scale.

**Total anxiety**

Consistent with the relationship between its two component scales and persistence and dropout, the relationship between the scores for total anxiety and persistence and dropout was not significant. Participants who had high total anxiety scores were not more or less likely to drop out than women with low scores.

**Life events**

For the relationship between the number of life change units as assigned by the SRRS for women in the study and persistence and dropout, scores for life change units were collapsed into six categories: the first five each had a range of 100; and the sixth included scores above 500. From table 19 it can be concluded that those with high scores resulting from their having experienced events assigned high values on the SRRS
were neither significantly more nor less inclined to drop out than women with low scores.

The weighted undesirable and desirable life events scores were collapsed into four and five categories respectively to compute the correlations with persistence and dropout. Neither of these two relationships was statistically significant. Accordingly, women who had experienced more undesirable events were not more or less inclined to persist than women who had experienced fewer or no undesirable events. The relationship between desirable life events and persistence and dropout more closely approached the set level of significance than that for undesirable changes. Yet women having fewer desirable changes in the previous twelve months were neither more nor less inclined to withdraw than women reporting a larger number of these changes.

The scores for the desirable life changes were subtracted from the undesirable ones, a procedure explained in chapter IV, to yield a net life change weighted score. The total number of these scores was collapsed to form five categories and correlated with persistence and dropout. Net life change weighted scores were not significantly related to persistence and dropout. When desirable events were subtracted from those which were undesirable, women who had a greater resultant sum of changes were neither more nor less inclined to withdraw than those having experienced fewer changes.

Self-esteem
For this correlation self-esteem scores were collapsed to form five categories. While 17 percent of persisters had self-esteem scores of 35 or more, only 7 percent of dropouts were in the same category. At the other end of scale 11 percent of persisters had self-esteem scores below 25, while 17 percent of dropouts did so. Although these trends were noted, the relationship between self-esteem and persistence and dropout was not statistically significant. Women who were assessed as having low self-esteem were neither more nor less significantly inclined to drop out of the New Start Program than women with high self-esteem.

Study orientation

Scores on each of the seven scales of the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes were collapsed into four or five categories depending on their range and correlated with persistence and dropout. Except for correlations involving one scale, Teacher Approval, and persistence and dropout, all of the correlations exceeded the specified alpha level of significance set for this study. For these relationships 118 women in the study were involved. The reasons for the sample being reduced to this number were explained in the previous chapter.

Those who scored higher on the Delay Avoidance scale were neither more nor less inclined to persist than those with lower scores. Although 25 percent of persisters scored 30 or more on the Work Methods scale, whereas only 13 percent of dropouts reached the same level, persisters were also proportionately
greater in the categories scoring less than 19. Therefore, scores on this scale did not indicate a greater or lesser likelihood of dropping out. Reflecting the pattern of its two constituent scales, women scoring lower on the Study Habits scale were neither more nor less inclined to drop out than those scoring higher.

As noted earlier, the relationship between Teacher Approval and persistence and dropout was significant. Ten (43.5 percent) of those who dropped out scored between 25 and 29, while a further seven (30.4 percent) scored between 30 and 34. While 73.9 percent of dropouts scored under 34, an almost identical percentage, 73.7, of persisters scored 30 or more on the Teacher Approval scale. Accordingly, those who rated themselves highly as having positive attitudes toward teachers and their classroom behaviour were significantly more likely to persist than those who scored lower on this scale. Many women had enrolled in the New Start Program expecting that they would be undergoing a role transition from non-student to student. It could be argued that most of them, particularly those who had been away from a formal educational environment for a number of years, believed implicitly that their instructors had the capacity to help them make this transition. Holding this view was consistent with remaining in the course.

The relationship between Education Acceptance and persistence and dropout approached the .05 alpha level that was set for this study. The results for this correlation showed a trend in which those who scored higher on this scale tended to
persist to a greater extent than those with lower scores. Accordingly, a higher score on the Education Acceptance scale indicated a tendency, although not a statistically significant relationship, for women to persist while a lower score was more often associated with dropping out.

Teacher Approval and Education Acceptance combine to form the Study Attitudes scale. The score on the Study Attitudes scale was not significantly related to persistence and dropout.

The four primary scales on the SSHA are summed up in one measure, Study Orientation. The relationship between it and persistence and dropout was not statistically significant. Therefore, as was the case for all but one of its individual scales, women with higher Study Orientation scores were not more nor less inclined to persist than women with lower scores.

**Summary: Correlational Statistics**

In the previous chapter the major characteristics of the women in the study were described briefly. In this chapter these characteristics were related to the data for persistence and dropout. The demographic and educational background of the participants as well as course-related behaviour (pre-registration, means of transport, and distance travelled), psycho-social variables, and their study orientation were related to this set of attendance data.

The principal statistical measure used was chi square. The level of significance was set at the .05 alpha level of probability. The results of the statistical relationships
tested were summarized in table 19.

Of all the variables which were related to persistence and dropout only scores on the Teacher Approval scale were significant statistically. Persisters tended to score higher on this scale than did dropouts. In other relationships some trends were shown but none of these was statistically significant.

The next chapter describes the characteristics of persisters and dropouts as well as comparing them. The findings reported in chapter VII were revealed in interviews conducted after the courses had been concluded.
CHAPTER VII

ACCOUNTING FOR PERSISTENCE AND DROPOUT THROUGH INTERVIEWS

Introduction

As was discussed in chapter IV interviews were included as a means of data collection to verify the factors in the conceptual framework which provided the basis for the hypotheses which gave direction to this study. The semi-structured nature of the interviews also gave subjects an opportunity to explain other factors which accounted for differences between persisting and dropping out.

The first part of the interview sought clarification for answers supplied to the questionnaire with an emphasis on how the factual information, including source of first publicity, pre-course consultation with university staff, pre-course anxiety, means of transport used to travel to the course, child-caring responsibilities, partner's attitude, factors thought likely to affect attendance, and goal aspirations, was related to persistence and dropout.

The latter part of the interview dealt with topics which arose primarily from participants' experiences in the New Start Program. In this chapter participants' responses to questions on the advantages and disadvantages of having enrolled, reactions they had encountered from other people, support received according to household arrangements, course-related
factors to persistence and dropout, personal outcomes, consideration given to withdrawing, and factors enhancing persistence are discussed. Finally, comparisons between persisters and dropouts are reported.

**Interview Findings**

The semi-structured nature of the interviews gave an opportunity for subjects to explain factors which accounted for the difference between persisting and dropping out.

As was reported in chapter IV, 55 interviews were conducted. Irrespective of how a subject was selected for interview, she was inevitably classified concurrently in two categories. The majority (N = 83) were in the persistence and high rate of attendance categories, as is shown in table 34. Thirty-one were classified persisters as well as being in the medium attendance category. Therefore, if a woman was selected from the latter category, the responses that she gave that were relevant to this chapter are discussed in it. Similarly, where she explained her behaviour that distinctively related to her inclusion in the medium rate of attendance category it is reported in chapter IX.

As was indicated in the introduction the first part of the interview sought clarification of answers supplied in the questionnaire with an emphasis on how the factual information was related to persistence and dropout.

*Source of first publicity*
The first question asked participants to recall where they had first seen information about the New Start Program. This question was posed for several reasons: to encourage interviewees to focus on their life situation before the course began; to allow a distinction to be made between human and non-human sources of publicity in relation to a follow-up question regarding the ongoing interest of the initial person suggesting to a participant that the New Start Program might be helpful; and to provide a link for subsequent questions on what steps were taken by participants to make contact with someone in the institution providing the program to obtain more information about the nature and content of the course.

All universities used similar means of publicity to advertise their spring term programs, of which the New Start Program was one course, albeit one which received more program planner attention and effort than most of the other courses being offered at the same time. Publicity avenues included newspaper advertising; distribution of brochures to libraries, bookstores, vocational guidance departments and other continuing education institutions; and news items in the media. In some cases participants reported that their attention had been drawn to the New Start Program by a friend or relative. Only at one university, Otago, was there any link between the source of publicity and subsequent attendance. There, participants who indicated 'Friend' as the source of their first learning about the program were more inclined to drop out than participants at the same institution who first learnt about the program from
other sources. The explanation given for this phenomenon was that the participants questioned reported that they had enrolled because a friend thought that "the course would be good for me." The two participants concerned subsequently enrolled without seeking further information from the providing institution. It appeared that a combination of a willingness to comply and a lack of understanding as to the program's goals and objectives contributed to a lack of commitment on behalf of those women who attended few sessions, and consequently dropped out of the course. Furthermore, the participants interviewed said that the friends who had suggested that the New Start Program might be worthwhile made no subsequent attempt to check on the participant's progress and her reaction to the course once it had begun. Because the number of participants in the University of Otago program was small, the information revealed by the interviews was not sufficient to affect the statistical relationship between the source of first publicity and persistence and dropout, which was discussed in the previous chapter.

Conversely, participants who reported that the course had been suggested to them by friends who knew someone who had taken part in the course in an earlier year or those who reported their first source of information as 'Previous course participant' said that they were reasonably well informed of the scope of the course before it began. The same group also indicated that they welcomed turning to the person who had provided them with the information about the course for
assistance or support, when appropriate, during their own participation in the program. Even having the initiator ask about their reaction to the program and their progress in it were seen as encouragement by the participants interviewed. Women who had been directed to the course in this way tended to persist more than women who did not obtain pre-course information.

Specific examples of the comments made by participants whose attention to the course had been drawn by friends or previous course participants were, "I know someone who had been in the course last year and had gone to university this year. She told me about the program and what she had done. She also said that the older students who went to New Start did better than those who hadn't." This participant believed that if she decided to undertake university studies she would have an advantage over her peers who did not participate in the New Start Program.

Another woman said, "I had friends who had done the course, then I heard about New Start on a radio talk program. I went back to my friends who told me how good the course was. I found out quite a lot from them." A similar comment was made by another participant. "I first heard about New Start from friends who had been in the course. I asked them about it. I thought if they could do it, so could I." Several other women echoed similar comments to those quoted. It was evident that being aware of the content and scope of the program, and having it explained by someone with first-hand experience, meant that a
participant with this background was cognisant of the course requirements. These circumstances made for persistence.

Similar attendance patterns were recorded by those who knew someone in the university who either had made or was prepared to make contact with the university staff members closely involved with the New Start Program. Knowledge of the course gained through this means provided a useful basis on which to proceed with enrolment. Women whose attendance record was most at risk were those who had relied almost solely on briefly stated newspaper advertisements and had made no additional effort to obtain further information before enrolling.

Pre-course consultation with university staff

Although each of the universities had staff available for participants in the New Start and other programs to consult with and to discuss course goals prior to enrolling, the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Auckland clearly provided the best pre-enrolment advisory service of the three universities. Almost all participants in that university's program who had taken advantage of the recommended pre-course interview reported very favourably on the climate that was set, the advice given, and the warmth of the person involved. "She was practical and friendly, and after listening to my background, encouraged me to do the course," one woman stated. Another said, "I made an appointment to see Anne. When I went in to see her, she explained what the program involved. I found it very useful." Another woman, who acknowledged that she
already knew something of the program from friends who had done
the course previously, admitted, "I didn't learn anything new,
but she (Anne) helped clarify and confirm what I wanted to know.
It was reassuring to find someone who understood what I was
interested in doing." At the University of Auckland nearly
three-quarters of the persisters interviewed had discussed the
program with course coordinators, whereas only half of the
dropouts had taken advantage of this provision. Although
proportions were not compared statistically, it appeared that
Auckland women in the New Start Program who had taken advantage
of the counselling interview prior to the start of the course
were more likely to persist than their counterparts who had not
made use of that opportunity.

Otago also provided for individual consultations with
participants but this arrangement was included as part of the
formal course structure after the program had commenced. At
Waikato the same arrangement was available but it tended to be
informally organized. Course coordinators invited participants
to make individual appointments whenever they felt it would be
helpful. For both of these universities, in contrast to
Auckland, there was no scheduled pre-course interview. While at
Auckland there was an apparent benefit for those who discussed
the course with a coordinator prior to enrolling, there was no
similar advantage evident at the other two universities for
those who had voluntarily sought additional information about
the course from coordinators or program planners compared with
those who had not. Hence participants who sought more
information were as likely to be in the dropout as in the persister categories.

Anxiety reported prior to course commencement

In the interviews, participants were asked how they had felt in the period between the time they had enrolled and the course commenced. Those women who had attended several adult education courses in recent years and those who were familiar with post-secondary institutions reported little anxiety or apprehension, admitted to looking forward to the New Start Program and the challenges that it offered, or said that they were curious and wondered how they would cope with the course.

On the other hand those who had not attended any courses in recent years made such comments as "I was very nervous," "I had butterflies in my stomach all week," "I was concerned how I would measure up," and even "I was really scared--I wanted to back out." Older women reported experiencing more apprehension than younger women. Although their age may have been a contributing factor, they also felt uncertain as to how they would compare with their younger counterparts not only in the New Start Program but also in the post-secondary institution in which they might enrol in the future where the majority of students were likely to be in their late teens or early twenties. Some women said that their feelings of anxiety were not eased in those programs in which coordinators asked participants to introduce themselves by stating their name, length of local residence, and educational background. "It made
me feel inadequate being in there with ex-teachers and people who already had U.E." [the right to study at university] was a viewpoint expressed by several older women. For them a redeeming feature of the course at that early stage was the presence of a retired woman who was the study skills adviser. This was a person with whom they felt they could identify.

Feelings of state or trait anxiety were not, as the statistical findings showed, significantly related to dropout and persistence. However, the interviews did reveal considerable pre-course apprehension which was more severe for those with no recent adult education experience, older women, and those who had not sought advice on the scope of the course beyond what had been advertised. About one-third of these participants acknowledged that for the first two or three sessions of the course, the thought of dropping out to cope with their anxiety was considered. For many of them they kept going because of the support they were receiving from their partners or from a classmate in the course who also admitted to having similar feelings.

Drawing on the recollection of their feelings at the early stages of the course, many of the women, in particular those who experienced high anxiety, could be likened to new-born babies placed in incubators. In the initial stages they were largely dependent for their continued attendance on life-support systems provided by outsiders, for example, their partners with comments reported as "Don't be chicken [scared], the others are probably feeling the same as you;" other classmates who provided support
and encouragement, either independently or by sharing similar feelings; or by course coordinators who were seen throughout as warm and caring individuals. Gradually, however, the individuals gained in strength and confidence so that while they still welcomed the outside support that they received, they came to feel that their survival in the program depended less on others and was based more on their own independent attributes. "I realised I could do it," one woman recalled. Another said, "During the third session, I said to myself I think I can manage, I'm not so worried any more, I can understand what they are talking about." Similar comments were made by other participants, some of whom stated that they felt this way by the end of the second session, while for the majority it was not until the third session that their confidence had grown to this point. These were, of course, comments made by persisters who attended the majority of the sessions.

Those in the dropout category reported a quite different experience. Most of them had not attended sufficient sessions to be able to comment on the growth in confidence and self-assurance which had been a feature of thepersisters. Even so, for many of them, although they admitted to feeling anxious and nervous at the outset, it was generally not these feelings or the inability to cope with them that caused withdrawal from the course. Rather, for many, factors external to the course were seen as prompting withdrawal. These factors are discussed in detail in the section dealing primarily with the explanation given by dropouts for their withdrawal. By contrast, external
factors were seen by many persisters as contributing to their continued attendance through the early stages of the New Start Program.

**Means of transport**

Statistically, means of transport was not significantly related to dropout and persistence. However, carpooling, travelling with another course member, particularly for those in the Auckland program, was reported by several interviewees as contributing to their continued attendance for one of several reasons. For those persisters who admitted to wavering on several occasions in regard to attending, the fact that they had to provide transport to a designated session or were being taken by another course member provided the necessary incentive to attend. An added benefit was the opportunity that a car journey provided for discussing a skill that was proving difficult to acquire, or a goal that was being clarified, or an assignment that was due.

Conversely, none of those classified as dropouts reported a commitment to a transport-sharing arrangement. While such arrangements cannot of themselves be seen as contributing to persistence or the absence of them as a factor in dropout, it is apparent that some persisters were encouraged to attend more sessions than they otherwise might have because of their involvement in a carpool.

**Child-caring responsibilities**
Women with children could be divided into one of three categories: those who had to make arrangements for their children to be looked after while they attended the New Start Program; those whose children were old enough to accept responsibility for their own welfare; and those whose children had left home. Women who dropped out were represented in each of these categories. None of those interviewed saw their children or their responsibilities for caring for them as a factor which contributed to their withdrawal from the program.

Solo mothers with young dependent children inevitably had to make arrangements for child care while they were at the course. In some cases women who attended the day course at the University of Waikato had the benefit of their children's being at a pre-school facility for most of the session and their youngsters were taken to another parent's home until after the class had concluded. The women who had made this arrangement reported that it worked well. The only disadvantage that they commented on was that they felt under some pressure to leave the university as soon as the class had concluded to resume responsibility for their children. Accordingly, they felt cut off from any informal post-class discussion, either with tutors or with other members of the class.

Solo mothers also commented that their external responsibilities and the absence of childcare facilities at the universities caused them to feel less attached to the university that they were attending than if such facilities had been available because they arrived just before the class started and
left immediately it had finished. They also felt that they were not able to become as much a part of the total group or sub-groups within the class as they would have liked.

For solo mothers with young children who attended evening programs, neighbours or friends were called upon to look after their children. Some felt obliged to pay their babysitters. The expense was something that they would have preferred not to have incurred but it was seen as a necessary part of the package which involved an investment in their future. Some admitted that going to class, and paying a babysitter while they were there, was the only regular outing that they considered worthy of the expense.

For almost all solo mothers in the New Start Program who were interviewed, the enrolment fee for the course and any babysitting expenses were seen in a similar light. They were part of the investment being made by the mother on behalf of her family in a better future, often still ill-defined in anything but general terms. In this sense the children were seen as part of the reason for spending time at the course and in doing the associated assignments. It was in part for their benefit that their mothers saw themselves going through the pre-course anxiety and accepting the challenges of a re-entry program.

Women with children living in a nuclear family with their spouse or a partner generally experienced fewer difficulties with child-minding responsibilities than solo mothers. Nevertheless, women who attended the day course at Waikato had to make similar arrangements as solo mothers for the care of
their children. No one reported a partner staying at home to assume this responsibility. However, evening course participants reported that their partners were happy to undertake babysitting duties. Generally, they were also seen as willing to cope with additional domestic responsibilities or a rearranged schedule on the evening that the class was held.

While women with young children who needed minding in their absence formed the first category, the second consisted of those with children for whom child-care arrangements did not need to be made. The older age of these children was the key difference between the two categories. While the children in the first group were invariably too young to appreciate the significance of their mother's return to an educational setting, the reaction of children in the second group was often a factor in spurring their mother to continued attendance.

Among the children old enough to appreciate what their mothers were doing by attending the New Start Program, two reactions were reported. For a minority of children the decision to return to an educational institution was met with indifference. This reaction was most commonly associated with teenage boys in the 15-18 years of age group. Mothers who experienced this response said that it did not deter them from carrying on in the program, nor did it restrict the number of sessions which they attended. If anything, their sons' indifference made women more determined to show that they could accomplish an academic achievement and complete the course.

The majority of women perceived that their children were
enthusiastic and supportive of their mother's return to an educational setting. Children, particularly those who were facing external examinations in the New Zealand secondary education system, asked their mothers what they had learnt. Note-taking, essay writing, and examination preparation became topics of family conversation. For other family members who were not facing examinations in the near future, the contents of sessions rather than study techniques were of greater interest. When asked about her children's attitudes to her taking part in a course at the university, one of the woman interviewed said, "They think it's marvellous." Another commented, "They were interested in what I was doing. It was a topic of conversation at the meal table on Thursdays, the day I went to New Start. I felt good that they were really interested in what I was doing." One said, "They were really rapt [delighted]. The eldest especially thinks it's super." Undoubtedly, quite a number of the women interviewed were encouraged as well as pleasantly surprised by their children's positive attitude to their involvement in an educational program which not only occupied their time for the contact hours of the course but also needed their attention for the assignments and out-of-class exercises which had to be completed.

Although many women commented on this aspect of homework, most said they managed to cope with the time commitment required by reordering their priorities; housework was done less often, social activities were reduced, or informal leisure pursuits were undertaken less frequently than before the course began.
Several women covered their rearranged schedules by admitting, "I became more efficient." Rarely, however, were formalized commitments, such as a sports club membership or voluntary group association surrendered.

In coping with domestic responsibilities and course requirements, many women in the New Start Program showed the characteristics which contributed to their high persistence rate. These characteristics may be seen as determination, ego-strength or motivation. However these qualities are defined, and a combination of all three as well as others were involved for many in the study, they contributed to the relatively high persistence rates in the program.

For the persisters, whether or not they were living with their spouse, their return to an educational setting and their application and determination to complete assignments had an unforeseen but beneficial impact on their children, particularly those aged ten years and older. Many of the women with children in this age group admitted that they had not anticipated their children's increased appreciation of the value of a successful educational achievement. Some of the women interviewed also reported that their returning to an educational institution had an impact on children other than their own, such as nephews, nieces, and neighbours. Others in employment, particularly older women, noted that their decision to return to school and their efforts in completing assignments made a favourable impression on younger adults with whom they associated, especially at work. Undoubtedly many women who took part in the
New Start Program, and particularly those who attended most or all of the sessions of the course, acted as positive role models for their children.

The third category of women with children were those who no longer had their children at home. Many of the older women in the study were in this category. Invariably these women reported very supportive attitudes being expressed by their children. Even when these women encountered negative or indifferent comments from some of their acquaintances in the same age group as themselves, they appreciated the loyalty and support of their children, and felt encouraged by their positive comments. One divorced woman who admitted feeling depressed after the last of her four children had left home said, "I mentioned that I might do New Start to my daughter . . . After I explained what I thought it involved, Robyn (the daughter) said she felt it would be really good for me." Another woman reported that when she told her children about the course she said, "They were keen for me." Others reported similar comments of encouragement, and acknowledged it contributed, in a small way, to their persistence.

Other women in the study did not have children. Two of those interviewed were still living at home with their parents. One of these was a woman in her early twenties who admitted that she had not achieved much in her life. At home she had responsibility for looking after her younger brothers and sisters while both of her parents worked. In response to the question asking about the attitude of family members to her
involvement in the New Start Program, she said, "My parents were keen on the idea. They thought that at last I was doing something useful with my life. Now I've decided to go to university next year, and they think that's great." Although the relationship was different for this participant from those previously discussed, having the support and encouragement of individuals whose opinions were valued were important in encouraging her continued attendance.

**Partner's attitude**

The initial questionnaire asked participants to indicate their partner's attitude to their enrolling in the New Start Program. The interview provided an opportunity for an explanation of how attitudes affected attendance, how attitudes were translated into assistance or support, and whether participants' partners' attitudes changed during the course. As was reported in chapter V, most women with partners reported their attitudes as encouraging. Many persisters and many of those who attended at least half of the sessions after having expressed feelings of doubt in the initial stages about their remaining in the course indicated that the support that they received was helpful in encouraging continuation. Support for this group took several practical forms, such as undertaking extra domestic chores on the evening of the course.

Women who described their partner's attitude as being 'Neutral' explained this viewpoint in terms of "He didn't care one way or the other whether I enrolled for the New Start
Program." Another said of her husband, "He didn't mind as long as there was a meal on the table." This attitude was similar to another woman whose husband did not object to her going, "As long as I've got my jobs done."

The most negative reaction reported was that by a woman who did not discuss with her husband her intention to enrol in the course. She told him after she had done so and was reported to have been told, "You must have flipped your lid" [gone out of your mind]. In this most negative case and others less harshly expressed, the lack of support did not make for dropout or limited attendance. In fact, the reverse was true provided the individual found a strong source of social support from another person or small group, such as from other family members or within in the class.

Some women reported that their partner's attitude became more supportive during their involvement in the course. None indicated a trend in the opposite direction. Increasing support was explained as, "He became more encouraging and more interested when he saw how much I was getting out of the course." Another participant reflected the feelings of several women when she explained that her husband seemed to remain guarded until he saw how she coped with the course. "I don't think he thought I would manage. I think he was surprised," she said. "After my first assignment was returned, he got more interested," she added.

Almost all women said that they, rather than their partners, had taken the initiative in following up
advertisements or discussions with friends about the New Start Program. In two instances women said that, "My husband had been pushing me for years to do something and this course seemed to be a good chance to take a step." In both of these cases husbands were highly supportive and the women concerned attended all sessions.

As a generalization, positive partner support seems to have been a factor in encouraging participant attendance in the initial stages of the course. After that the challenge offered by the course, the variety in the content of each session, and the satisfaction of developing new skills contributed to a momentum of its own. Women who had initially described their partner's attitude as neutral generally explained that their partner had adopted a "wait and see" approach. When it had become apparent that the participant was deriving some benefit from the program her partner became more supportive. Negative or neutral partner support did not appear to have contributed to dropout or limited attendance.

Factors thought likely to affect attendance

The penultimate question seeking biographical information completed at the first session asked participants to indicate circumstances which might affect their continuing attendance in the New Start Program. In the interview the factors listed were checked to judge the extent to which predicted events had eventuated and to consider the effect of unexpected events. As was noted in chapter V, a range of possibilities was seen as
likely to affect attendance.

Among women in the groups classified as dropouts the reasons they gave for their limited attendance rarely matched the factors they had thought might have affected them when they responded at the beginning of the course. Several moved from the city in which the course was held to other towns. These shifts were prompted by the demands of their husband's employment or were initiated by the individuals themselves. Most of these moves were employment-related. Several other women who had enrolled and had attended the first session were confronted with marital difficulties which worsened in the early stages of the program. Faced with increased problems and having to contend with legal and real estate matters, as well as added domestic responsibilities, these women decided to withdraw from the program soon after it started. All who faced this situation felt that there were more pressing short-term matters demanding their attention which prevented them from devoting the necessary time to the course and its associated requirements. Employment-related activities interrupted the involvement of two other women who were interviewed. The key factor for this group's attendance record was the unexpected emergence of events which they had not foreseen at the time of the first session of the course.

There were several factors which were indicated by participants in both groups but which did not ultimately affect their attendance. The most common among these were course-related factors. Some participants cautioned at the outset that
their continuing attendance would be dependent upon their assessment of the personal benefits of the course. For those interviewed there were very few who attributed their withdrawal to aspects of the course. Several other participants admitted to having negative feelings about or lacking in confidence in their ability to cope with the demands of the course. However, as the course progressed these women said that they received encouragement from course coordinators and classmates which resulted in their confidence growing, and they completed the course.

Achievements sought

The final question in the biographical questionnaire was similar to the preceding one except that it focused on personal goals rather than factors likely to affect attendance. Participants were asked to state what they hoped to achieve as a result of participating in the New Start Program. In the interviews participants were reminded of the goals that they had stated approximately twelve weeks previously when the course was beginning and were asked the extent to which these goals had been achieved or modified or both.

The principal difference between persisters and dropouts proved to be the vague or less easily measured goals that were mentioned by the latter group. Examples of these statements included a "desire for a more stable future," or "to overcome stagnation" or "to cope with life" or "to escape from being a housewife." Persisters, on the other hand, listed more
realistic goals or goals that could be more easily assessed. For example, "to develop skills like essay writing and note-making" were frequently mentioned. "To become familiar with the university and its procedures" was another commonly expressed reason for enrolling, as was "to find out what I am capable of achieving."

The interviews revealed thatpersisters judged their progress by their acquisition of such study skills as note-taking in lectures and from books, reading effectiveness, and essay writing. Library skills, too, were important measuring steps, particularly locating books, finding articles in serials, and preparing bibliographies. Even for women who had at one time been taught some or all of these skills, perhaps as many as thirty years previously, "getting rid of the rust," as it was often described, was an important achievement. Dropouts, on the other hand, tended to have more global aims. Some of them, not having sought additional information from the providing institution, were to some extent deceived by the title, "New Start Program," and attributed to it the prospect of more general life chance skills rather than preparing participants to make a more informed choice about re-entry into an educational institution.

To this point the responses discussed and the differences noted between persisters and dropouts arose from questions in the interview which were primarily designed to seek clarification of or an explanation for the answers given to the questions posed in the questionnaire completed at the first
session of the New Start Program. The remainder of this chapter deals with questions which referred to participants' course experiences and how these experiences were related to the women's continuing attendance in or withdrawal from the course.

Reasons for enrolling in the New Start Program

The opening question in this section asked participants if they would have considered undertaking full-time or part-time study without having taken part in a study skills orientation course, such as the New Start Program, beforehand. For dropouts there was no pattern or unifying trend in their responses. Some said, "Probably not," because they had heard from student friends that New Start participants among mature students were more successful than those who had not attended the course. Others said that they might have tried tackling tertiary studies only if they had not known about the New Start Program. There was one woman, a dropout, who had already attempted, albeit un成功fully, two university courses and considered that improved study skills would give her a better chance of success at the second attempt.

Among persisters the reasons for entering the New Start Program were reflected in the themes of exploration, confirmation, and certainty. The latter was typified by one woman who said, "I've been to several adult education courses. The New Start Program seemed a natural stepping stone to higher education now that my family is older." Another woman stated a similar view when she said, "I have been seriously considering
going to university for several years, and being in the New Start Program made it easier for me to decide I was on the right track."

A more cautious response was given by some persisters whose reasons for enrolling could be seen as part of an exploratory process. These women wanted more information and wished to try themselves out in a short course during which they counted on getting more support than they would expect to receive in a more formalized educational institution. This attitude of "testing the temperature of the water" was brought out in several comments including, "I was only thinking about doing some study, but I was persuaded to try myself out." In a similar vein, one woman said, "I'm kind of doubtful. It would have been a big hurdle."

While the second theme for persisters on the question of the New Start Program being a transition phase to higher education was characterized by the self-testing motives of the women concerned, a third group of persisters were certain that but for the course they would not have contemplated study at a higher level. Giving some thought to her response, one woman said, "I doubt it . . . No, I really don't think I would have." Another woman answered emphatically, "No, I wouldn't have known where to start."

While there was no consistent response from dropouts regarding the likelihood of their enrolling in a tertiary educational institution without having participated in the New Start Program, there were three distinct viewpoints discernible
among persisters. One group reported having been almost certain about undertaking full-time or part-time formal study. Another group stated that while they had given this option some consideration, they saw the New Start Program as providing an opportunity to assess their abilities and capacity for formal study. Finally, members of the third category were almost certain that but for their involvement in the New Start Program they would not have contemplated enrolment in a university or technical institute.

**Perceived advantages of enrolling in the New Start Program**

The next question followed on from that posed previously. Participants were asked what had been the advantages of participating in the New Start Program. At the same time they were asked to comment on any disadvantages that participation had brought.

Persisters emphasized acquiring or developing study skills as a major benefit of having remained in the program. Regular assignments provided the opportunity for skill development. Participants reported that the comments received from university staff who marked their papers were helpful and encouraging. Positive remarks made for continued attendance and effort, while the helpful comments were seen as contributing to the enhancement of skills. A second benefit reported by persisters was having the chance to listen to lecturers speaking on a range of different subjects which helped them decide on future study options.
Without the induction offered by the New Start Program, some participants believed that they would not have considered enrolling in a tertiary educational institution because they doubted their ability to cope. Consequently, the boost in confidence to tackle such a goal was seen as an advantage of having participated. Other advantages were seen as general familiarity with a university and its procedures, and meeting others in a similar situation making the same kinds of decisions.

Dropouts mentioned several advantages of having attended at least one session in the first half of the course. Several said that they had satisfied their curiosity as to what university study might involve. Others appreciated having been introduced to some systematically taught study skills. These advantages were, however, much less important than the benefits reported by persisters.

Disadvantages of participating in the New Start Program

The disadvantages of attending the New Start Program were seen in terms of other activities which had to be foregone for the duration of the course. These losses were more keenly felt by persisters who assigned higher priority to New Start than to their other commitments. Examples of disadvantages were given as not being available to accept relieving teaching positions, reducing social activities, not being able to give as much time to voluntary organizations, and having to rush the evening meal on the night of the course. Having to arrange for children to
be looked after was a drawback faced by some mothers with young children. Some of these disadvantages had been anticipated, so that the women concerned had prepared for them. Particularly those who had sought information on the amount of work or additional time that would be required to be spent on assignments had made allowances for the demands of the course. Some who dropped out were unaware of the time that they would have to spend, particularly on out-of-class assignments.

Among dropouts fewer disadvantages were reported than by persisters. A plausible explanation for this difference was that because of their withdrawal women in this group were not faced with having to make choices between the course and other activities over as long a period as persisters. In fact, the only disadvantage mentioned by more than one dropout and not mentioned by any persisters was that their enrolling in the New Start Program had excluded the possibility of taking on another activity.

Reactions from others to participants' New Start Program participation

During the first half of each of the interviews when sections of the questionnaire were being expanded and interpretations of factual responses were sought, questions were asked on the reaction of family members, particularly partners and children. Examples of strong support and hostility were reported and related to persistence or dropout. While those matters were being discussed it became apparent that some
participants drew strong support from people outside their immediate families, so the reactions of other people, including neighbours, friends, and workmates, where applicable, were explored in the second half of the interviews.

Surprisingly, none of the dropouts interviewed reported any negative comments from people outside the membership of their immediate families to their participation in the New Start Program. It was not ascertained with certainty in the interviews whether this group spoke to fewer people than other participants about their course involvement, although this appeared to have been the case. Inevitably the limited number of sessions at which they were present in the program reduced the length of time that they could talk to others about what they were currently doing. Hence a woman who dropped out had less to talk about the program than one who persisted. Reactions of other people reported by dropouts was generally in terms of mild interest in and support for their endeavours. There was no criticism, covert or overt, as was made of some persisters. It could be argued, perhaps, that some of the latter group were, in fact, stirred into attending more sessions than they might otherwise have done by some of the negative comments that were made about their participation. A more likely explanation, as is discussed in the paragraph on persisters, is that they drew strong social support from another source when faced with negative comments.

Some of the dropouts said that they had not discussed their participation in the program with many people. It could have
been their uncertainty about completing the program or measuring up to the demands that they anticipated being made of them during the course which accounted for this cautious approach. However, the explanation commonly given was that their participation in the New Start Program was not likely to have been of interest to many others. One woman who held this view did not tell her workmates of her involvement in the course, yet she gave as her explanation for her early withdrawal the pressure at work associated with a major reorganization. It seems reasonable to speculate that if she had raised the matter with her work colleagues, an adjustment may have been possible in her role in the reorganization so that it would have been possible for her to have completed the course. To some extent the employer may have benefitted, too, because the woman had earlier unsuccessfully attempted university undergraduate courses in administration but had been hindered by her lack of study skills.

While the reaction of other people reported by dropouts was one of low-key interest, persisters gave examples of a great range of feelings and expressions. They gave examples of having experienced both strong support and surprise or criticism. This contrast is well represented by one woman who lived at a small air force base. Her husband was very supportive, and her children were enthusiastic. "Only three days to go, Mum," they reminded her during the countdown to the beginning of the course. Reaction from other servicemen's wives ranged from open criticism with comments like "You're balmy" [out of your mind],
to passive acknowledgement with "Oh" or "Are you?" to surprise with the comment, "I didn't know you were that clever." On the other hand, a few were complimentary and encouraging, and reportedly said, "Good on you." This woman said that she received support from her husband's workmates who wanted to know how she was progressing in the course and asked her about it when she called into his place of employment. Outside her family, the strongest expression of support came from the principal of her children's primary school. In commenting on the attitude of people in her community, which she described as being rather closed and typical of armed services establishments, the woman interviewed highlighted the range of reactions which many persisters reported.

Reactions common to persisters and dropouts

At the same time as concluding that there was an important difference in the reactions of others as perceived by dropouts and persisters, some generalizations can be applied to both groups.

First, older participants were the subject of more surprised reactions than younger ones, except from members of their own families who were generally supportive. On occasions, some of the comments reported were tantamount to hostility. One older woman said that one of her friends said, "Money shouldn't be wasted on educating people like you." Another was greeted with a cautionary warning, "Are you sure you can manage? You are going through the change of life. You'll get tired." One
other woman in her fifties was asked by a friend in an apparently surprised and non-supportive tone, "What are you doing that for?" Despite these comments, these women said that their resolve to continue attending was heightened by, in one case, an older uncle who proudly said, "Good on you." In another instance, the enthusiastic support of a brother encouraged one woman in her efforts and counteracted the negative comments of friends.

Second, the comments of friends who were employed full-time were different in emphasis from those who did not have paid jobs. The former tended to view their friends' participation in the New Start Program in somewhat utilitarian terms. One woman was told, "Why waste your time? You should be getting a job." Another woman was greeted with, "Surely that's a bit of a luxury. Wouldn't you be better off with a job?" The tone reported by other women whose friends saw their involvement in the course as a stepping stone to a job was milder. In contrast, participants reported more understanding comments made by people who were not in paid employment. They saw their friends' efforts as being useful and worthwhile. Furthermore, many women in the New Start Program saw little prospect of obtaining a satisfying job in the current economic conditions without improving their educational qualifications.

Third, there was a difference between the attitudes of those who were well-qualified educationally or who had had some post-secondary educational experience and those who had had little of this experience. As is the case with participation
phenomena in adult education, those who have received the benefits of education tend to take part more frequently than those who have limited formal educational experience. Likewise, the same group tended to support their friends' involvement in the New Start Program. On the other hand, those whose educational experience was limited seemed to be reserved or hesitant in offering their support.

One woman who reported that she had friends who fitted into both groups said, "My friends who had been nursing or to teachers' college encouraged me. They appreciated the possible benefits of my attempting higher studies. But those who hadn't been beyond secondary school didn't seem to understand. The pressure for me to complete assignments, reading, and going to the library was like living in another world for them." Another participant commented on a similar division of opinion. She said, "My friends who didn't have much education were opposed to or negative about my going up to the university. They thought I could be wasting my time. Yet my friends who had more education than me hoped I would do well and that I would enjoy the program." Other participants expressed similar views, noting a difference in the reactions of their friends according to their educational background.

Some women were not in a position to make the direct comparisons like those quoted in the previous paragraph. Instead they reported on comments from people with one type of educational background. One participant said she knew someone who had left secondary school at fourteen years of age. "What
the hell do you want to do that for?" she was asked, when she
mentioned her enrolment in the New Start Program. When one
woman told her parents, she felt that their lack of appreciation
for the value of education showed, a fact that she attributed to
their limited schooling. Their immediate response was to laugh,
and then to ask, "Why would you want to do that?" She, like
other participants, found compensation for such discouragement
in their own determination or the strong and positive
encouragement given by others whose views they respected.

Perceived support according to household arrangement

Participants in the New Start Program lived in a variety of
different household arrangements, some of which offered
considerable support while in others there were elements of a
lack of cooperation and hostility. Household arrangements
included nuclear families with two parents and children;
separated women, some with children, and others without; women
living alone, after their children had left home and either
their husbands had died or they were separated; two women were
living at home with their parents; and other women were living
in a communal arrangement, as typified by several people sharing
an apartment.

The attitudes of partners and children and their effect on
persistence and dropout have been discussed earlier. Solo
mothers reported support from their parents if they lived in the
same town, but otherwise they were dependent on the goodwill of
friends or neighbours to mind their children while they attended
classes. Those with parental support attended more frequently than those who did not have this assistance. Women whose children had left home were generally subjected to the comments of doubt expressed to older participants, because many of them were in this age group. Yet these comments were often offset by the support that these women received from their children. Living at home with parents was only reported by two women who were interviewed. One of these women was a dropout and the other a persister. Both received encouragement from their parents to enrol. The former indicated that her withdrawal after one session was not related in any way to her living at home or to her parents' attitudes. Likewise, although the one who had persisted attended five sessions, she believed that her absences had nothing to do with her domestic arrangements. For those living communally, persisters and dropouts were represented without any discernible pattern. Those sharing apartments reported neither strong support nor hostile criticism from their fellow-dwellers. Instead the reaction tended to be one of mild interest or lukewarm support.

Clearly, there was no obvious relationship between household arrangement and attendance pattern. Lack of support or even criticism from within the household could be overcome by active encouragement from an external source, such as parents, other relatives, friends, or other members of the class. In some cases participants reported that in the face of a negative reaction, particularly from a source that they would have preferred to have found supportive, they became more determined
to complete the program. In these circumstances it was still possible for the woman concerned to identify a key source of support. Failure to do so had an adverse effect on attendance, although it did not directly result in dropout.

Course-related factors to persistence and dropout

The next series of questions were posed to invite participants' reactions on features of or activities in the course and to relate any trends which emerged to persistence and dropout. Taking heed of some program planning literature which suggests that participant involvement in setting course objectives will enhance satisfaction and improve persistence rates, participants were asked the extent to which they felt that they had been involved in the objective-setting process.

This was one question which has to be discussed according to the individual university as there were clear differences among them. Participants at the University of Auckland agreed that their program had been largely finalized before the course began and that they made very little input to it. Nevertheless, most participants expressed considerable satisfaction with what they had been offered and with the range of topics presented to them. Those interviewed were aware that the program had been offered in previous years. They spoke highly of the course coordinators as caring and experienced adult educators, and they seemed to have concluded that the program had evolved to the format they had been given as a result of feedback from previous groups. One woman summed up most of her classmates' comments...
when she said, "No, we didn't get involved in shaping the program. The needs of New Starters seemed to have been looked at carefully. We were given a spectrum of what to expect and what is available."

In the New Start Program at the University of Otago participants perceived some flexibility in the presentation of the course which allowed them to influence to some degree the content rather than the objectives. Comments which supported this generalization included, "Most times we ran pretty well to an organized program." Another woman said, "Suggestions were asked for in preparing later sessions." Even though participants acknowledged being able to influence to some extent the program offering, there were no notable differences between persisters and dropouts in their perceptions of their involvement in objective setting or content inclusion.

The institution which appeared to offer its participants most opportunities to influence the program planning process was the University of Waikato. Unlike the cases of the other two institutions, a consensus among participants was not readily obtained in the interviews. Persisters saw opportunities for their involvement in objective setting, not necessarily throughout the course, but more particularly in the latter stages. Yet about one-third of the participants believed that this had always been the case for them. Evidence for an ongoing involvement in modifying the nature of the course is reflected in such comments as, "Yes, we had plenty of opportunity to influence what was going on and I appreciated
that." This view was supported by another participant who said, "We were forever being asked for our input." Others, however, said, "We were not given much opportunity early, but later on we were." One woman said, "We were given an outline on the first night, but later we made changes." This comment supports the previous one in that it confirms the perspective that early in the program participants were the recipients of a course outline, but later they saw themselves sharing in initiating changes. Dropouts, on the other hand, felt that they had little influence on what had been presented and the reasons for that selection. Their views were summed up by one participant who said, "The program was well organized and presented to us as an entity."

Class spirit as a factor in persistence and dropout

While the previous question implied a relationship between course coordinators and participants by focusing on the formulation of objectives, the next question asked participants to reflect on the relationships among themselves by encouraging them to comment on the spirit within the group, the way in which this was manifested, and its effect upon their attendance.

Although to a lesser extent than with the previous question, each university program had its effect on participants' perceptions of group spirit, particularly at Auckland where the size of the group (over 90 enrollees) made it extremely difficult for a common spirit to be felt. Given the number of participants who enrolled, individuals reported that
their attendance was encouraged if they were a member of sub-group within the class. These sub-groups ranged in size from two to five members. Entry to and formation of them appeared to have been influenced by pre-course factors and an individual's personality. Coming to the course with a friend provided a platform from which to meet other people. Even if new friendships were but a regular exchange of progress reports, there remained someone with whom to share concerns, to work on assignments, and to discuss problems. Such an arrangement was mutually reinforcing. Similarly, those who had an extroverted personality seemed to make friends and formed similar beneficial bonds as those women who travelled to the course together.

Evidence for these conclusions was provided by women in the Auckland program in their interviews. "I made friends with one of the other women. It made a difference. It helped me realise that there were other people in the same situation as me," one participant said. One solo mother with three children said that she had identified with another woman in similar circumstances. She said, "I didn't know anyone else at the start. Some people were easy to approach. Others found it hard to make contacts. You had to make the effort. I became very friendly with Gail. We worked on assignments together. We took our kids to the recreation centre at the university, and that helped us feel as if we belonged to the university." The importance of group membership was emphasized by one woman who said, "I made friends with two others. We rang each other up. We also shared assignments, concerns and worked out any problems we had. A
number of others teamed up in small groups, too."

At Auckland persisters and dropouts were agreed that the size of the group made it extremely difficult for a common spirit to develop. Faced with this challenge persisters sought to become part of or to form sub-groups which provided support for course-related activities. Some participants had an advantage of knowing other members of the class prior to its commencement. However, the majority of persisters formed friendship bonds after the course began. Dropouts did not remain in the program long enough to develop a sense of belonging. None reported having a close friend in the class. They came as lone individuals and withdrew without any sense of having let down someone else in the course. In no sense, however, did they attribute their withdrawal to the lack of group spirit. Yet persisters expressed the view that feeling part of a sub-group and having a commitment to the other women in that group were factors in their continued attendance.

At Otago and Waikato where the groups were much smaller than at Auckland, similar comments were made about the development of class spirit, and, therefore, these two universities can be considered together.

As was the case for Auckland, women at Otago and Waikato reported experiencing a sense of an emerging group cohesiveness, although this took time to develop because of the apparent reserved and retiring nature of many present. As a process, group building was apparently not facilitated by the coordinators. Yet most women reported the atmosphere as
friendly. Those who came with another class member had an advantage because from the outset there was a sense of commitment either to provide transport or to accompany a friend. Among those who dropped out no one expressed having a similar feeling. Dropouts acknowledged not being in attendance long enough to experience any sense of an emergent group spirit. They did not feel any sense of belonging and they withdrew without having developed a sense of group identity.

**Personal outcomes from the New Start Program**

A somewhat different pattern emerged from the responses to the next question which asked each participant to identify the outcomes of the New Start Program at a personal level. Most spoke in terms of individual benefits. Even those who attended only one session felt that they had gained something from their experience.

The outcomes identified by participants could be divided into the following headings: decisions, skills, friendships, services, personal development, and content knowledge. Some participants had decided in which educational institution they were going to enrol in the following year, while others indicated that they could not cope with the demands of study because of job or other pressures. Acquisition of skills was the most commonly mentioned benefit. Note-taking, reading, essay writing and being able to use the library were all given as examples of personal improvements resulting from participation in the course. New social contacts had been made
among participants and contributors. In particular, those who had decided to enrol in a tertiary educational institution valued the friendships that they had made with women intending to follow a similar educational program as themselves. Most participants commented on a sense of relief knowing that there were other women in similar situations to themselves unsure about which among several options to choose and how best to make the decision. Learning about new services was welcomed. Information about child-care facilities; who and where to turn for educational and vocational guidance and counselling; and the availability of study skills advisers who could offer similar assistance to that given during the New Start Program were among the benefits identified. Various dimensions of personal development were put forward as outcomes of having attended the course. Most frequently mentioned was gain in confidence, often accompanied by an admission of feeling more relaxed. Also suggested were a sense of achievement of having completed a challenging task and a feeling of having been mentally stimulated. Finally, by being introduced to new subjects participants acknowledged having acquired information with which they had not been familiar. Similarly, other subjects were often presented in a new light which provided a stimulus.

Not all these outcomes were evenly shared by all participants. Not unexpectedly persisters reported more benefits per person than dropouts. One woman summed up the overall advantage of having completed the program when she said, "Being in the New Start Program meant I didn't make a false
Persisters also reported having acquired a greater range of study skills and being more adept at using them than was reported by those who dropped out. In view of the fact that skills were introduced and practised throughout the course, this conclusion is understandable. Essay writing is the best example of the area in which persisters felt that they had improved. The ability to think more critically than they had been able to do at the beginning of the course was a skill gain mentioned by persisters but not by dropouts.

Gains in personal development were frequently reported by persisters, particularly in their confidence to tackle formalized study in the following year. About half of the women interviewed also said that they were more relaxed as individuals. Those who completed the course commented on feeling a sense of accomplishment, particularly as many had doubted their ability to tackle the academic projects which were an integral part of the New Start Program. Those who remained in the program longer developed a greater awareness of the range of educational opportunities available, full-time and part-time, at different institutions.

Dropouts generally acknowledged that not attending the entire course restricted the possible benefits they could have gained. Several of them spoke of having a "glimpse" rather than a full view of the attributes necessary and avenues available to return to an educational institution. Over half, having decided that they were not going to make this return in the immediate future, admitted that they had a better idea of what would be
required of them if they later made the decision to enrol in a tertiary educational institution. As a consequence of the decision that about half of the dropouts made not to proceed with further study in the near future, most had educational goals which were less clearly defined than persisters, about two-thirds of whom had decided what subjects they would be studying in the following year.

Consideration given to withdrawal

The final major question was varied according to the attendance pattern of the participant being interviewed. The intention was to ascertain whether at any stage interviewees had felt any temptation to withdraw either before doing so, or for others, at any time during the course. An allied question, asked where relevant, aimed to find out what factors helped sustain attendance.

Among persisters, those who attended most frequently tended to have felt less like withdrawing from the New Start Program during the ten week period of its duration than those who attended least frequently. Although the majority stated that at no stage had they felt like withdrawing, there were those who had given some thought to this possibility. Women who claimed they had never wavered spoke of the enjoyment which the course had given them, the importance they attached to completing it so that they might be favourably considered for Provisional Admission, the diversity of tutors and viewpoints expressed, and the assistance given by course coordinators. Among those who
reported having given some thought to withdrawal, their doubts arose out of their apprehension concerning their ability to cope with some aspects of the course or with the assistance it was providing for them as they attempted to clarify certain personal goals.

Whether or not persisters considered withdrawal, their continued participation was a combination of some inner drive, which might be described as determination, the strong support of someone who was significant to them, and the accumulation of positive experiences and encouraging feedback during the course. The importance of social support has been discussed earlier in this chapter, but it is worth emphasizing again because it was often mentioned in this context as well as in response to questions on the attitude of family members or other people with whom participants were in contact. Furthermore, it portrays the interrelationships between several factors which have been considered separately.

The program planners provided for variety in the course by having a range of resource people contribute to the New Start Program. Some spoke of the services which were available for women, others provided study skills training, while others dealt with different content or subject areas. Continuity in the program was provided by course coordinators who linked the diverse strands. This variation was appreciated particularly by persisters and contributed to their continuing attendance. In part as a consequence of the variety of the program but also because of the university environment many persisters continued
to be attracted by the stimulation provided by being exposed to new ideas or being confronted with the challenge of tackling an assignment in which they had to argue for a particular viewpoint, the discipline of which was new to many.

Whereas most persisters claimed not to have thought about withdrawing, most dropouts had done so. Although the course register impersonally records the last attendance of each participant, some dropouts said that they had intended to return to the course but it was often several weeks after their final appearance that they admitted to themselves that they would not be returning. The process of withdrawing was made easier for those classified as dropouts who had left the city in which the course was held. Residential relocation inevitably required some commitments to be curtailed and membership of the New Start Program fell into this category. However, for others there had existed the prospect that, "Next week will be easier at work and I'll be able to go," or "By next time my husband and I may have come to some arrangement and I'll be able to attend." These were some of the comments which dropouts reported that they had said to themselves as they thought about their involvement in the program. Hence dropouts took some time to accept the fact that they had really dropped out rather than just having missed one or two sessions.

Other researchers have warned about the dangers of post-course follow-up studies and the tendency of subjects to provide rationalizations for their behaviour. However, in the interviews conducted in this study, the interviewees appeared to
be quite candid in their explanations for having dropped out. For some there were changes in their circumstances from the time they had enrolled until the course began. Some unforeseen circumstances included taking up a new job, reorganization of an existing job resulting in added responsibilities, marital stress, and a move to a new location. Although feeling some sense of obligation to attend, or going in the hope of finding assistance with a problem that needed individual counselling rather than a classroom environment, the pressure of attending, and of completing assignments, was sometimes seen as adding to difficulties rather than easing them. The course attendance versus job demands dilemma is best illustrated by those who enrolled in the New Start Program to prepare themselves for a program of study the successful completion of which would entitle them to promotion to a new position or help them adjust to it. Ironically, the demands of a new position for some were felt to be too heavy to allow sufficient time to fulfil course requirements. A similar dilemma was faced by those seeking to re-enter the work force after they had retrained, yet there was a temptation to accept a job offer without the training, particularly when job opportunities continue to be limited.

Most of these causes of dropout are not directly course-related. There were, however, those who claimed that the reason for withdrawing at an early stage was related to aspects of the course. One woman, who had not sought clarification from the providing institution confessed, "I thought that my commitment would be limited to the contact hours of the course, that is,
two hours per week. I wasn't counting on having to do extra work." Another woman said, "I could not cope with the level of work that they were talking about." A similar view was conveyed in the comment, "The course work was above my head."

For others there was a mismatch between the objectives that coordinators had set and those which participants hoped would be set. Generally, those who withdrew had hoped for a more literal interpretation of "New Start" than was applied to preparing people for a return to an educational institution. Particularly when it became apparent that little attention would be given to vocational opportunities some participants who had been counting on job placement advice or vocational guidance came to realise their time would be better spent in another setting. Counselling at the time of registration appeared to have been a weak point in the program.

**Factors enhancing persistence**

The main reasons for continued attendance have been discussed. Personal determination, social support, societal conditions calling for improved educational qualifications, and positive encouragement given by course coordinators have been identified as the main factors contributing to persistence.

For those who claimed to have never doubted their ability to complete the New Start Program, their sense of determination was expressed in such statements as, "Once I start something I make sure I finish it," or "I'm always determined to see something through that I start." Some even had a moralistic
tone to their comments, arguing that, "Once you have enrolled, you know your commitments." Others simply stated, "I never wavered."

The challenge represented by the course did not necessarily come from the course itself, but for some women who had sufficient time to recover from a recent separation, the program provided an opportunity to measure themselves in an adult setting. For example, one woman said, "The course was a challenge to me. It was very important for me to do well after my separation. I had a chance to explore new ideas. I found it very stimulating." Others making a similar adjustment echoed these comments. However, for women in the throes of separation rather than recovering from it, the unexpected demands and pressures were such that their circumstances adversely affected their attendance.

Older women and those whose years of schooling had been terminated earlier than they would have preferred because of having to look after younger brothers and sisters in the absence of their mother, usually as a result of her death, formed a distinct but, nevertheless, determined sub-group. The New Start Program offered the means of making up for educational opportunities lost earlier in their lives and these women were determined to make the most of this chance. Many of them acknowledged the support from their sons and daughters, many of whom had been given schooling opportunities denied to their mothers. Generally, the return of their mothers to an educational setting was reportedly applauded and supported.
Thus far this chapter has focused on comments made by persisters and dropouts and related the interview findings to their attendance behaviour. The next section directly compares the two groups to account for their remaining in or withdrawing from the New Start Program.

**Comparing Persisters and Dropouts**

As has been mentioned previously, there was considerable overlap in this study between dropouts and those in the low rate of attendance category and between persisters and those women in the medium and high rate of attendance categories. This section focuses on the essential differences between persisters and dropouts as were revealed in the interviews conducted after the New Start Program had concluded.

In commenting on where they first obtained information about the New Start Program, persisters stated that they appreciated learning about the program from a friend, previous participant, or university staff member who was familiar with the nature and scope of the course. A participant was better informed by any of these sources than by printed course descriptions. Some persisters were also encouraged by having friends who had been in the program previously asking them about their progress in the course.

Although program planners and course coordinators were available to discuss the New Start Program with interested participants, the University of Auckland had a more formalized arrangement than the other two universities and actively
encouraged women to attend a pre-course interview during which a broad outline of the program was given and participants' time commitments were assessed. At Auckland persisters frequently acknowledged having taken advantage of the pre-course interview. At the other two universities there was no apparent difference between persisters and dropouts as to whether or not they had initiated contact with course coordinators prior to the beginning of the course.

Persisters had three commonly mentioned motives for enrolling before undertaking higher education. First, about one-quarter of the women interviewed wanted to explore a range of possible options. They wanted to obtain information on what opportunities were available, to learn what steps were required to take advantage of these possibilities, and to acquire the skills necessary to return to an educational institution. A second group consisting of about half of the women interviewed had enrolled to seek confirmation that their proposed plan to return to a formal educational setting was viable in terms of the level of study required and their capabilities to attain that level. A third group of persisters, the remaining quarter, had virtually made up their minds to re-enter an educational institution and wished to take advantage of the New Start Program to develop the necessary study skills and to help them settle on course options.

The latter two groups identified their objectives in terms that were relatively easy for them to use to assess their progress during the course. Many of them mentioned how each
week's session helped them move another step toward their goal. Being aware of the progress they were making encouraged them to continue to attend. Another feature of the goal statements of this group was that they tended to be more study-related than those made by dropouts. Such statements were more congruent with the aims of the program as perceived by course coordinators than the statements made by dropouts.

Of the three universities it appeared that participants at Waikato were given most opportunity to influence course objectives. Persisters perceived themselves as being given this chance more than dropouts did. This would suggest that early in the program course coordinators presented a structured format but later gave more opportunity for participant involvement. At Waikato this opportunity was favourably commented on by persisters. At Auckland there was apparently little participant involvement. However, this did not appear to affect attendance behaviour.

Travelling to the course as a member of a carpool appeared to enhance persistence. Women in this group mentioned the sense of commitment to attending that they felt if they had agreed to travel with another course member.

Reactions to their participation from friends and relatives for women in the persister group were mixed. Some felt almost rebuked for their decision and others were met with hostility. However, others were greatly encouraged by the statements of support that had they received. Sensing and experiencing strong support from at least one person whose opinion was valued was a
significant factor in enhancing persistence. A partner was often the key person forpersisters. However, in the absence of a partner or a partner's support, a substitute could be equally as effective. Older women often found their married children to be supportive. Other course members filled this role for some women. Yet dropouts reported that they had not received any intense reaction either in favour of or in opposition to their participation in the program. Further, they could not point to other individuals who provided strong support for their decision either to enrol or to withdraw.

Persisters often reported that they became members of subgroups within the class. Such membership provided a source of support and friendship as well as being a means of practical assistance. Books for assignments were shared, reading lists were jointly prepared, and concerns with assignments were discussed. The more active sub-groups reported that they telephoned one another as well as meeting to work on assignments.

Persisters spoke of more disadvantages of participating than did dropouts, particularly in terms of activities that they had to forego. However, their determination to complete the program resulted in a reordering of priorities in their lives at least for the duration of the course. Social events, part-time jobs, voluntary community involvement, and leisure pursuits were some of the activities which were given up or reduced.

Persisters considered these disadvantages were minor compared to the benefits which they gained from continuing to
attend. Consistent with the aims of the course, the acquisition of study skills was the most frequently mentioned benefit. Other advantages included making identifiable progress toward a longer term goal, particularly returning to formal study, increasing their awareness of educational opportunities, gaining greater clarity of available subject and course options, advancing their personal development, and meeting other women with similar aspirations.

Some persisters admitted that they had given some thought to withdrawing during the course. Others claimed never to have wavered. Whatever thoughts they had, there were key factors which enhanced persistence. First, there was support from another person. In the early stages of the course such support was very important particularly when women were feeling anxious and uncertain of their ability to cope with the demands of the course. A partner who offered verbal and practical support was spoken highly of by those interviewed. Support also came from children in their early teenaged years or those who had left the family home, respected friends, and others within sub-groups in the class. A second factor in enhancing persistence was the attitude of persisters. Many showed themselves to have been determined to complete the course and its associated assignments. A third factor was the sense of accomplishment which developed during the course, which many said had been reinforced by the positive encouragement of course coordinators. Other important factors included the course itself which was seen as varied, interesting, and stimulating. Many persisters
also commented favourably on the caring attitude of course coordinators. Taken together these factors contributed to women in this group attending at least one session in each half of the course. In reality most of them attended the majority of sessions in the course.

The limited number of sessions attended by dropouts, some of whom attended only the first session of the course, provided them with a smaller experience base than persisters to discuss course-related matters when they were interviewed.

Women who first heard about the New Start Program from a friend whose familiarity with the course was limited and those who enrolled after reading about it in the newspaper without making subsequent contact with staff in the providing institution were more inclined to drop out than women who had heard about the course by other means. Some of these women interviewed explained that the course was not quite what they had expected. Some had expected the course to give them assistance with life planning strategies, an interpretation they had deduced from the title of the course.

None of the dropouts interviewed was involved in sharing transport with another course member. All travelled alone, mainly by private car.

Whereas persisters reported encountering a range of reactions to their involvement in the New Start Program, dropouts stated that no one that they had spoken to was negative. Conversely, they did not report the enthusiastic support that some persisters were given. Mild interest was the
most commonly mentioned reaction experienced by dropouts. However, about one-third of them admitted that they had not discussed their involvement with many people.

The goal statements made by dropouts were more general than those made by most persisters. Rather than limiting their focus solely to study plans, dropouts often made reference to broader life goals, such as future stability, career reorientation, personal development, and living independently. When interviewed, those who withdrew for course-related factors acknowledged that their expectations were not adequately served by a program which focused on study skill development and preparation for entry into higher education.

There was no pattern in the responses to the question whether the women would have considered enrolling in higher education without having participated in the New Start Program. Some would not have attempted higher education, whereas others said that they would have, and still intended to, despite having attended only a few sessions. Several of these women had decided to delay starting their higher education studies, whereas some planned to begin on a part-time basis in the following year.

In the course most dropouts felt that they, as participants, had little or no opportunity to share in the process of setting course objectives. Instead they believed that course coordinators had presented a well-organized package that had evolved over the last few years when similar courses were held. In these circumstances some women felt that their
particular concerns had not been addressed. Because they were not sure what other women's expectations had been, they did not know how many others may have had similar concerns to themselves.

Compared with persisters, dropouts could point to a limited number of advantages for having attended the program. Their limited attendance largely accounted for this difference. Most admitted that they had attended too few sessions to get to know well other women in the course. Likewise, they did not become members of a sub-group whose members worked co-operatively on course assignments. The two benefits of having attended the course that were most frequently mentioned by dropouts were being introduced to some study skills and learning where to turn for advice on educational topics. Both of these were thought to have been worthwhile accomplishments, particularly by those women who hoped to return to formal study in the future.

Fewer disadvantages were reported by dropouts than by persisters. Several reasons accounted for this difference. First, when faced with making a choice between the course and some other activity, dropouts selected the latter even if the women concerned felt that there was no choice for them, as in the case of those facing marital problems or the pressure of employment. Second, by attending fewer sessions and undertaking few of the course assignments, dropouts did not make the same time commitment to the course as did persisters. In a sense, therefore, there were fewer occasions on which they had to make a choice between attending the course and doing something else
than was the case for the persisters.

Asked about the decision to withdraw and the process of dropping out, the women gave a mixed pattern of responses. Two made a decision during the first session not to return when they learnt from the course coordinators what would be expected. Several dwelt on the decision for several days and did not return for a second session. Five were absent from the second and/or third sessions and subsequently returned but felt that they had missed too much. Besides these women had to face the fact that an assignment was due and they felt that they did not know anyone else in the class well enough to approach to catch up on some of the course work that had been missed. There were others who attended several consecutive sessions before finally deciding that the level demanded in the class was beyond their capabilities or realizing that the nature of the course was not quite what they had expected.

Some women were compelled to withdraw because they could not cope with the demands of the course as well as domestic responsibilities, a decision made by several who had unexpected marital difficulties. Others decided that the pressures of employment were too great to combine with study demands. A few took the opportunity of employment, valuing having a job after being out of the work force for a number of years in preference to participating in the course. Those who moved to another town either with or to rejoin a husband who had moved ahead alone until the family home in the university town had been sold regretted the decision of having to withdraw but felt they had
no option but to do so.

Depending on each woman's circumstances the mental process of dropping out varied. Some said that the decision was easy to make, clear-cut and irrevocable. For others, however, there remained the lingering possibility that they would return to the course, catch up on the work that they had missed, and remain in the program until the end. Generally, though, after several consecutive absences the women who had thought they might return but did not, came to realize that their involvement in the New Start Program had ended before the conclusion of the course.

Summary

The findings from the 55 interviews which were conducted with women randomly selected have been discussed in this chapter. About a third of the interview was spent seeking explanations for and implications of answers supplied in the questionnaire that was completed at the first session of the New Start Program. The remaining two-thirds was spent raising new issues that were expected to have had a bearing on the attendance pattern of participants. The response patterns of persisters and dropouts were identified wherever relevant.

Individual circumstances varied considerably in accounting for persistence and dropout. For each individual there was a myriad of complex and interrelated factors which contributed to their particular behaviour pattern. Rarely was it possible to identify a sole factor as accounting for an outcome. The complexities of human society were confirmed by the interviews
conducted in this study. The interviews also provided an insight into factors which complemented the variables measured statistically. In particular, attention was drawn to factors such as social support, progress toward goals, and personal attributes which contributed to persistence.

The next chapter reports the statistical correlations between the variables identified in chapter V which described participant characteristics and the number of sessions women in the sample attended. The following chapter also describes the statistical relationships between these characteristics and rate of attendance category membership. In chapter IX an analysis is reported of the interview comments which accounted for rate of attendance category differentiation.
CHAPTER VIII

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS
AND RATES OF ATTENDANCE

Introduction

In this chapter the results and findings of the study are discussed as they apply to the three rate of attendance categories: high, medium, and low. As explained in chapter II these categories were determined prior to the collection of the data. Rate of attendance was studied because it was believed that frequency of attendance may reflect different behavioural phenomena from persistence and dropout which were the focus of the previous two chapters.

As was the case for persistence and dropout in chapter VII, data subsequently related to rate of attendance were obtained from instruments administered at the first session of the course. Participants were classified in one of the three rate of attendance categories after course records were examined at the conclusion of each course.

The findings for the bivariate relationships between demographic, educational, and psycho-social variables and the three rate of attendance categories are reported and discussed. In addition the relationships between the same variables and the number of sessions attended are examined. Tables 20, 21, and 22 are presented to summarize these statistical relationships. Following the sections discussing the relationships between
participant characteristics and their attendance behaviour, the latter part of the chapter reports on relationships among the educational and psycho-social variables which have been shown to be conceptually and empirically significant.

As was the case in chapter VI, an alpha level of significance of .05 was set for statistical analyses in this dissertation. Probability levels are reported for each relationship.

**Findings**

To compute the relationships between participant characteristics and the number of sessions attended two statistical techniques were used. When continuous variables were involved, as with age, years of schooling, distance to the course, and all the psycho-social variables, Pearson's product-moment correlation (hereafter referred to as Pearson's r) was used. The results of measuring these relationships are shown in table 20.
**TABLE 20**

**SUMMARY OF THE BIVARIATE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS AND NUMBER OF SESSIONS ATTENDED**

*USING PEARSON'S PRODUCT-MOMENT COEFFICIENT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sample number</th>
<th>r value</th>
<th>Level of probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children cared for</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of schooling</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous course attendance</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>.0017**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous withdrawal</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment-course start</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>.005**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to course</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State anxiety</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait anxiety</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total anxiety</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life change units</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesirable life events</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desirable life events</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net life change scores</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delay Avoidance</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Methods</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Habits</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Approval</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Acceptance</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Attitudes</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Orientation</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Highly significant**

**Significant**

In other cases where discrete variables were correlated, for example, marital status, educational qualifications, occupation, and partner's attitude, chi square was the statistical technique used. The relationships between these characteristics and the number of sessions attended are shown in table 21.
TABLE 21
SUMMARY OF THE BIVARIATE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS AND NUMBER OF SESSIONS ATTENDED USING THE CHI SQUARE STATISTIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sample number</th>
<th>Chi square value</th>
<th>D.f.</th>
<th>Level of probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>35.92</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.007**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational qualifications</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>70.45</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>46.68</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>66.45</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity source</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>64.69</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner's attitude</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>27.16</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means of transport</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>36.29</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Highly significant

When all the variables reflecting the selected characteristics of participants in this study were correlated with rate of attendance category chi square was used. The resultant relationships are summarized and presented in table 22. Comments on each of these relationships are made in the same order in which these relationships are listed in table 22.
Table 22

Summary of the bivariate relationships between each of the variables used in this study and rate of attendance category using the chi square statistic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sample number</th>
<th>Chi square value</th>
<th>D.f.</th>
<th>Level of probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>8.96</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children cared for</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>10.13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational qualifications</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>20.41</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of schooling</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>12.84</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>16.89</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous course attendance</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>18.68</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous withdrawal</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity source</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment-course start</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>9.17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner's attitude</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>7.64</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means of transport</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to course</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>17.15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State anxiety</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>9.62</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait anxiety</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total anxiety</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life change units</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>11.51</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesirable life events</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desirable life events</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>7.61</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net life change scores</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delay Avoidance</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Methods</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Habits</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Approval</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>25.65</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.004**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Acceptance</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>14.07</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Attitudes</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>11.86</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Orientation</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Highly significant

Age

As is shown in table 20 the age of participants in this study was not significantly related to the number of sessions they attended. Therefore, younger women were not significantly more inclined to have attended fewer sessions, a finding which
had been reported in some previous studies as noted in chapter II.

To correlate age with attendance category membership, age categories were formed by collapsing the ages of the participants into decades (see table 25). The age of women in this study was not significantly related to rate of attendance category membership. A similar finding was reported in the chapter VI when the focus was on persisters and dropouts. As was explained in that chapter, most women in this study were older than participants in previous studies in which dropout was reported as being significantly related to age.

Marital status

In correlating marital status and sessions attended, the categories of separated, divorced, and widowed were combined because there were only eight women in the latter two categories. As table 21 shows, marital status was significantly related to the number of sessions attended. Thirty-five percent of married women attended all ten sessions, whereas 24 percent of single women did so, and 13 percent of the 'Other' category. The proportion of married women attending nine sessions was also higher than for the other two categories. At the other end of the sessions attended continuum 31 percent of single women attended one, two, or three sessions, whereas 17 percent of married women and only four percent of the 'Other' category attended three or fewer sessions.

This pattern was confirmed when marital status was
correlated with attendance category. As table 22 shows, the relationship between these variables was statistically significant. Thirty-one percent of single women in the sample were in the low attendance category, a much higher proportion than for other marital status groups. Sixty-seven percent (N = 55) of married women were in the high attendance category, a higher proportion than for the other marital status types. Hence being married was positively associated with attending more sessions and, therefore, being placed in a higher attendance category than not being married. Of the women who were not married, those who were single attended fewer sessions than separated or divorced women. This result could reflect married women in particular having a partner and other family members who offered greater support and encouragement to attend more sessions than single women experienced. Another possible explanation is that the latter group of women were faced with competing interests which they gave priority to from time to time rather than attending sessions of the course. Although the group of single women attended fewer sessions than other marital status groups they were no more inclined to drop out than these groups as was revealed in chapter VI.

Children
The finding of a positive and significant relationship between the number of children cared for and the number of sessions attended was explained by interviewees as their being encouraged by the supportive attitude of their children. In
addition participants saw benefits for their children by being a positive role model by attending all or most sessions of the course. It is also reasonable to conclude that caring for children did not act as a hindrance to attendance.

By collapsing the number of sessions attended into categories, the nature of the statistic reflecting attendance behaviour is altered. Women with more children to care for were not significantly inclined to be members of the high attendance category than women with fewer or no children.

**Educational qualifications**

The relationships between educational qualifications and both attendance set data considered in this chapter were not significant. These findings showed that those with lower levels of educational qualifications were neither more nor less inclined to attend fewer sessions than those with higher qualifications. One factor which could have contributed to this result was the length of time since many women had earned their qualifications. Furthermore, many women in the program were determined to improve their educational qualifications and had enrolled to acquire the skills to achieve this goal.

**Years of schooling**

The relationship between years of schooling and the number of sessions attended not being significant gives support to the results of the previous relationship in which no significant correlation was found between the level of schooling and
sessions attended because educational qualifications tend to reflect years of schooling. Likewise, no significant relationship was found between years of schooling and attendance category membership. Hence, those with fewer years of schooling were neither more nor less inclined to attend fewer sessions than those having spent more years in schooling.

Family income

When family income was correlated with attendance category, the relationship approached the probability level of 0.05. There was a tendency noted for those in the highest income group to have a greater proportion of their group in the high attendance category than was the case for women from low income families. At the lowest income level 11 percent of those in the low attendance category (19 percent of the sample) had family incomes less than $5,000, whereas 8 percent of the high attendance category (57 percent of the sample) earned less than this amount. Yet at levels between the extremes there was no consistent pattern, hence family income was not found to be significantly related to rate of attendance category membership.

Occupation

The relationships between occupational category and sessions attended and between occupational category and attendance category were not significant. The categorization of occupations based on income and other factors is discussed in appendix D. Clearly, these women's occupational categories were
not significantly associated with their rate of attendance category.

**Previous course attendance**

There was a positive and significant correlation (Pearson's r of .21) between the number of courses which participants had attended in the previous three years and sessions attended in the New Start Program. The more courses that women had attended in the past the more they were inclined to attend a higher number of sessions in the program studied.

Of the 48 women who had not attended a course in the previous three years 25 percent (N = 12) were present at all sessions, whereas 55 percent (N = 6) and all (N = 3) of those who had attended eight or more and seven courses respectively in the past three years were at all sessions. Similarly women who attended nine sessions had previously attended more courses than those who attended fewer sessions.

Whereas there was a significant relationship for the correlation involving the continuous variables, this was not the case for the non-parametric statistical relationship. The previous attendance pattern of the middle attendance group did not follow the expected relationship for the number of courses attended in the previous three years. Whereas 28 percent of those in the high attendance category had attended four or more courses in this time period, only 7 and 6 percent of those in the low and medium categories respectively had done so. At the other extreme, 30, 37, and 33 percent of those in the low,
medium, and high attendance categories respectively had not attended any course in the time period considered. Thus the medium attendance category was proportionately highest for not having attended courses and lowest, albeit marginally, for having attended most courses. Hence, as continuous variables, courses attended and sessions attended were positively and significantly related. On the other hand, a woman's previous course attendance was not significantly related to her rate of attendance category membership. If only rate of attendance category membership had been considered the positive and significant relationship with the number of sessions attended would not have been detected.

Previous withdrawal

Whereas previous course attendance was positively and significantly related to the number of sessions attended, the relationship between the number of courses from which withdrawal had previously occurred and sessions attended was not significant. Therefore, those who had withdrawn from more classes previously were not more or less inclined to attend fewer sessions than those who had withdrawn from few or no classes previously. For the relationship with rate of attendance the frequencies of previous withdrawal from two or more courses were coalesced because only eleven respondents were involved. This relationship was also not significant.

Accordingly, those who had withdrawn from courses previously were neither more nor less inclined to have attended
fewer sessions. Likewise, they were not significantly more inclined to be members of the low attendance category than those who had not withdrawn previously. For participants in this study past behaviour, in terms of withdrawing from a course, was not a predictor of behaviour in this program.

**Publicity source**

As is shown in table 21 and table 22 the relationships between where information about the New Start Program was obtained and attendance behaviour were not significant.

As was explained in chapter VI, it was thought that there might have been a difference in the attendance pattern of women who learnt about the program from the media as distinct from personal contact. Yet in the category, public advertising, which was the first source of publicity reported by 40 percent of the participants, the distribution of women in the three attendance categories reflected their overall proportions in these categories. Hence source of first publicity was not significantly associated with rate of attendance category membership.

**Time from enrolment to course commencement**

There was a positive and significant correlation (Pearson's r of .21) between the number of days which women enrolled prior to when the course began and the number of sessions attended. The greater the amount of time before it began women had enrolled for the New Start Program the greater the tendency to
attend a higher number of sessions. A possible explanation for this finding is that women who decided to enrol and acted upon their decision well in advance of the course's beginning had sufficient time to review their commitments and made the necessary changes to enable them to attend most or all sessions in the program without being distracted from attending.

In calculating the relationship between the time from enrolment to course commencement and attendance category the number of days were collapsed into five groups.

The explanation for a significant relationship between the continuous variables and a lack of significance when they are treated as discrete variables is similar to that offered when previous course attendance was discussed. In this case those in the high attendance category acted as might be expected. They were proportionately underrepresented in the grouping of days immediately prior to the course's commencement and they were proportionately overrepresented in groupings well in advance of the start of the course. The percentage of women from the low and medium attendance categories varied no more than 5 percent from each other in each of the five groupings. Therefore, the relationship between the number of days from enrolment to course commencement and rate of attendance category membership was not significant.

Partner's attitude

The relationships between partner's attitude and each of the two sets of attendance behaviour considered in this chapter,
sessions attended and rate of attendance category, were not significant.

Evidently, those women whose partners had a positive attitude to their enrolling were neither more nor less inclined to be in a particular rate of attendance category than women who reported their partners were discouraging. Most single women were not included in the relationship of partner attitude to participant enrolment because they considered the question was not applicable. Therefore, for the remainder (N = 89) partner attitude to their enrolment was not significantly associated with the number of sessions attended or rate of attendance category membership. The interviews revealed that the nature of the support given rather than initially reported attitude was a more important determinant of rate of attendance category membership.

Means of transport

Table 20 and table 21 show that means of transport used by participants to travel to the New Start Program was not significantly related to either the number of sessions women attended or to their rate of attendance category membership. Accordingly, it did not seem to make any difference to their attendance behaviour how the participants travelled to the course.

Distance to the course

There was a negative correlation (Pearson's r of -0.11)
between the distance women travelled from their homes to the location of the course and the number of sessions attended at the .09 level of probability.

For the relationship between distance travelled and attendance category, the number of kilometres travelled was collapsed into six groups. Although the chi square value exceeded the specified alpha level of .05, it was sufficiently close to indicate that the distance travelled to the class had an effect on participants' attendance behaviour.

In both cases a tendency was noted for those women who lived closest to the course location to attend more frequently than those who lived further away.

State anxiety

There was a negative but not significant correlation between state anxiety and the number of sessions attended by women in the New Start Program.

The relationship between state anxiety (after the anxiety scores had been collapsed into five groups) and attendance category membership was also not significant. Women who had low state anxiety scores were not more inclined to be members of the high attendance category than women with high scores.

Trait anxiety

As for state anxiety, the relationship between trait anxiety and the number of sessions attended was a negative one. To correlate trait anxiety with rate of attendance category,
scores on this anxiety scale were collapsed into five groups. In each of these groups participants were represented almost in direct proportion to their distribution among the three rate of attendance categories. Hence those women who had high scores in trait anxiety were not more or less inclined to be in the low rate of attendance category than women who had low scores on this scale.

**Total anxiety**

Consistent with the relationship between its two component scales and the number of sessions attended, total anxiety was also negatively correlated.

The relationship between total anxiety and attendance category was also not significant. Apparently the attendance of the women in this study was not influenced by their levels of anxiety.

**Self-esteem**

Self-esteem was not significantly related to either the number of sessions attended or to rate of attendance category membership. For the latter correlation self-esteem scores were collapsed to form five categories. Accordingly, those women who saw themselves as worthy and capable as measured by high self-esteem scores were not more inclined to be in the high attendance category than women who recorded low scores on the self-esteem measure.
Life events

The relationship between the number of life change units as assigned by the SRRS for women in the study and the number of sessions they attended was negative, but not significant.

For the correlation with attendance category, scores for life change units were collapsed into six categories, the first five each had a range of 100; and the sixth included all scores above 500. In this relationship the alpha level of probability of .05 was exceeded. Women in the New Start Program who attended less frequently did not record higher life scores according to "values" assigned by the SRRS than women who attended often.

The weighted undesirable and desirable life events scores were collapsed into four and five categories respectively to compute the correlations with attendance category membership. Neither of these correlations was within the .05 level of probability. These data suggest that when participants were given the opportunity to judge the effect of the events which they had experienced in the previous twelve months, those who had experienced more undesirable events were not more inclined to be in the low attendance category than those who had experienced fewer undesirable events.

For events defined by the participants as desirable, the relationships between their weighted scores and the number of sessions attended and between weighted desirable life events scores and attendance category were not significant. Accordingly, it is evident that those women who had experienced
more desirable changes were not more or less inclined to be in the high attendance category than those who had experienced fewer desirable changes.

When the scores for the desirable life changes were subtracted from the undesirable ones, a procedure explained in chapter IV, the relationship was found to be not significant. Therefore, life events scores, irrespective of how they were measured, were not significantly related to the number of sessions attended. Whereas in other research (as discussed in chapter III) high scores on the SRRS have been associated with undesirable outcomes, for example, illness or dropout, no similar significant relationships were found in this study. The attendance of women with high scores on scales representing either more life change units or undesirable life changes was not affected in the courses studied.

The total number of scores for the sum of the weighted life events was collapsed to form five categories and correlated with attendance category. When desirable events were subtracted from those considered to be undesirable, women who recorded a higher net sum of changes score were almost as likely to be members of the high attendance as the low attendance categories than those who were assessed a lower number of net changes. Apparently life events which had been experienced by participants in the twelve months prior to their enrolment in the New Start Program did not affect their attendance in the course.

Study orientation
Each of the seven scales on the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes, all of which yield scores which can be considered as continuous variables, was correlated with the number of sessions attended, another continuous variable. Scores on these scales were collapsed and also correlated with rate of attendance category membership. Except for correlations involving one scale, Teacher Approval, and attendance category membership, none of the correlations reached the level of significance set for this study. For each of the correlations the number of participants involved was 118, as was explained in chapter V.

Women in the high attendance category were in the majority in groupings of scores at both ends of the Delay Avoidance scale. Therefore, women who had high scores on this scale were not more or less inclined to be in the high attendance category group than women with low scores. Similarly, a low score on the Work Methods scale did not affect attendance in the New Start Program.

In keeping with its two constituent scales, the relationships between Study Habits and sessions attended and between Study Habits and attendance category were not significant. Accordingly, the scores women recorded on the Study Habits scale were not significantly related to their attendance behaviour. It could be argued that most women who enrolled in the program were concerned about and keen to improve their study skills. After many participants had acknowledged this goal at the time of the first session (see table 6), it is unlikely that it would have subsequently been a major reason for
low attendance.

Of the four primary scales on the SSHA only Teacher Approval had a positive relationship, albeit very small, with the number of sessions attended. Again the relationship was not significant. Women who recorded a high score on this scale were not more or less inclined to attend more sessions than women who had a low score.

As noted earlier, the relationship between Teacher Approval and attendance category was significant. For the low attendance category more than half (N = 11, 52.4 percent) had scores of 29 or less on this scale, whereas 73.5 percent (N = 50) of those in the high attendance category had scores of 30 or more. The medium attendance category participants were clearly midway between the other two categories as might be expected by their forming the middle category. Nearly one-half (N = 14, 48.2 percent) of their members had scores ranging from 25-34. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between a woman's score on this scale and her rate of attendance category membership. Women who had high scores on this scale were more likely to be in the high attendance category than women who had low scores. As was noted in chapter VI, when this scale was discussed, participants who regarded teachers more positively than did their counterparts were more inclined to be in the high attendance category. Holding a positive attitude to teachers, as is reflected in a high score on the Teacher Approval scale, was consistent with attending eight or more sessions in the course and, therefore, being classified in the high attendance
category. Women's attendance behaviour in this category confirmed their belief that instructors in the New Start Program would assist them achieve their goals.

Neither of the relationships between the fourth primary scale of the SSHA, Education Acceptance, and sessions attended and attendance category was significant. For the latter correlation scores were collapsed to form six groups. When this was done for this scale, participants in the high attendance category were overrepresented for their proportion (58 percent) of the sample completing the scale. Among those in the low attendance category 86 percent scored between 25 and 34. Some participants in the medium attendance category scored lower but others scored higher than those in the low attendance category. Therefore, scores on the Education Acceptance scale were not significantly associated with rate of attendance category membership.

Teacher Approval and Education Acceptance combine to form the Study Attitudes scale. Neither the relationship for this scale with the number of sessions attended nor with attendance category was statistically significant. Accordingly, the attitude of women in the New Start Program to study did not influence their attendance behaviour.

The four primary scales on the SSHA are summed up in one measure, Study Orientation. Reflecting the influence of its primary scales, Study Orientation was not significantly related either to the number of sessions attended or to attendance category membership. Evidently, the overall attitude that women
in the New Start Program had toward education and their own study habits did not affect their attendance in the program. The exception to this pattern was the Teacher Approval scale on which women who had high scores, indicating a positive regard for teachers, were more likely to be in the high category than women who had low scores on this primary scale.

The next section reports on relationships in this study which have been shown in previous studies to be significant, for example, between state and trait anxiety, and between anxiety and self-esteem.

**Inter-variable Relationships**

Conceptually and empirically significant relationships have been shown in previous research, some of which was reviewed in chapter II and chapter III, among the educational and psychosocial variables selected for this study. In this section the relationships between the anxiety measures are considered first, then educational experiences are related to anxiety. Anxiety and self-esteem have been the focus of previous social psychological research. The relationships between these variables for women in this study is reported and discussed. The education experiences of women, as measured by their years schooling, highest level of formal educational qualifications, and attendance in adult education courses in the previous three years, were related to their self-esteem and to their study orientation.
State and trait anxiety

As was noted in a chapter III, the correlation between the STAI 'A-State' and 'A-Trait' depends upon the amount and type of stress that prevail in the conditions under which the former scale is administered. In this study both scales were completed consecutively as part of the package of instruments and questionnaires to which participants responded at the first session of the New Start Program.

In this study (N = 144) there was a positive correlation (Pearson's r of 0.59) between state and trait anxiety scores. This relationship was significant beyond the .0001 level of probability. Therefore, there appears to have been some overlap in the two types of anxiety recorded by participants in this study. The relationship between scores on the two scales approached the range of .45 - .55 reported in the STAI Manual, although it was slightly higher than the reported usual upper limit range.

Educational experience and anxiety

Many women in the study had not attended an educational institution for a number of years. Thirty-three percent of them had not participated in an adult education course in the past three years. A further 39 percent had attended only one or two courses in this time. The New Start Program was designed to provide participants with information about further educational opportunities and to equip them with study skills to enable them to cope with the requirements of tertiary education,
particularly in university degree credit courses.

Against this background it was expected that three indices of educational experience: years of schooling, level of formal education, and number of adult education courses attended in the previous three years would be important antecedents of anxiety for women returning to an educational setting. Hence, these three indices were correlated with state anxiety which, because of its emphasis on how the individual feels at a particular time, was anticipated to have been more strongly felt by women who had been absent from an educational setting for a number of years than by women who had higher educational qualifications as well as by those who had recent experience of participating in an educational program. By enrolling and taking part in the New Start Program all these women had returned to this setting.

Correlations involving years of schooling and level of formal education with state anxiety failed to satisfy the level of probability set for this study. However, the relationship between the number of adult education courses attended in the previous three years and state anxiety was -0.22, using Pearson's r, at the .004 level of probability. Women who had attended a greater number of adult education courses in recent years were far less likely to feel anxious about being in an adult education program than those without or with little of this experience. Important from a conceptual point of view was the finding that when previous course attendance was correlated with trait anxiety, the relationship exceeded the alpha level of probability set for this study. In other words, scores on the
scale which measures the general anxiety-proneness of respondents were not significantly related to the number of days prior to the beginning of the course that participants enrolled. Hence it can be concluded that previous adult education course attendance affected how women felt at a particular time, which is what state anxiety measures. In this study their feelings at the first session of a ten-session course were measured. Yet previous course attendance did not affect how these women felt generally, a feeling which is measured by trait anxiety.

In case the possibility existed that women who had not attended adult education courses in recent years were not familiar with enrolment procedures, or doubted their eligibility to participate or, what is a more likely explanation, they were not on the providing institutions' mailing lists, and therefore, their enrolment had been delayed, the number of days which women enrolled prior to the commencement of the course was correlated with state anxiety. However, the relationship failed to meet the level of probability set for this study. Hence of the possible educationally-related factors which might have been considered causally linked with state anxiety, only the number of adult education courses attended in the previous three years was significantly related to it. Evidently, for women in this study the greater the number of adult education courses they had attended during the preceding three years the lower their level of state anxiety.

Self-esteem and anxiety
Previous research, as reported in chapter III, has shown significant correlations between self-esteem and anxiety. It was noted, for example, that larger correlations between the two anxiety sub-scales of STAI are obtained when they are administered in conditions which pose a threat to self-esteem than when these measures are obtained in situations in which there is the threat of physical danger.

In this study the relationship between state anxiety and self-esteem, measured using Pearson's r, was -0.64. The relationship was significant beyond the .0001 level of probability. The same level of probability was found when trait anxiety was correlated with self-esteem. Pearson's r in this case was -0.60. For the total anxiety score, the relationship between it and self-esteem was -0.69, again beyond the .0001 level of probability.

Hence there was an inverse relationship between anxiety and self-esteem for the women in this study. Those with high self-esteem tended to be less anxious than those with low self-esteem. Low self-esteem tended to be associated with high anxiety.

**Educational experience and self-esteem**

Expected links between educational experience (years of schooling, level of formal education, and recent attendance at adult education courses) and state anxiety were explained earlier. When these relationships were computed, the only significant correlation was that involving the number of courses
attended in the previous three years which suggested that women who were unfamiliar with adult education practices became anxious in that particular setting. That they were not generally anxious was shown by the number of courses attended not being significantly associated with trait anxiety. Similar reasons which appeared to justify associating educational experience and state anxiety might also be applied to educational experience and self-esteem, particularly in view of the finding that was reported earlier of a significant and inverse relationship between state anxiety and self-esteem. Women who had not attended adult education courses in recent years as well as those who had limited years of schooling or those who lacked educational qualifications might have been expected to have had a lower level of self-esteem than those who had higher educational qualifications and recent adult education course experience. This tendency may be magnified in the context of a course in which participants may admit, either openly or by inference, to deficiencies in study skills or to a feeling of personal inadequacy.

However, when the three indices of educational experience were correlated with self-esteem none of the relationships was within the set level of probability, although a correlation of .13 at the .06 level of probability was found for the relationship between self-esteem and the number of courses attended in the previous three years. Hence there was a strong tendency for those with high self-esteem to have attended more adult education courses in the previous three years than those
with low self-esteem.

Self-esteem was not significantly related to either of the other two indices of educational experience. There was a zero relationship between self-esteem and years of schooling. For the relationship with level of educational qualifications the chi square value was 38.76 with 32 d.f. at the .19 level of probability. It is suggested that neither of these two variables were significantly related to self-esteem because for many participants in the study it had been a number of years since they had been involved in full-time formal education. Participants' subsequent life experiences were more likely to have influenced their feelings of self-worth than their formal schooling experiences.

Although the data do not provide sufficient evidence to establish causality, it is argued throughout this dissertation that participants who attended less frequently would be those with lower self-esteem than their counterparts.

**Educational experience and SSHA scales**

Earlier in this chapter years of schooling, level of formal educational qualifications, and the number of adult education courses attended in the previous three years were referred to as reflecting women's educational experience. In addition to being correlated with sessions attended, attendance categories, and persistence and dropout (in chapter VI), these variables have been correlated with state anxiety and self-esteem, and the findings reported. It also seems justifiable for the
educational experience variables to be associated with the scales of the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes. For example, a woman's Work Methods (as defined by the SSHA) could be expected to have been influenced by her years of schooling or level of formal education. Likewise, her acceptance of education might reasonably be assumed to be linked significantly with years of schooling or recent adult education course attendance. Similarly, an individual's endorsement of teachers, as measured by the Teacher Approval scale, logically might be expected to be associated with years of schooling or adult education participation. Therefore, the three educational experience variables were correlated with each of the four primary scales of the SSHA, and with the overall score produced by the SSHA, Study Orientation.

When the level of formal educational qualifications was related to the SSHA scales, the only significant relationship was with Teacher Approval. For 116 women who completed both measures the chi square value was 60.17 with 30 d.f. at the .0009 level of probability. Those with higher qualifications, such as University Entrance and completed tertiary educational qualifications (such as nursing or an apprenticeship), had larger proportions of their category membership than those with lower qualifications with higher scores on the Teacher Approval scale. Evidently, those who had been more successful educationally than others prior to the New Start Program, as reflected by their higher level of educational qualifications, were more inclined to have a more positive attitude to teachers
as was indicated by their higher score on the Teacher Approval scale. Furthermore, women with high scores on this scale, as has been shown, were significantly more inclined to persist compared to those with low scores. They were also significantly more likely to be in the high rate of attendance category than women whose scores were low. Therefore, of the four primary scales of the SSHA only the Teacher Approval scale appeared to have some discriminating function to distinguish between persisters and dropouts and, as has been the focus in this chapter, among members of the three rate of attendance categories.

For the other two variables which formed what has been termed the women's educational experience, years of schooling and the number of adult education courses attended in the previous years, their correlation with the SSHA scales exceeded the specified level of probability. Years of schooling may have been an inappropriate variable to relate to the SSHA because of the length of time many women in the study had been away from a formal educational setting. When women were interviewed, as is reported in chapter IX, ten of them said that one of their reasons for enrolling was to offset their absence from formal education which had resulted in a decline in their study skills. The section dealing with achievements that were hoped for (reported in chapter V) confirmed the acquisition of study skills as an important goal for participants in the study. In these circumstances years since attending a formal educational institution may have been a variable that might have been
significantly related, albeit in an inverse direction, to the scales emphasizing study skills in the SSHA.

A possible explanation for the number of adult education courses not being significantly related to the SSHA scales is that many adult education courses do not emphasize or encourage the development of study skills. The New Start Program was somewhat unique in this regard, particularly in the New Zealand context. For these reasons, therefore, the relationships between the variables constituting educational experience and the SSHA were not significant, except for that between level of educational qualifications and the Teacher Approval scale.

**Summary**

In chapter V the major characteristics of the women in the study were described. In this chapter these characteristics were related to the data for two of the attendance sets. That is, the social, demographic, and educational background of the participants as well as their course-related behaviour (pre-registration, means of transport, and distance travelled), psycho-social measures, and study orientation were related to the number of sessions attended and rate of attendance category membership.

Four descriptive variables were found to be significantly related to the number of sessions which women attended: marital status, number of children cared for, the number of adult education courses attended in the previous three years, and the number of days prior to the beginning of the program that
enrolment occurred.

A higher proportion of married women than those in other marital status categories attended all or most sessions of the course. Women who cared for a greater number of children tended to be present at more sessions than women with fewer or no children. Women whose educational background included recent adult education course attendance were more likely to attend a greater number of sessions than those who did not have this experience. There was also a positive correlation between the number of days before the course commenced that women enrolled and the number of sessions which they attended. Thus, women who enrolled early for the program tended to be present at more sessions than those who enrolled closer to its commencement.

Two variables were significantly related to attendance category membership, marital status and Teacher Approval. A higher proportion of married women than other marital status groups were in the high attendance category. Single women had a larger percentage in the low attendance category than did other groups. If support from a partner was a major contributing factor in being in the high attendance category then most single women in the study would have been denied this support because of their marital status.

Teacher Approval, one of the four primary scales on the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes, was significantly related to rate of attendance category membership. More of those who scored higher on this scale attended a greater number of sessions in the course than those who scored lower. Teacher
Approval was also significantly related to level of educational qualifications. Therefore, those who had previously been successful in the educational system viewed teachers positively. If women with high scores on this scale attributed their previous success, at least in part, to the efforts of their teachers, then it follows that they would attend most or all sessions in the New Start Program expecting that the instructors would help them achieve their goals.

There were three relationships in addition to those already discussed which approached the .05 level of probability. Women who travelled a shorter distance to the location of the course attended more sessions than those who lived further away from it. The same trend was also noted in the relationship between distance travelled and attendance category membership. There was a tendency for those women in families earning a higher income to be classified in the high attendance category to a greater extent than those from families earning a lower income.

There were several relationships between the variables describing participant characteristics which were significantly related statistically. As has been reported in other studies, the relationship between the two anxiety measures for women in the New Start Program was significant. When both of the anxiety measures were related to the number of adult education courses which women had attended in the previous three years, there was a negative and significant correlation between state anxiety and the number of courses attended, but the relationship with trait anxiety was not significant. Women who had attended a greater
number of adult education courses in recent years were inclined to feel less anxious at the first session of the New Start Program than women who had attended few or no courses. Yet neither anxiety measure was significantly related to either the number of sessions attended or to the rate of attendance category into which participants were classified. Whatever anxiety women felt at the beginning of the New Start Program it did not affect their attendance.

The next chapter reports on the interviews which were conducted to ascertain reasons for the different rates of attendance for women who enrolled in the New Start Program.
CHAPTER IX
ACCOUNTING FOR RATE OF ATTENDANCE
DIFFERENTIATION THROUGH INTERVIEWS

Introduction

As was indicated in chapters IV and VII, the first part of the interview sought clarification of answers supplied in the questionnaire with an emphasis on how the factual information was related to rate of attendance category membership. Questions were asked on the importance of where information about the course was first obtained, how participants travelled to the course, their previous adult education course attendance, their child-caring responsibilities, their partner's attitude, the factors they thought might affect their attendance, and the achievements they sought from attending the course.

Two-thirds of the interview was spent on participants' course experiences and how these experiences affected their attendance. Women interviewed were asked to comment on the advantages and disadvantages of having participated in the program, the reactions they had encountered from other people, the effect of course activities, and the benefits gained. Time was also spent in the interviews on consideration given to withdrawal and the factors that encouraged continued attendance.

Finally in this chapter the characteristics which were most strongly associated with women in each of the three attendance categories are identified.
Interview Findings

The source of first publicity, means of transport, previous adult education course experience, child-caring responsibilities, partner's attitude, factors thought likely to affect attendance, and achievements sought were questioned to identify factors which may have accounted for rate of attendance differentiation.

Source of first publicity

The findings regarding the effect of the source of first learning about the New Start Program on rate of attendance category membership are similar to those for persistence and dropout which were discussed in chapter VII. Only at the University of Otago was there any link between the source of publicity and subsequent attendance. There, participants who indicated 'Friend' as the source of their first learning about the program were more inclined to attend fewer sessions than participants at the same institution who first learnt about the program from other sources. The explanation given for this phenomenon, reported in chapter VII, was that the informants thought the participants would benefit from the experience. Both participants concerned subsequently enrolled without seeking further information from the providing institution. Women whose attention had been directed to the course by previous course participants or by friends who knew women who had taken part in the course previously were more inclined to be amongst those in the high and medium attendance categories.
Having personal reports about the course provided potential enrollees with information upon which they could enrol. Women with this advantage reported having been better informed at the beginning of the course about its nature and scope than those who had not had this initial personal source of information. Some women overcame this disadvantage by making contact with course coordinators and thereby learning of the demands of the course. Arrangements for and the apparent benefits of pre-course consultations with university staff members were discussed in chapter VII.

Means of transport

Statistically, means of transport was not significantly related to rate of attendance category. However, carpooling, travelling with another course member, particularly for those in the Auckland program, was reported by several interviewees as contributing to their having attended more sessions than they might have done. Several reasons were given to support this comment, in particular having a pre-arranged on-going commitment either to provide transport or to be taken to the course created a sense of obligation in those who had entered into an agreement. None of the women in the low attendance category reported having been part of a carpooling arrangement.

Previous adult education course attendance

The relationship between the number of adult education courses attended in the previous three years, in contrast to
most of the other relationships which have been discussed, was statistically significant when related to the number of sessions attended. The reaction of women to their involvement in the New Start Program depended on whether or not they had had recent experience in adult education. For those who had attended another adult education course within three years, there was a consensus that the coordinators were more caring, more responsive to individual needs and more accepting of individual differences than tutors or instructors in other programs. For those participants experiencing their first adult education class since leaving secondary school, a time interval that ranged from three to twenty years, the common view was that the experience was very different from what they had encountered in the secondary school and from what they had expected. Being treated as an equal, receiving special assistance, and being instructed in a relaxed environment created by the coordinators were features pointed out by those with no formal adult education experience.

Child-caring responsibilities

Considerable mention was made in chapter VII on the reaction and support of children to their mother's involvement in the New Start Program. Generally, women perceived their children's attitude to be favourable to their participation. In view of the overlap between persisters and those in the high and medium attendance categories and between dropouts and low attendance category members, the findings discussed that chapter
generally apply to this one. However, there were particular comments which were contributed by women in different attendance categories which are more appropriately discussed in this chapter.

In regard to balancing responsibilities for caring for their families and fulfilling course requirements, those in the high attendance category said that they either did their course work while their children were at school or they did it in the evening after the children had gone to bed. Others commented on the need for compromise with their children, arranged by agreement with older children or through a sense of duty for younger ones. Discussing their arrangements, some women said that they asked to be left alone to concentrate on their reading or an assignment. In return they offered a reward such as spending time at a park or playing in a gymnasium.

For women in the medium attendance category where compromise was called for in balancing course and family commitments, many typically reacted by doing fewer assignments. For some this was a factor in their attending fewer than the maximum number of sessions in the course. For others, completing fewer assignments was a consequence of their being absent from several sessions for other reasons.

In coping with domestic responsibilities and course requirements, many women in the New Start Program showed the characteristics which accounted for the majority of participants being classified in the high attendance category. These characteristics may be seen as determination, resolution, or
motivation. However these qualities are defined, and a combination of all three as well as others were involved for many in the study, they contributed to many women attending most or all sessions in the program.

For many in the low attendance category group, factors other than the need to make compromises to accommodate family and course obligations were given as reasons for not attending more sessions. Because women in this group attended three or fewer sessions, course-work demands rarely intruded on child-caring responsibilities. For those classified as dropouts the same conditions prevailed.

**Partner's attitude**

The influence of a partner's attitude on attendance behaviour was discussed fully in chapter VII. Similar effects applied to rate of attendance category membership as they did to persistence and dropout. For women with partners, the nature of the support given was important.

As a generalization, positive partner support seems to have been a factor in encouraging participant attendance in the initial stages of the course. After that other factors associated with the course, perceived progress toward a goal, or the participant's growing confidence accounted for attendance category membership. Negative or neutral partner support did not appear to have contributed to limited attendance where some other valued source of support was provided.
Factors thought likely to affect attendance

Among women in the groups classified in the low attendance category the reasons they gave for their limited attendance rarely matched the factors they had thought might have affected them when they responded at the beginning of the course. As was noted in chapter VII, several women moved from the city in which the course was held to other towns. Several other women who had enrolled and had attended the first session were confronted with marital difficulties which worsened in the early stages of the program. Employment-related activities interrupted the involvement of two other women who were interviewed. An important factor accounting for this group's attendance record was the unexpected emergence of events which they had not foreseen at the time of the first session of the course.

Whereas the low attendance category was adversely affected by unanticipated events, the medium attendance group was the most accurate in its predictions of factors likely to affect the number of sessions attended. Dominant of the concerns predicted included those related directly or indirectly to work. Direct employment-related causes of absence among this group were being called to work a shift that was not normally rostered or feeling obliged to work when another secretary in the same department was on sick leave. Indirect work-related effects included feeling too exhausted or tired after working long hours. One woman who gave this as a reason for missing sessions was the owner-manager of a store. Another woman worked as a cleaner and started work each day at 5.00 a.m. Combining study with full-
time employment was a burden which was eased by not attending some sessions.

The high attendance group could be characterized by its caution and determination. Caution was reflected in the number of possible factors participants listed that might affect their attendance but which in practice did not eventuate. Problems with their own health or with the health of other members of the family which might require their attention were listed, as were transport difficulties, other commitments, and job obligations. However, few of these eventuated except for absence from the occasional session because of individual or family sickness. The determination of women in this category was demonstrated by the alternative arrangements some of them reported making to enable them to attend sessions and by their re-ordering priorities in their lives to allow them to attend. For example, one woman declined to serve as a relieving teacher during the term she participated in the New Start Program so that she could concentrate on attending the course and meeting its requirements. Another woman postponed taking on an active role in a voluntary organization. Several rearranged regular activities because the New Start Program took precedence at least for the duration of the course.

The determination of women in the high attendance category was also reflected by those who indicated clearly on the questionnaire that nothing was likely to affect their attendance. "I've thought about doing this for a long time," one woman said, "and nothing is going to stop me." Neither of
the other attendance categories were as well represented with such determined participants as the high attendance group.

There were several factors which were indicated by participants in all groups but which did not ultimately affect their attendance. The most common among these were course-related factors. Some participants cautioned at the outset that their continuing attendance would be dependent upon their assessment of the personal benefits of the course. For those interviewed there were very few who attributed their absence from sessions to aspects of the course. There were, however, women in the medium attendance category who continued to attend but who acknowledged in the interviews that they became more selective of the sessions they went to in the latter half of the course as they more clearly defined their goals. Hence they chose not to attend sessions which they judged were not directly relevant to helping them fulfill their goals.

Achievements sought

While a tendency toward preciseness in contrast to vagueness in general statements was a distinguishing factor between persisters and dropouts, as was explained in chapter VII, it was not necessarily the goal statements themselves which differentiated among high, medium, and low attendance category participants. Rather it was the individual participant's assessment of her progress toward the goals she set for herself that tended to determine attendance category membership. Those who remained in the course until the end and attended most, if
not all, sessions reported steady progress toward their goals. On the other hand, some of those who attended few sessions said that the course was not what they had been looking for.

High attendance category members who at the outset included as course goals finding out what they were capable of achieving, becoming familiar with the way in which topics were taught, learning what courses were available, and polishing up on old or acquiring new study skills remained in the course because they saw themselves as increasingly working toward achievement of their various goals. "Each week I learnt something new which helped me understand what university was about," was one comment which was echoed by others in this category.

Members of this attendance category also reported that they had or nearly had achieved the goals which they had set more than did members of the medium and low attendance categories. For example, for those who attended eight or more sessions after having stated as a goal, "to find out whether I am capable of university study," they acknowledged that "I know I've got the brains to do it." A similar comment was made by another woman in this category who said "I am not as dumb as I thought," reflecting her judgment that she was capable of tackling academic subjects at the university level. For women like her there was a growing realisation as the course progressed that they were coming closer and closer to fulfilling targets which they had set for themselves.

On the other hand, women in the medium attendance category who had stated similar goals, expressed as "to see whether I can
go on to tertiary study," or "to find out if I am capable of tackling higher studies" attended fewer sessions than women in the previous category if they judged that they were not making sufficient progress to enable them to make their goals a reality. Some women in this category admitted that "university is not for me" or more explicitly, "I used to be good at bookkeeping. I hoped to use that knowledge with computers, but things have become too technical and too scientific, so I'll look for a job."

The other characteristic of goal achievement for members of the medium attendance category was a postponement of the original goal, particularly if it related to the possibility of tackling post-secondary educational study in the following year. Some women in this category, while attending at least half of the sessions in the course, did not feel as compelled to attend sessions as their counterparts who had made the decision to tackle further study in the following year. For them the sense of urgency and commitment faded somewhat during the New Start Program as they decided to delay their return to a tertiary educational institution. The comments which reflected this attitude included, "I decided I would not go on to higher studies next year," or "I've decided to wait until I retire in three years' time. The course has helped me realise what my workload will be and I don't think I can work and study at the same time." Another woman who managed her own small business said, "The course has made me realise it's not too late for me to take up study, but at the moment the business takes up too
much of my time, so I'll have to wait until it is sold." Hence either an awareness that goals were not going to be achieved or a postponement of the goals were characteristics of many participants in the medium attendance category.

In contrast, those in the low attendance category realised that their relatively few appearances at the course made it difficult for them to have achieved the goals they had stated at the first session. Furthermore, some had become aware that their somewhat general or nonspecific goals were not going to be achieved in a course which was primarily designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills to return to full-time or part-time study. Among some members of this category, particularly those who had shifted to another town from the one in which they had lived at the start of the course, there was a more indefinite postponement of future formalized study than for those in the medium attendance category. "I would still like to start a degree, but I'm not sure when that'll be now that I'm living here," said one woman who had attended two sessions before the family house had been sold and she had moved with her children to rejoin her husband. Although the opportunity for degree course work and other study programs by distance methods exists in New Zealand, two of the participants affected by moving either were not aware of the service available or had decided to wait until they and their families had re-established themselves in their new location before undertaking a distance education course.

To this point the responses discussed and the differences
noted among those in the three attendance categories arose from questions in the interview which were primarily designed to seek clarification of or an explanation for the answers given to the questions posed in the questionnaire completed at the first session of the New Start Program.

The next section in this chapter deals with questions which referred to participants' course experiences and how these experiences were related to the women's rate of attendance category membership.

**Reasons for enrolling in the New Start Program**

The opening question in this section of the interview schedule asked participants if they would have considered undertaking full-time or part-time study without having taken part in a study skills orientation course, such as the New Start Program, beforehand.

The main difference between women in the high and medium attendance categories was that the former tended to include more women who had made up their minds about further study and saw the New Start Program as a helpful stepping stone to university or technical institute studies. For some women who had not passed the University Entrance examination their entry into a university depended on their being granted Provisional Admission and several hoped that a sound performance in the New Start Program would result in their being favourably recommended for entry into a university. Others admitted that they had made up their minds to go on to university and that for them the course
was a bonus. As such it was seen as a preparatory program which would provide some study skill development as well as giving an insight into selected subjects and the interest of the lecturers involved.

Within the high attendance category there was also a division in confidence among the women, depending on their age, about going on to further studies. Older women confessed to a greater hesitancy than their younger counterparts prior to being involved in the New Start Program. One older woman said openly, "Without this course I wouldn't have known where to start." Another felt that, "I probably couldn't have coped." In her response, one of the older woman said, "No, I don't think so. I would have needed a lot of encouragement." One of their age group was more convinced about her attempting further studies. "I wouldn't have considered it," she said.

Yet younger women in the same attendance category reported being more assured about the prospect of tackling tertiary educational studies. These women were less unsure about their study skills and their absence from an educational setting obviously involved less time than their older counterparts. Their resoluteness is reflected in such comments as, "Even if I hadn't heard about the New Start Program, I would have been at university next year." One woman said, "I had made up my mind to go to university, but this course has helped me in lots of ways . . . studying, writing essays, and picking my subjects." These determined younger women as well as the cautious older ones had attended the majority of sessions in the program.
Among the medium attendance category there was a greater hesitancy in claiming that higher educational studies would have been undertaken without the New Start Program. There were two exceptions to this pattern and both of the women concerned worked in secretarial and clerical capacities in the university which offered the New Start Program they attended. Both of these women said they would have attended more sessions than they did but work and other commitments had prevented them from doing so. Both had also decided to attend undergraduate classes at the university in the following year, and having the opportunity to attend the New Start Program beforehand was seen as a welcome preparatory step. Generally, however, there was an admitted uncertainty about whether university or technical institute studies would have been considered without having received the benefits of involvement in the New Start Program. For example, one woman said, "Being the sort of person I am, I doubt whether I would have tackled higher studies. I would have needed to dig out all the information I could before I decided." Another woman said that she had thought about distance education and studying for an Advanced Teachers' Certificate. However, after participating in the New Start Program she said that she felt confident enough to do something more demanding. The doubts of another participant summed up the feelings of many in this category when asked about undertaking tertiary study without participating in an adult education orientation program, she said, "Perhaps not. This program has helped to ease me into the prospect of going on." It appeared that many women entered
the course with a view to trying themselves out academically after an absence from an educational institution and gradually gained the confidence to believe that success in tertiary education was not beyond their capabilities.

There was no clear pattern in the plans of women in the low attendance group as they reflected on their possible transition from not studying to attending an educational institution. Despite attending few sessions in the course, some had intended to go on to a tertiary institution for further study and that remained a goal for them. Others had considered such study as a vague possibility and the course had given them an opportunity to find out what was involved. Some of these people still intended to go ahead with their study plans, not necessarily next year but at some unspecified time in the future. Others who had come into the course with similarly vague notions about their future had decided that further formalized study was not going to be attempted, at least in the foreseeable future. Clearly, the reasons for participants' low attendance in the course were seen by about half them as unrelated to their future study plans. What had affected their attendance at this course was not seen by the women in this category as a block to further study.

Perceived advantages of enrolling in the New Start Program

The next question followed on from that posed previously. Participants were asked that having made the decision to enrol and to participate in the New Start Program what had been the
advantages of doing so. Women were also asked to comment on any
disadvantages that participation had brought.

Among women in the high attendance group the advantages
clearly related to acquiring or developing study skills. Improved note-taking, more effective reading and consequent
gains in comprehension, better note-making abilities
(summarizing from textbooks), and the development of essay
writing skills were repeatedly mentioned acquisitions. These
skills were seen as transferable to a variety of educational
settings, and hence were seen as major achievements. The
second-most frequently mentioned advantage of having taken part
in the course was being exposed to a number of subject
representatives, and in some cases completing assignments on the
topics presented. Participants commented on being exposed to
subjects which were new to them as well as having new
interpretations on subjects with which they were familiar. Many
considered themselves fortunate to have had exposure to a range
of subjects well in advance of having to make a decision first
of all on re-entry to an educational institution and then on a
choice of subjects. People enrolling directly into an
educational institution would not normally be given the
opportunity of having first-hand experience of a lecturer or of
a subject until after they had enrolled.

Although the accomplishment of improvements in study
skills, gains in confidence, and meeting people considering
similar transitions were all of importance to those in the
medium attendance category, the distinguishing feature of the
advantages of participating seen by this group were in relation to more general life skills rather than the narrower range of educational skills emphasized by members of the high attendance group. Women spoke of lecturers having broadened their horizons by discussing topics which were new to them. Being able to join the university library and to read recent journals or choose books from a previously untapped source were further examples of new experiences. Others mentioned receiving some guidance in helping to decide their future plans. For some this meant a decision not to proceed with further study, although others said that they had confirmed plans to proceed to an educational institution, thereby giving their life a more positive direction.

A possible explanation for the difference in emphasis of the perceived advantages of the New Start Program by high and medium attendance category members may have been that many of the former group had become committed to further study in the following year, whereas some of the latter group had decided to delay their re-entry, yet they were still gaining from their participation in the course and, therefore, persisted. Hence those in the high attendance category had their goals in sharper focus than did members of the medium attendance category. It was also apparent from the interviews that they had a greater specificity of career plans as regards the contribution that the New Start Program would make.

For those in the low attendance category there were some advantages in having participated, even on but a few occasions.
Women in this category felt they had satisfied their curiosity about aspects of post-secondary education as well as having been introduced to some study skills. For example, one woman said that the advantage of having participated in the New Start Program was "to have a taste of university and to see whether this level would suit my own needs." Another woman admitted that she thought that she has learnt more about "what goes on at university." The limited exposure to university subjects and techniques appeared to be considered by women in this category as an advantage of having attended even a few sessions of the course.

Disadvantages of participating in the New Start Program

Among those in the low attendance category fewer disadvantages were reported than by participants in the other two categories. A plausible explanation for this difference was that women in these groups were not faced with having to make choices between the course and other activities over as long a period because of their limited attendance. Alternatively, faced with an option of attending the course or another activity, they selected the latter. Often, however, women in this group interpreted their situation in the weeks soon after the course started as giving them little option but to shift to a new town with their family, to take a job, or to re-establish their lives after a marital crisis.

Reactions from others to their participation
Earlier in this chapter, the reactions of partners and children to participants' involvement in the New Start Program were discussed. Examples of strong support and hostility were reported and related to attendance category membership. While those matters were being discussed it became apparent that some participants drew strong support from people outside their immediate families, so the reactions of other people, including neighbours, friends, and workmates, where applicable, were explored in the latter half of the interviews. Some received very favourable comments, while others heard negative statements, and there were also those who could claim to have been subjected to both points of view. An example of the last-mentioned case was expressed by one woman who said, "Half of the people I spoke to thought I was crazy, and that I was wasting my time. The other half gave me a lot of encouragement. That was what I needed." One woman got a contrasting reaction from her mother and her mother-in-law. While the former was apparently delighted, the latter demanded, "What are you going to do with the children?" The woman interviewed sympathetically appreciated that stereotyped images of women's roles were a feature of her husband's family.

Favourable reactions which were welcomed by participants included those from people who thought that their enrolment was a "great idea," or who offered verbal and practical support (by helping to look after their children), or who "were pleased for me." Interest did not have to be expressed in terms of what was being taught in the course or what subjects were being covered.
Participants said that they were encouraged by workmates or friends asking how participants judged their progress.

The determination which increased as a result of some of the participants receiving negative comments regarding their involvement in the New Start Program and their subsequent finding of an alternative source of social support which they acknowledged as being critical to their remaining in the course and attending most sessions is illustrated briefly by three case studies.

Mrs B. was 50 years of age, twice married, with twin 17 year old children still living at home. She worked from 4.00-10.30 p.m. in an old peoples' home. One of her motives for enrolling in the program was that she "did not want to finish up like them." She believed that prevention lay in having an active mind and keeping occupied physically. In response to the question as to with whom she discussed her involvement in the course, Mrs B. said, "My friends, but they were so off-putting. When I told one I was going to a study skills course, she told me that I couldn't possibly do it because I didn't have it" [the ability to cope with further study]. She added, "Now I'm determined to prove to her and others, as well as myself, that I can cope." Mrs B. said that the drive for continuing in the course came from her own determination and the support of her children. "I've helped them get a good education so they don't have to do the yukky [menial] jobs that I've had to do. Now it's my turn, and my children think it's marvellous."

Mrs P. was also in her 50s. Her children had left home,
she was divorced, and lived alone. In these circumstances she relied on friends for company, but she was disappointed at their attitude to her decision to enrol in the New Start Program and to be considering returning to a tertiary educational institution. "Most of them were cool," she said referring to her friends, "but I was upset by one who told me it was a waste of money educating people like me." Mrs. P. drew on her children for encouragement to sustain her attendance. "One told me that he wouldn't see my dropping out as failing. It was trying that was important," she reported. Her son had also given her practical support by lending her his car each day that the class was held. The final comment which this woman made in the relevant section of the interview was, "My family was most encouraging. That was what counted for me. The rest [other people] don't matter."

The third example, Mrs G., probably faced more difficulties than most other women interviewed. Her husband left her, apparently without warning, on the same day as the third session of the course. "I felt like a zombie. I was walking around in a daze. I don't remember much about that day, everything was just going round and round in my head." When questioned about her husband's attitude prior to and after her enrolment, Mrs G. said, "I didn't tell him until after I had enrolled. He thought I had flipped my lid." She had not told her friends about her participation until after her husband had left because she was not confident about her chances of completing the course. "I was really scared. Before the course started I wanted to back out," she confessed. Soon after Mrs G.'s husband deserted her
and their four children, aged 12, 8, 7, and 4 years of age, she had a mental breakdown and was treated as an outpatient at a mental institution. Asked what kept her attending the course in face of such adversity, Mrs G. gave most credit to the psychologist who was treating her. "He urged me to keep going. He told me I was not going to back out. He followed my progress and showed an interest in what I was doing," she explained. She also found the course coordinators very helpful and caring. Later in the course she became friendly with one of the other participants and they had spent time at one another's homes and had had lunch together. Asked about the attitude of her friends, Mrs G. said that they were not keen on her going to the New Start Program "because they think I've got too many other problems to face without taking on anything else." However, it was apparent in the interview that although Mrs G. was still under some emotional strain, she was gaining a sense of independence and self-worth, which had been developed over the latter half of the course. She gave credit to her psychologist, to the course coordinators, and another woman in the program for giving her the support to sustain her attendance. One of her final comments in the interview summed up the progress which she felt she had made. "I've come so far and I don't want to give it up," she said.

The three women whose experiences have been described had all faced negative comments from people whose encouragement they would have preferred. In the face of these unhelpful reactions, these participants drew what they considered was invaluable
support from people who were significant to them, family, course coordinators, and a psychologist. The interviews pointed to the importance of at least one source of strong social support which accounted for persistence among participants, and more importantly for inclusion in the high attendance category. Such support when it was provided, appeared to strengthen the resolve of many women to complete the New Start Program.

Whereas the high attendance category participants experienced a range of strongly expressed reactions to their involvement, those in the medium attendance category reported more moderately expressed comments on their participation in the course. Several women said that their friends had expressed surprise, but "nicely so." One woman said that her friends "were quite impressed, but they didn't offer any great encouragement." Coincidentally, three women described the reaction of their friends as "quizzical" and they wanted to know, "What are you doing that for?" Participants saw this as neither criticism nor support. Instead it was interpreted as a type of unendorsed approval. Each woman in this category who saw reactions in this light felt that her friends had not invested any of their own energy in her endeavours. Yet friends of women in the high attendance category had more often committed themselves to a judgment in favour of or opposed to their friend's involvement in the New Start Program. A consistent difference between high and medium attendance category participants was that the former exhibited more determination than the latter. This difference may not be
linked directly to the more forceful expression of opinion to which the former group were subjected. Nevertheless, it was apparent that a personal quality which can be summed up as determination was a key factor differentiating members of these two rate of attendance groups.

The low attendance category participants also reported no negative comments from their friends and workmates on their involvement in the New Start Program. Some stated that they did not tell many people, so this group probably gave their friends less opportunity to make comments. Furthermore, participants in the other two attendance categories had four weeks or more to report their progress to anyone whom they thought might be interested, whereas this group had up to three sessions on which to comment. Hence there was a probable difference in opportunities for friends to pass judgment. Members of this group reported that the reaction that they most commonly experienced from their friends was one of mild interest, somewhat akin to the quizzical reaction which the previous category members noted. While there were no negative comments on their involvement, there also appeared to be no adverse reaction to or expression of disappointment at their limited attendance in the course from friends. However, it would seem that compared with the other two categories, members of this group initiated fewer discussions about their involvement in the program.

Influence of course-related factors
The next series of questions were designed to learn about participants' reactions to features of or activities in the course and to relate any generalizations to attendance category membership. This was one question which has to be discussed according to the individual university as there were clear differences among them.

It was possible to detect differences between persisters and dropouts in their perception of opportunities to become involved in aspects of the program planning process, especially at Otago and Waikato. There was no clear group pattern to the responses offered by members of the high and medium attendance categories. Yet taken together these groups had a different view from those participants in the low attendance category. Most of these differences can be accounted for by the overlap in membership between persisters and the high and medium attendance categories, and between dropouts and those in the low attendance category.

In the high attendance category at the University of Waikato over half of those interviewed believed that there had been ample opportunity for participants to be involved in aspects of the program planning process. They claimed that the coordinators had been very open in encouraging suggestions from participants. About one-third of the women believed that there had been only limited chances for participant input, while the remainder thought that the opportunity had increased as the program had progressed. The medium attendance category was similarly divided, although there were more women who qualified
their judgment of participant involvement in objective-setting and shaping the program with the use of such words as "some" or "a bit" or "to some extent." Participants in the low attendance category saw limited participant involvement in objective setting. They viewed themselves being presented with a package, albeit a well-organized one, which had been developed by the program coordinators prior to the course commencing.

A trend was apparent at the University of Waikato in that those who attended most sessions saw opportunities for participants to influence aspects of the program, whereas those who attended few sessions did not have the same perception. To link perception of program involvement with persistence and perception of the lack of such an opportunity with dropout would be premature for two reasons. First, there was no unanimity among persisters. Some clearly believed participants were involved in setting objectives, others disagreed, while a third group gave qualified support for there having been participant involvement. Yet dropouts agreed that there was a lack of opportunity for involvement by participants. Second, there was some support for the conclusion reached by one woman who claimed, "In the beginning we seemed to get what they (course coordinators) thought we needed, then later in the course we had more say in what we wanted." The participant then added, "I'm not saying that was a bad way to go about it because at the beginning so many women were unsure of themselves and how they were going to make some progress." This comment was confirmed by those in the low attendance category who did not feel
participants were given a sense of involvement in deciding on objectives. It was also supported by some of the comments of those in the other two attendance categories.

Among the three universities a range of opportunities given for participant involvement in the process of setting course objectives was perceived. At Auckland there was agreement among all attendance categories, persisters and dropouts that the course was organized by coordinators who followed a predetermined schedule without allowing input from participants. There was no evidence that this approach contributed to persistence or dropout, or encouraged greater attendance. At Otago some flexibility on the part of coordinators in allowing the program to reflect participants' views was reported, particularly by those who attended the majority of the sessions. A similar trend appeared at Waikato, although it was more pronounced. While participants who attended most sessions clearly saw increased opportunities for participant involvement, there was no evidence that limiting this involvement in the early stages of the course contributed to the early withdrawal of dropouts or limited attendance of those in the low and medium attendance categories. In fact, given the uncertainty of many women regarding the demands of higher education, their lack of confidence in their ability to make the transition from domestic or paid employment to being a student in an educational institution, and their need to acquire or develop the appropriate study skills, a structured program which gradually allowed for more individual choice and input may have been
appropriate.

Class spirit as a factor in attendance category membership

While the previous question implied a relationship between course coordinators and participants by considering the extent to which the latter were involved in the formulation of objectives, the next question asked participants to reflect on the relationships among themselves by encouraging them to comment on the spirit within the group, the way in which this was expressed, and its effect upon their attendance.

The importance of travelling together was not only an economical arrangement as was pointed out by several women in the high attendance category. "Lindy and I took turns in bringing our cars. We discussed assignments while we travelled. Being with someone else also gave me the feeling that I should go to the class," one woman explained. Another participant spoke in a similar vein, "There was not much spirit in the class because of its size. I formed a carpool and that helped. We discussed our assignments and how we were getting on," she said. Yet for some, even amongst the high attendance category, the size of the group was disquieting as one woman said, "I felt lonely in the course. It was too big. There were too many people."

Most women in the Auckland program who attended eight or more sessions found joining or forming a small sub-group to be beneficial. It provided a sounding board to test ideas related to assignments, it eased the burden of searching for references,
and it provided a forum to reflect on in-class activities. For those who travelled together, there was an added practical advantage. Some women in the medium attendance category also shared transport although they did not appear to feel a sense of belonging to a sub-group as strongly as did the high attendance category. They, too, acknowledged that the class was too big for any common spirit to form, although the theme which ran through their interview comments was that they found other people in the group friendly when approached. Generally, however, there was not the sense of commitment to others in the class as was expressed by those who attended more frequently.

Among the low attendance category, there was an acknowledgement that they had attended too few sessions to become involved with a sub-group. In addition several said that the size of the group made it difficult to establish friendships with others.

Those in the low attendance category at Otago and Waikato made similar observations to those of their counterparts at Auckland. They admitted that they had not been with the group very long, but in that time, "They didn't meld as a cohesive group," one woman said. Another commented that, "There was a collection of individuals." A third comment was similar. "There was no tangible spirit," one woman said. Limited appearances at the course restricted the development of a sense of belonging so women in this category did not report any feelings of obligation to continue their attendance nor did they have any sense of letting others down.
Women in the medium attendance category reported a friendliness among course members which made it easy to talk about course-related concerns before the class began each week or during breaks in what was being discussed. However, most of those interviewed doubted whether this atmosphere which prevailed when small groups met together informally constituted a group spirit. One woman felt that, "People took a long time to relax." Another woman offered an explanation for her opinion. "I don't think there was a group spirit," she said emphasizing 'a', "mainly because group building was not worked on." This view was supported by some women in the high attendance category who agreed that the course "built up to a good atmosphere" or that "it [group spirit] was slow to develop because of the range of backgrounds and the shyness of many of the women." Generally, it seemed that the women in the medium attendance category felt that they had a choice as far as attending was concerned. When they had commitments outside the course which they judged to be of greater importance, they did not feel obliged to attend. Equally, when they were present they felt comfortable in the friendly atmosphere.

Women in the category of those who attended most frequently felt a greater sense of belonging to a group than the other women reported for any other category. They believed that a common spirit had developed because many of them had a similar goal. They had started the course feeling uncertain about either their ability to cope with tertiary education or they were unsure of which study path to take to attain some future
goal. One participant explained this phenomenon by saying, "Most of us were trying to add a new dimension to our lives, and some were searching for a new meaning. We all hoped that the New Start Program would help us find whatever we were looking for. The key to the formation of a group spirit which many in this category felt had evolved was the searching." Although assignments were set and provided a topic of conversation for many, it was a feeling of "exploring together" which appeared to be the most important basis for developing a group spirit.

**Personal outcomes from the New Start Program**

For women in all three attendance categories there were some commonly mentioned outcomes. For example, all of these groups had people in them who had decided to go on to university to study in the following year, although the proportion of women planning this step was much greater in the high than in the low attendance category. Conversely, there were women in all three categories who had decided to postpone a return to an educational institution. Women in all categories acknowledged the acquisition of some study skills, although the benefits were perceived as greatest by those who attended most frequently. All, too, said that they were more aware of sources of advice and assistance than they had been before the New Start Program began.

Women in the high attendance category were unique in their reference to being stimulated mentally, to improving their organizational and time management skills, and to having gained
the courage to embark on a career shift. The medium and low attendance category participants did not mention these outcomes.

Consideration given to withdrawal

For participants in all attendance categories there were course-related challenges which reportedly led to thoughts of withdrawal. By far the most commonly mentioned was the first assignment. It was not necessarily the nature of the assignment which caused participants to be troubled but the fact that their efforts were to be assessed. For about one-third of the women interviewed this represented much more than writing a set number of words after doing some reading. More importantly, it was seen as the crucial test of the 'self'; success meant remaining in the course and facing the next challenge with some sort of "stamp of approval"; failure was likely to have been interpreted as a form of rejection and for many withdrawal may have occurred at that point. Few were faced with the latter prospect, hence it can be concluded it was the prospect of failing rather than having failed which caused participants to express their doubts.

Other aspects of the course were not mentioned by more than four people and they were relatively minor in comparison with the daunting challenge of the first assignment. After having the course outlined to them at the first session, some women admitted asking themselves, "What am I doing here?" Although a rhetorical question, some women in all categories answered that the reality of the course as described was quite different from their interpretation of the written course description which had
originally attracted their interest. Two women interviewed, decided not to return for a second session; others did. Three of those women who reported that they had wondered to themselves why they were in attendance at the first session completed the course.

The level of course work required was higher than some women expected. Consequently these women attended few sessions and selected those topics which tended to have a service focus or a skills orientation rather than academic content. Some found the attitude of resource people had a negative effect on them. These indifferent contributions stood out in contrast to the remainder who made highly commended contributions. Those sessions, or parts of sessions, which were criticized often served as irritants rather than as causes of reduced attendance because the lecturers involved rarely appeared more than once in the course.

High attendance participants could be divided into those who had doubts at some stage during the course about continuing and those who claimed to have never wavered. There were twice as many in the latter group, whereas about half of those in the medium attendance category acknowledged having considered withdrawing, and all those in the low attendance category did so.

Those who at some stage had thought about withdrawing mentioned several causes of their doubts. About one-third of the women interviewed saw the first assignment as a major challenge. The task itself was not particularly difficult but
being assessed was seen as threatening. The brusque manner of a study skills adviser in one of the courses prompted some women to think about withdrawing. External factors also posed a threat to continuing attendance. Personal illness, for example, was a cause several women identified, particularly at times when assignments were due. Those who were in full-time paid employment acknowledged that nearing 5.00 p.m. they had on several occasions thought about "giving the course a miss" but after relaxing for a while and being reminded by a partner or friend of their commitments, they recovered some enthusiasm and sustained their attendance record.

Factors enhancing continuing attendance

Women who said that they had overcome doubts about continuing and others who said that they had never faltered gave identical reasons for remaining in the course. The paramount factors, personal determination, external support, and positive feedback have been discussed previously. In addition, participants spoke of the variety in the program, being introduced to new subjects and viewpoints, and having to complete assignments (once the first one had been completed and returned), as challenging and stimulating. "I was so stimulated, so fired up by the program I didn't want it to end," one woman admitted. Another woman said, "I saw the course as a challenge. It helped me work toward a goal I had only dreamed about." Another participant explained, "I saw things as a challenge, like preparing a bibliography. I had never done one
In comparison with women in the other categories, members of the high attendance category group, at least by the time the interviews were conducted, were closer to identifying future goals for themselves, if they had not already done so. A similar trend was noted earlier in this chapter when participants' goals were being discussed. Examples of the effect of attending the course for a specific purpose were highlighted by several interviewees, one of whom said, "I saw the value of this course for me. I would have gone to university next year without the New Start Program, but I've learnt several skills." Another woman said, "I was looking ahead to 1983. I'm planning to specialize in sociology. Next year my son will be starting at pre-school and I'll have a new baby. That will keep me busy. But in the following year when the older one goes to school I'll have time for study." One participant explained her continued attendance was because, "I could see myself working toward my goal. I had often said that I wanted to get out of the house when the children were older and do some study before getting a job. I surprised my husband. He thought it was only talk, but he supported me once I had enrolled." The last statement reinforces once again the importance of the emotional support of another person, as well as of having a goal to work towards.

Women in the middle attendance category were equally divided between those who admitted to giving some thought to withdrawing from the course and those who said that they were
unswerving in their intention to remain in it. Some of the latter group, when interviewed, hastened to explain their absences because all of them had been absent from more than three sessions. Being away from the city, illness, work commitments, and family bereavements were among the explanations for "unavoidable" absence. There were, however, some participants who admitted being selective about the sessions that they attended, whether or not they intended to enrol in a higher education program in the following year. "I felt I didn't need to go to the session on the library," one interviewee said. Another said, "Once I decided not to give up my job, I wasn't interested in some of the sessions, so I didn't go." One woman admitted to getting behind schedule with her assignments because, "I couldn't find enough reference material. There didn't seem to be much point in going when I would have got another assignment and I already had the last one to do." In addition to the unavoidable events, and the selection of sessions to attend, some participants also gave, "Other things took priority," as an explanation for their absences.

Women in this attendance category, like the previous one, pointed to the first assignment as a task which threatened their continuing in the program. Other course-related doubts were brought about by the realisation that, "The course was not quite what I wanted. I was hoping for help in looking for new directions in my life." Otherwise, it tended to be employment or domestic pressures which appeared to foreshorten involvement in the New Start Program.
Women who had attended between four and seven sessions (and were, therefore, classified in the medium rate of attendance category) explained their continuing attendance in terms of the variety of the program, the satisfaction felt in gaining and using newly acquired study skills, and the fact that the course was interesting.

All of those interviewed in the low attendance category admitted to having considered withdrawing. Despite not returning many said that for several weeks they still thought that they would return. However, after missing three sessions most conceded that it would not be feasible to return. For this group not continuing had a physical absence but a mental presence until closure was reached some weeks later. The exceptions were those who moved away from the city in which the university they had been attending was located, and one participant who was quite categorical in her insistence that, "I made up my mind as soon as I heard what was expected of us that I wouldn't be back." For others in this category they continued to tell themselves they would return to class even after they had stopped attending.

The next section considers the predominant characteristics of women in each of the three rate of attendance categories.

**Characteristics of Members of Each Attendance Category**

In the preceding section the findings from the interviews were discussed based on the responses made by interviewees to questions asked. In this section of the dissertation the focus
is on the characteristics most commonly associated with each of the three groups as revealed in the interviews.

High rate of attendance category

Women were classified as members of the high rate of attendance category if they had attended 80 percent or more of the number of sessions in the course. The cumulative effect of personal determination, support from another significant person, particularly in the early stages of the course, positive feedback from course coordinators regarding assignments completed, and favourable assessment of progress toward a goal contributed to a high rate of attendance. These factors were complemented by others, such as enjoyment of the course, developing new skills, and meeting others with similar goals but these did not appear to be crucial to continued attendance. Rather they were the advantages of having done so. In fact, in responding to the question on the advantages gained from the New Start Program women in this category mentioned the acquisition or development of skills in note-taking, essay writing, and effective reading, as well as having met other women in similar circumstances to themselves who were contemplating returning to an educational institution for further studies. Other advantages included having been given a preview of tertiary educational requirements, having met subject representatives and being introduced to new subjects. A further benefit was the mental stimulation that remaining in the course had provided.

Factors that members of this group had anticipated that
might affect their attendance generally did not materialize, either because they had been cautious at the outset and had in a sense insured themselves against possible absences or they had been determined to attend most, if not all, sessions. Their involvement in the program became a major priority in their lives. Other commitments were postponed or daily activities were reorganized to make time for assignments and course reading. Where other family members were involved some compromise was worked out, particularly with children, to allow participants time for doing the required course work.

Reactions from other relatives, friends and acquaintances varied considerably from very positive encouragement to negative hostility. Reactions were generally more critical from people with limited educational qualifications, from those already in full-time paid employment, and were more commonly reported by older women. This latter group of women, faced with adverse comments, found the support of their children reassuring. Having encountered negative reactions participants generally resolved to prove their capabilities by remaining in the program.

Although the means of travel to the course was not in itself a variable which was significantly related to any of the attendance data sets, those in the high attendance category who travelled to the course with another course member said that the commitment of sharing transport was a factor which ensured that they attended the majority of the sessions. Although participants were unaware of any categorization on the basis of
their attendance, it seemed that about a third of those who travelled to the course with someone else attended most sessions whereas without that arrangement half of them said that they would have attended fewer sessions. Had they done so, they may have been classified in the medium attendance category. Apart from the commitment of providing or sharing transport, travelling with someone else made available the opportunity to discuss course assignments or share concerns about future study options.

Women in the high attendance category reported a constructive and friendly spirit within the class. Although some felt this spirit was slow to develop, towards the end of the ten weeks they felt that a sense of belonging to a group with common goals had evolved. This process was more difficult in Auckland than in other programs because of the size, (95 enrolments were received, of whom 86 took part in this study), of the group at that university. Nevertheless, for participants in this attendance category group a sense of unity and purpose emerged as the goals of those who remained in the program became more sharply focused than was the case earlier in the course when there were more people and they had more divergent expectations.

The goals of women in this category differed from those in other categories in that they tended to be more specifically study-oriented which more closely represented the goals of the program planners and course coordinators. Although members of other categories mentioned the development of study skills, they
also made reference to broader life skills as reasons for enrolling. Such life skills were beyond the scope of the course. Hence there was greater goal congruence between program planners and members of the high attendance category than with members of the other attendance categories.

Furthermore, women in the high attendance category said they continued to attend sessions in the program because they saw themselves making progress toward the fulfilment of the goals which they had set. Activities at successive sessions added another piece to the jigsaw which depicted the image of the goals to which these women saw themselves working. Becoming familiar with what courses were available, developing study skills and becoming confident in their ability to undertake further studies were all achievements that these women felt they were accomplishing and hence they felt encouraged to continue to attend.

At least three-quarters of the women in this category had decided from the outset or as the course progressed to enrol in a tertiary educational institution in the following year and, therefore, saw the short-term and long-term benefits of remaining in the program. Younger women were more confident than older ones about their coping with returning to full-time or part-time study. However, all acknowledged that the program had helped them prepare for this transition.

Even when members of this category were not faced with difficulties, they exhibited personality characteristics which could be labelled as determination, resolution or will-power.
Some had difficulties in the form of limited years of schooling, lack of partner support, high anxiety, low self-esteem, or poor study skills. Yet these women overcame these handicaps and attended most or, for many, all of the sessions in the course.

Medium rate of attendance category

Women were placed in the medium rate of attendance category if they had attended from 40 to 70 percent of the sessions in the New Start Program. Within this category there were some who had similar characteristics to those in another category. For example, in some aspects those who attended four sessions reflected features of the low attendance group, while those who attended seven sometimes exhibited features of the high attendance category. Nevertheless, there were some distinctive characteristics of women in the medium rate of attendance category.

For some women their attendance behaviour was summed up by one woman who said, "Once I missed one session it was easy to miss another." Others admitted to being selective in their attendance depending on their judgment as to the relevance of the topic to their changing life plan.

When faced with conflicting demands between the course or the associated assignments and other obligations, women in this category often opted for the latter. Because they were absent from sessions, to some extent they controlled the amount of work that they were required to do. In a program in which assignments were designed to cumulatively build study skills and
confidence rather than to award a pass/fail grade, the most benefits were gained by those who did the most work. No penalty was imposed by the instructors if participants had not completed their assignments.

The reactions of other people to the enrolment and participation in the program was less intense for women in the medium attendance category than that reported by members of the high attendance category. Some encountered comments of surprise or a quizzical response when they told others of their involvement. But generally the tone of comments was reported as being milder than that experienced by women in the high rate of attendance category, and consequently did not arouse the determined reaction of the women in the medium attendance group.

When asked whether they would have undertaken studies at the tertiary level without having participated in the New Start Program, women in this category expressed greater hesitancy than members of either of the other groups. Clearly, many of them had taken part in the course to test themselves before deciding about their future, particularly the educational qualifications that they may be capable of achieving.

However, having participated, although not in all sessions, women in this category identified advantages which were not mentioned by members of other groups who were interviewed. These women made reference to generalized life skills and personal development, expressed in such terms as "made me more aware of other opportunities than I had been thinking about" or "helped me decide that university was not appropriate for me."
Similarly, these women spoke about having had their horizons broadened or being helped to decide on which educational institution that they should attend in the following year.

Women in this group reported a spirit of friendliness among those in the course, although they did not attribute to it the slowly developing cohesiveness that those who had attended more often frequently mentioned. Nevertheless, members of the medium attendance category felt comfortable and not as strangers whenever they attended.

Like the preceding group, women in this rate of attendance category were present approximately in proportion to the extent that they considered that they were achieving their goals. Those who attended six or seven sessions reported having made greater progress toward their goals than those who attended four or five sessions. At the beginning of the course some women in this category had similar goals to those in the high attendance category but through attending fewer sessions progress toward these goals had been delayed. For others a revision of the goals stated originally was a factor which contributed to reduced attendance. For example, for participants who decided not to attend any educational institution in the following year the perceived benefits of attending the New Start Program were not as great as they had been while the possibility existed for their undertaking tertiary education. Likewise, those who made the decision to continue in full-time employment and not do any formal study, even on a part-time basis, also said they had less incentive to attend all sessions. Postponement of working
toward the original goal eased the sense of urgency to acquire the necessary study skills that would contribute to successful university, technical institute, or teachers' college study.

Most women in this group reported that they had benefitted from their attendance in the course, that they had acquired study skills, that they had experienced a friendly spirit among participants, but that faced with conflicting demands on their time they sometimes chose an alternative activity to attending the course. Some women became selective in the sessions which they attended as they revised their goals. Others chose to attend fewer sessions to control the amount of academic work that they did. For these women the factors that they noted at the first session as likely to affect their attendance, such as personal illness or community organization commitments, eventuated more often than the predictions made by women in the other attendance categories.

Low rate of attendance category

The low rate of attendance category consisted of 27 women who had attended 10 to 30 percent of the sessions in the New Start Program. Only one of them attended a session in the latter half of the program so their course-related experiences are largely restricted to the first part of the course.

There was no clear pattern from their responses whether members of this category would have contemplated further studies without the benefit of their experience, albeit somewhat limited, of being in the New Start Program. Some women said
that they would have enrolled in a university or technical institute for courses, others claimed that they would not have done so. For some of these women the course provided them with sufficient information that they no longer considered it likely that they would undertake tertiary educational studies. However, others were not deterred by their attendance rate in the program. They did not see their limited attendance acting as an impediment to enrolling in higher education in the future.

Of the few sessions which members of this category attended they were agreed that there was a lack of a group spirit in the classes. The size of the group at the University of Auckland was clearly seen as an inhibiting factor, while elsewhere participants claimed that course coordinators, while caring for individuals, did not actively work on building a group spirit. Women in this category tended not to have developed friendships with others in the class, nor did they come to the course with a friend. Hence they tended to see themselves as individuals within a collection of other individuals with whom they did not develop any significant bonds, a finding that was not unexpected given their limited exposure to the class.

The reactions reported from other people to their enrolling in the course were akin to the medium category group. None of the participants interviewed reported any negative criticism or adverse comments. Yet there was no apparent strong support or encouragement forthcoming either. Instead mild interest and lukewarm support were the two most commonly mentioned responses reported.
Like members of the other two categories, some women who attended few sessions were faced with conflicting demands. A choice had to be made between course and other commitments. As their course attendance record showed, faced with this dilemma women in this category chose not to continue attending. For some not continuing was almost inevitable when, for example, a woman had to move to another town with her family. Others opted for employment which they considered more important than continuing in the course given the limited job opportunities which prevailed. Even some women in paid positions withdrew in the early stages of the course because they felt unable to cope with the demands on their time imposed by job, domestic, and course requirements. Unanticipated marital problems posed strains for three women which contributed to their withdrawal.

On the other hand, there were women who attended few sessions in the program for reasons that they attributed to the nature of the course. Some had not expected to be required to undertake course work outside class hours in addition to the time commitment of the course. Others quickly came to realise the level of work required was beyond their capacity. These women admitted that they had not expected the course to be as academically demanding as they had found it. Others withdrew in the early stages because the reality of the experience did not match their expectations. In none of these cases had these participants consulted with the university program planning staff or the course coordinators before the program began.

Whatever the reasons were for withdrawal, few participants
in this category said they had anticipated the circumstances which they later claimed had caused them to withdraw. In this regard they were more like the high than the medium attendance category. Apparently, women in the low attendance category had little or no insight or knowledge concerning the problems they encountered soon after the course commenced and which caused them to miss sessions of the course. However, unlike women in the high attendance category who were also inaccurate in predicting factors which might have affected their attendance, women in the low attendance category apparently did not have a supportive social network to draw on to assist them tackle their difficulties.

Despite attending few sessions, all participants interviewed were able to identify at least one benefit gained as a result of participating in the New Start Program. Most frequently mentioned advantages were having satisfied a curiosity to gain an insight into what studying at the tertiary level involved and developing some study skills, even to a limited extent.

In response to the question seeking an assessment on the extent to which they had made progress toward achieving whatever goals they had set for themselves, most women in this category understandably admitted that they had attended too few sessions to accomplish their stated goals. Some had revised their future educational plans as a result of their experience in the course. Others had postponed returning to an educational institution in the foreseeable future, yet a few were still planning to return
in the following year.

Attendance at a few sessions of the course, while resulting in these women being placed in the low rate of attendance category, did not necessarily dissuade them from planning for studying in higher education. Particularly for those whose withdrawal was attributed to non-course factors, they still looked to the prospect of returning to a tertiary educational institution in the future.

Summary

Women in the high rate of attendance category attributed their having attended eight or more sessions in the course to the combined effects of support from another significant person, particularly in the early stages of the course, positive feedback from course coordinators, personal determination, and the satisfaction of acquiring new skills as they made progress toward achieving their goals. Women in the medium rate of attendance category reported exercising a choice between attending and doing some other activity. A characteristic of this group was their being selective about the sessions they chose to attend depending on their original or revised goals. Women who attended three or fewer sessions could not point to the advantages or benefits identified by women in the other two groups. Most commonly, unanticipated events, such as work or domestic pressures, were the explanations offered for limited attendance in the New Start Program. In reporting on the interviews, even though women were randomly selected from one
set of attendance data, the comments relevant to other attendance behaviour have been reported. Thus a woman who attended all sessions provided insightful information on persistence as well as high attendance category membership. Similarly, a woman who withdrew after the second session of the course yielded data on low attendance category membership and dropout.

In the next chapter the use of multivariate analysis of variance to test the two research hypotheses formulated for this study and the results of this testing are reported and discussed.
CHAPTER X

TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

Introduction

The rationale for the hypotheses formulated in this study was explained in chapter I. The literature reviewed in chapters II and III formed the basis of the relationships proposed in the conceptual model for predicting attendance behaviour in the program studied.

In this chapter the two research hypotheses which gave direction to this study are considered in turn. The first was concerned with the relationship between persistence and dropout and five criterion variables: years of schooling, state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem, and study orientation. The second research hypothesis measured the relationship between rate of attendance category membership and the five criterion variables.

Following this introduction, an explanation is offered for the use of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), the statistical technique used to test the two operational hypotheses for each of the research hypotheses. After the operational hypothesis testing is reported, the results are presented and discussed.

The Use of the MANOVA

The present study involved measurements on five criterion
variables: years of schooling; state anxiety; undesirable life events; self-esteem; and study orientation. Comparisons of groups differing in attendance behaviour (persistence and dropout, and rate of attendance) in the re-entry program in terms of these criterion variables considered separately could have contributed to a confusing, conflicting, and unintelligible overall picture. One group could have appeared superior in terms of self-esteem, another in terms of years of schooling, and yet another in terms of anxiety. Such a pattern would have made it extremely difficult to form an overall evaluation taking into account all of these variables as an integrated whole.

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) is a statistical technique which makes it possible to study relationships among criterion and independent variables in a multi-dimensional space—such as differences between groups varying in persistence and dropout or among those recording different rates of attendance in terms of several criterion variables taken simultaneously.

In this study a One-way MANOVA was carried out with attendance behaviour groups and five criterion variables. In the first hypothesis a distinction was made between persisters and dropouts. In the second hypothesis three groups were formed into which participants were classified according to the proportion of sessions they attended.

The hypotheses tested were, generally, hypotheses about the equality of the group population dispersions, a requirement for the validity of the statistical model used in the analysis, and
hypotheses about the equality of group population centroids, that is, the equality of the row vectors of means on the five criterion variables of each of the attendance behaviour groups. There were two groups considered in the first hypothesis and three in the second.

Each of the two hypotheses is considered in turn.

Testing of Hypothesis One

The first research hypothesis was concerned with the differences between persisters and dropouts on the educational and psycho-social variables selected as criteria for this study. It was posited that those who attended the first session and at least one session in the second half of the course (thereby being classified as persisters) would be distinguishable from those who dropped out of the program by the combined effect of having more years of schooling, lower state anxiety, fewer undesirable life events, higher self-esteem, and a more positive study orientation.

Technically, the first hypothesis may be stated as:
Hypothesis I: Women enrolled in the New Start Program who persisted in the course would obtain a statistically significant different group centroid from women who dropped out of the program.

Two operational hypotheses, which are discussed next, gave direction to testing the first research hypothesis.

Operational Hypotheses
The first operational hypothesis was concerned with the equality of the population dispersions, the second with the equality of group centroids. Both operational hypotheses were tested at the $\alpha = .05$ level of statistical significance.

The first hypothesis may be expressed as follows:

I  Equality of population dispersions: $H_1 = \Delta_1 = \Delta_2$

This test is the only way of determining whetherpersisters and dropouts were drawn from populations having the same dispersions. Since equality of dispersions is an important assumption in the statistical model used to test for equality of centroids, $H_1$ should be tenable. In addition, the test of $H_1$ may have value as an important research finding in its own right, which was the case in this study as is reported in the next section.

II  Equality of group centroids: $H_2 = \mu_1 = \mu_2$

This hypothesis tested the equality of the row vectors of means on the five criterion variables for the persister and dropout groups.

The next section presents the results from testing both operational hypotheses.

**Results**

The mean scores resulting from the multivariate analysis of variance showing the relationship between persistence and dropout and the following criterion variables: years of schooling, state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem,
and study orientation as criterion variables are reported in table 23. All subjects whose records on the selected variables were incomplete were excluded from this analysis. As was explained in chapter V, 27 women did not satisfactorily complete the SSHA. Their exclusion is the principal reason for 117 subjects being included in the MANOVA. No significant differences were found on the variables in the MANOVA between those who completed the SSHA and those who did not.

**TABLE 23**

**ONE-WAY MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE DESIGN: PERSISTENCE AND DROP OUT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion variables</th>
<th>Categories of participants</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persisters</td>
<td>Dropouts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 94</td>
<td>N = 23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of schooling</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State anxiety</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesirable events</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study orientation</td>
<td>110.9</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>110.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 23 it can be seen that there is little difference between the mean scores for persisters and dropouts on each of the five criterion variables. Persisters had mean scores in the expected direction (i.e., lower for state anxiety and undesirable life events, and higher for self-esteem) on three of these variables. For study orientation the mean scores were
identical. The mean years of schooling for dropouts was actually .01 years higher than for persisters. Therefore, there was a weak trend for the differences to be in the direction predicted, but as the analysis of the testing of the operational hypothesis shows, the relationship was not greater than could be expected on chance alone.

The lack of variability in the scores across groups would suggest that the population dispersions of the two groups would be equal. This impression was confirmed when the first operational hypothesis regarding persisters and dropouts was tested. The results were as follows:

\[ H_1: \Delta_1 = \Delta_2 \text{ (Population dispersions are equal)} \]

\[ F_1 (288, 40,640) = 0.15, P > 0.10. \]

These results indicate that \( H_1 \) is tenable. Therefore, the two groups were equal in terms of their dispersion. This result shows that persisters and dropouts were drawn from populations which had the same dispersions. That is, the groups were homogeneous.

The second operational hypothesis predicted that the population centroids for the two groups would be equal. The results of testing the second hypothesis were:

\[ H_2: \mu_1 = \mu_2 \text{ (Population centroids are equal)} \]
F2 (5, 111) = 1.29, p > .0.10

These results indicate that H2 is tenable. Therefore, the population centroids for the two groups are not significantly different, statistically. If rejection of the second hypothesis had been warranted, then a discriminant analysis would have been performed to determine which variables had differentiated most highly between persisters and dropouts. Yet this procedure was not necessary. The first research hypothesis, which predicted that women who enrolled and persisted in the New Start Program would obtain a significantly different group centroid on all five criterion variables taken as a whole from women who dropped out of the program, was not supported.

Discussion of the results

The finding that there was no significant difference between the scores of persisters and dropouts on the five criterion variables, despite the apparent trends suggested, could be attributed to several factors. First, the groups could have differed only slightly on each criterion so that none of the bivariate tests would have detected a significant difference. Multivariate analysis is a technique for deciding whether a significant difference is probable; whether small but consistent differences, taken together, point to a real difference; whether the difference is significant (at a given alpha level) for some criteria but not others; and whether the
significant and nonsignificant differences can be taken at face value. Second, the criterion variables selected, despite having been drawn from previous research, may have been inappropriate in this study. The interviews, which were conducted to complement the statistical analysis, pointed to other factors, such as social support and goal achievement, being more important than those included in the hypothesis.

The difference between persisters and dropouts in the mean number of years of schooling each group had experienced, given the size of the sample, was too small to be statistically significant. No other educational background factor was statistically significant either when related to persistence and dropout. These findings may suggest, other things being equal, the program offered at the three universities was successful in providing opportunities for an educational new start for participants irrespective of their educational background.

No anxiety measures were significantly related to persistence and dropout. Yet as table 23 showed, the state anxiety scores of dropouts had a higher lower mean of 3.4 on the STAI than that recorded by persisters, although it is probable that this was a chance difference. When participants' educational background characteristics were related to state anxiety, a significant statistical relationship was found between the number of adult education courses attended in the previous three years and the anxiety score. Women who had been to few or no courses in this time recorded higher state anxiety scores than those who had been to a greater number of courses.
This statistical finding was also confirmed in the interviews during which women who had not attended courses recently reported more intense feelings of anxiety than those who had participated in courses. Therefore, the interactive effect of recent educational experiences and state anxiety, could have been a better predictor of persistence and dropout than years of schooling and state anxiety.

Although the number of undesirable life events experienced in a fixed time period had been shown in other research to be associated with performance deficiency, the number of undesirable life events reported by subjects in this study was not significantly related to persistence and dropout. Furthermore, women in this study reported having experienced more desirable than undesirable events in the past twelve months. Therefore, for many women the past twelve months had been a period in which changes in their lives had been viewed positively. For many of them this constructive period also included preparing themselves for a possible further transition to becoming a student in a tertiary educational institution, either full-time or part-time.

The mean self-esteem score for dropouts was 1.9 lower than that for persisters on the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale. In chapter VI it was shown that self-esteem scores were not significantly related to persistence and dropout. This measurement, along with most others, was taken at the first session of the course. Yet interviewees, irrespective of their self-esteem level, reported having been encouraged by course
coordinators to continue in the program. At least half of the women interviewed commented on their feeling better about themselves as a result of having participated in the course. No self-esteem, or other personality, measures were recorded at the conclusion of the course. Therefore, it is not possible to show confirmation for the reports of women feeling better about themselves on a validated instrument.

The mean study orientation score was identical for persisters and dropouts. In chapter VI this score was shown to be not significantly related to persistence and dropout. These two findings suggest that the overall mean score on the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes did not predict differences between persisters and dropouts. Despite the emphasis given to the importance of study skills by Houle (1964) and others, women's self-assessment of their skills was not significantly related to their continuing in the program which was the focus of this study. However, scores on one of the scales, Teacher Approval, of the SSHA were significantly related to persistence and dropout. In chapter VI it was argued that this scale may have been significantly related to persistence and dropout because members of the former group gave teachers credit for being able to help them achieve their goals. Remaining in the course was consistent with this view.

Testing of the second research hypothesis is considered next.

Testing of Hypothesis Two
As noted earlier in the chapter, the literature reviewed in chapters II and III formed the basis for hypothesizing the relationships proposed in the second hypothesis which predicted rate of attendance category membership differentiation. It was argued that membership of each of the three groups would be accounted for in terms of the five criterion variables. In particular, it was claimed that the overall effect of high self-esteem, low state anxiety, few undesirable life events, positive study orientation, and a greater number of years of schooling would characterize those belonging to the high rate of attendance group. Membership of the medium and the low attendance groups would in turn coincide with less desirable scores on these criterion variables.

Technically, the second hypothesis was stated as:
Hypothesis II: Women whose participation, in terms of their rate of course attendance, was high would obtain significantly different group centroids on all five criterion variables taken as a whole from women whose rate of attendance was low. Two operational hypotheses, which are set out in the next section, were formulated to test the second research hypothesis.

Operational Hypotheses

The two operational hypotheses were similar to those used to test the first research hypothesis. Both were also tested at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level of statistical significance.

I Equality of population dispersions: $H1 = \Delta 1 = \Delta 2 = \Delta 3$
Since equality of dispersions is an important assumption in the statistical model used to test for equality of centroids, $H_1$ should be tenable.

II Equality of group centroids: $H_2 = \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$

The next section reports the results of testing the second research hypothesis.

Results

The data were complete for 117 subjects in the study and were analyzed by means of the multivariate analysis of variance technique. The mean scores from this analysis showing the association between three levels of rate of attendance, and five criterion variables: years of schooling, state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem, and study orientation are reported in table 24.
TABLE 24
ONE-WAY MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE DESIGN: RATE OF ATTENDANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion variables</th>
<th>Attendance rate</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High(80-100%)</td>
<td>Medium(40-70%)</td>
<td>Low(10-30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 67</td>
<td>N = 29</td>
<td>N = 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean S.D.</td>
<td>Mean S.D.</td>
<td>Mean S.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of schooling</td>
<td>11.9 1.5</td>
<td>12.1 1.4</td>
<td>12.0 0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State anxiety</td>
<td>35.9 7.6</td>
<td>39.9 8.7</td>
<td>39.3 10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesirable events</td>
<td>3.8 3.2</td>
<td>3.2 3.3</td>
<td>5.0 3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>29.9 3.9</td>
<td>29.0 5.1</td>
<td>28.2 5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study orientation</td>
<td>109.7 22.3</td>
<td>114.1 22.8</td>
<td>110.6 14.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pattern shown in table 24 does not portray as clearly discernible a pattern as did the similar table produced by the MANOVA when persistence and dropout were considered (reported earlier in this chapter). The mean scores for each of the five criterion variables might have been expected to have been the highest or lowest, as appropriate, for members of the high rate of attendance category. Yet for only two variables, state anxiety (lowest mean score), and self-esteem (highest mean score) were the variables for this category ranked in the order expected. At the other extreme, scores for women in the low attendance category might have been predicted to have been lowest or highest, depending on the direction of expectation, for all five criterion variables. Yet again, the results showed the expected rank applied to only two of the variables. Lowest mean scores were recorded for self-esteem, while the highest
mean score applied to undesirable life events. Finally, women in the medium attendance category might have been expected to have obtained mean scores between those of the other two groups. Yet this was the case for only one variable, self-esteem. Therefore, of the five criterion variables, only self-esteem was in the order expected for all three attendance rate categories.

This pattern would suggest that the population dispersions of the three groups would be equal. This expectation was confirmed when the first operational hypothesis regarding membership in the three rates of attendance categories was tested. The results were as follows:

\[ H_1: \Delta_1 = \Delta_2 = \Delta_3 \text{ (Population dispersions are equal)} \]

\[ F_1(570, 87,368) = 0.39, \ p > .10 \]

These results indicate that \( H_1 \) is tenable. Hence the three categories were equal in terms of their dispersion, that is, the three groups were homogeneous.

The second operational hypothesis predicted that the population centroids for the three groups would be equal. Testing the second hypothesis produced the following result:

\[ H_2: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 \text{ (Population centroids are equal)} \]

\[ F_2(10, 220) = 1.21, \ p > .10 \]
These results suggest that H2 is tenable. Hence the population centroids for the three groups were equal. Scores on the five criterion variables for all groups were such that the differences between them were not considered statistically significant. As for the first research hypothesis reported earlier in this chapter, if the second research hypothesis had been accepted, then a discriminant analysis would have been performed to determine which of the variables had contributed most to the differentiation among the three attendance categories. Again, because the operational hypothesis was tenable, a discriminant analysis was not undertaken.

An indication that the relationship in the second hypothesis would exceed the level of significance set for this study had been suggested by the fact that the bivariate relationships between each of the criterion variables and rate of attendance categories had also exceeded the .05 alpha level of probability. This was confirmed by the MANOVA even when the integrative effects of the variables were taken into account. Hence the second research hypothesis, which predicted that women whose rate of attendance in the New Start Program was high would obtain significantly different group centroids on all five criterion variables taken as a whole from women whose rate of attendance was lower, was not accepted.

Discussion of the results

The finding that there was no significant relationship
between rate of attendance category membership and the five criterion variables may have been due to several factors. For the first research hypothesis there was a weak trend for persisters to have a mean score in the expected direction compared with mean scores for dropouts on three out of five criterion variables. However, for the rankings of the criterion variables seen as a function of rate of attendance category membership, only one was in the expected order.

The differences in the mean number of years of schooling among each category were small, only .1 years. When years of schooling were correlated with rate of attendance categories the relationship was not significant (as was reported in chapter VIII). However, there was a positive and significant correlation between another background educational variable, number of adult education courses attended in the previous three years, and the number of sessions attended (from which attendance categories were derived). Yet the relationship between adult education courses attended and rate of attendance category membership exceeded the .05 alpha level of probability. When the table showing the distribution of courses attended for each of the three categories was examined, it was noted that as expected high attendance category members had attended more courses than members in the other categories; and members of the low attendance category, also as expected, were inclined to have attended few or no courses. The previous course attendance pattern of members of the medium category showed no identifiable trend; some women had attended five or six courses while others
had not attended any. Nevertheless, there was some evidence to suggest that recency of educational experience might have been useful in differentiating attendance category membership.

On the state anxiety scale the high attendance category, as predicted, had the lowest score. As with the previous variable, the mean scores for the other two categories were close. As was explained in chapter VIII, the state scale score was significantly related in an inverse direction to the number of adult education courses attended in the previous three years.

The highest mean score for undesirable events experienced in the past twelve months was recorded, as expected, by women in the low rate of attendance category. The order for the other two categories was the reverse of what might have been expected.

In writing about the impact and significance of life events, social psychologists are generally agreed on three conclusions of relevance to this study. First, that undesirable changes are more predictive of changes affecting individuals than are desirable changes or change per se because undesirable changes generally call for greater adjustments to be made. Second, as yet the instruments for measuring undesirable changes have not yet become sufficiently sensitive to account for much more than 10-15 per cent of the variance in any change-related symptoms. Third, undesirable changes may be moderated by intervening or mediating factors which serve to reduce the impact of these changes. The three factors are considered in turn.

First, participants in this study reported having
experienced more desirable than undesirable life change events in the previous twelve months. Therefore, it could be argued that most subjects viewed the current developmental period in their lives as constructive. Participating in an adult education program prior to undertaking tertiary education at a technical institute or university was a further manifestation of their positive outlook. Furthermore, although neither the relationship between desirable nor undesirable events and attendance category membership was significant, the former approached the .05 alpha level of probability more closely than the latter.

Second, instruments measuring life change events have been acknowledged as lacking in sensitivity, although the modification of the original Social Readjustment Rating Scale to allow for personal evaluation of the events listed in the Scale is supported by researchers. Nevertheless, another criticism made of the Scale that it does not enable individuals to add events which may have been more important to them than some included was not allowed for in this study. Therefore, there may have been events which had a greater impact than some of the 43 on the SRRS but the women in the New Start Program did not have the opportunity of referring to them.

Third, several moderator variables have been suggested as having a mediating effect on the consequences of life events. Among these variables referred to in the research literature, the most pertinent to this study is social support. Participants were given few opportunities to indicate the
importance of this variable statistically, apart from categorizing their partner's attitude to their enrolling in the New Start Program. However, in the interviews it was apparent that the women felt that social support was a major factor contributing to continued attendance, and hence particularly to membership in the high attendance category. This support was most keenly experienced in the initial stages of the course when many women were still feeling apprehensive about continuing. It was apparent from the interviews that at least a quarter of the women owed their remaining in the course to positive encouragement received from members of their social network. Yet this mediating variable was not taken into account in the statistical analysis.

Self-esteem was the only variable for which the mean scores were in the expected order. Members of the high attendance category had a mean score of 29.9, which was 0.9 above that for the medium attendance group, and 1.7 above that for the low attendance group. Hence there was a trend noted for self-esteem scores to be a function of attendance category membership. By itself, though, self-esteem was not significantly related to attendance category membership. Like the previous variable, there is research evidence to show that the effects of having low self-esteem may be moderated. Of particular relevance to this study are findings which have shown that subjects low in self-esteem tend to exhibit a greater affiliation tendency than those with high self-esteem. Furthermore, this tendency is heightened with the induction of anxiety. These findings would
suggest that for women in this study high anxiety and low self-esteem may have been countervailing forces, one working to reduce the impact of the other. No evidence, either from the interviews or from the standardized instruments, was collected to support or to reject this proposition. However, it seems possible that women with low self-esteem may have tended to remain as members of the course to satisfy their affiliation needs.

Finally, the rank order of the mean scores for study orientation was almost the reverse of what might have been expected. The highest mean score on the SSHA scale was recorded by members of the medium attendance category, 3.5 and 4.4 points higher than the low and high attendance categories respectively. As was the case for persistence and dropout, scores on one of the primary scales on the SSHA, Teacher Approval, was significantly related to attendance category membership. It would seem that the same argument which was presented earlier in this chapter also applies to this relationship. Participants who believed that teachers were able to help them achieve their goals remained in the course and attended most, if not all, sessions because doing so was consistent with their belief.

Reference has been made in this discussion to factors other than those which were considered in the MANOVA which may have contributed to the second research hypothesis not being accepted. The influence of social support as a mediating influence on undesirable life events is an example. There was also evidence that marital status and having child-caring
responsibilities were significantly associated with rate of attendance category membership. Both of these factors can be considered as supporting the argument for the importance of membership of a close social network. Likewise, being a member of a carpool to travel to the class or being part of a sub-group within the class to share books and co-operatively work on assignments further exemplified the importance of the support of other people to enhance the rate of attendance.

The interviews also revealed the importance of goals and the way in which women assessed their progress in meeting the goals they had set for themselves. Members of the high attendance category either had more clearly defined goals than members of the other two categories or they reported focusing their goals as the course progressed. They judged their progress favourably in this light. Women who revised or postponed their goals during the course had less incentive to continue to attend than women who were committed to enrolling in a tertiary educational institution in the following year. The influence of progress toward a goal was an important factor in rate of attendance category differentiation yet it was not taken into account in testing the hypotheses.

Two other factors contributing to attending more than half of the sessions and, therefore, being placed in the high or medium categories were also reported by interviewees. Awareness of the increasing demand by employers for higher educational qualifications than participants had acted as an incentive for women in the study to seriously consider improving their
qualifications to enable themselves to be competitive in an uncertain job market. Positive feedback from course coordinators for class exercises and assignments was a factor reported as contributing to continuing attendance. Those women who withdrew from the course in its early stages, and were, therefore, included in the low attendance category, generally left before even a few assignments had been completed. Accordingly, they did not get the encouragement those remaining reported having received. As was the case for the importance of social support, progress toward a goal, conditions in the labour market, and the effects of positive feedback were not taken into account when the research hypothesis predicting a relationship between rate of attendance category membership and the five criterion variables was tested.

Summary

Multivariate analysis of variance was the statistical technique used to test two operational hypotheses for each of the two research hypotheses formulated in this study.

For the first hypothesis the results of the MANOVA showed that the population dispersions of persisters and dropouts were equal, and that their population centroids were also equal. Therefore, the first hypothesis which predicted that persisters would obtain a significantly different group centroid from dropouts was not supported. Hence the integration effects of years of schooling, state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem, and study orientation were not significantly
related to persistence and dropout.

There seemed to be a slight trend in the data which suggested that there were differences between persisters and dropouts on their mean scores on three of the five criterion variables. The study orientation score and years of schooling were the exceptions with the mean scores being almost identical. Yet the MANOVA did not demonstrate a significant relationship between these variables and persistence and dropout as was predicted. Several factors were presented to explain the reasons why the hypothesis was not supported. For example, recent educational experience may have been more important than level of formal education. Further, the interviews revealed other factors, such as social support, were important in distinguishing between persisters and dropouts.

For the second research hypothesis the MANOVA showed the population dispersions of the three attendance categories were equal within the range of chance. The three groups were homogeneous in terms of the characteristics measured. Their population centroids were also equal. Therefore, the second hypothesis which predicted that women in the high attendance category would obtain a significantly different group centroid from women in the lower categories was not supported. Thus, the integrative effects of years of schooling, state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem, and study orientation were not significantly related to rate of attendance category membership.

When mean scores on each of the five criterion variables
were compared for the three categories, only one of them, self-esteem, was in the expected order whereby the high attendance group had the highest score, followed in order by the medium and low attendance categories. The high attendance category also had, as predicted, the lowest state anxiety score. Similarly, the low attendance category members reported having experienced more undesirable life events in the previous twelve months than members of the other two categories.

Explanations were offered for the second research hypothesis not being accepted. The interviews revealed that there were factors for subjects in this study which accounted for rate of attendance category differentiation which were not considered in the testing of the research hypothesis. Social support, as evidenced by encouragement from family members or class colleagues, marital status, child-caring responsibilities, or carpooling, all contributed to a subject's attending most if not all sessions and, therefore, being categorized in the high or medium attendance groups. A subject's assessment of her progress toward a clearly defined goal and the specificity of that goal were also important factors making for high attendance category membership. The exclusion of these influences as well as the other factors discussed may have contributed to the non-acceptance of the second research hypothesis.

The implications of the findings, from the bivariate and multivariate statistical testing and the interviews, for practitioners and researchers are considered in the next, and final, chapter. Chapter XI also reviews the study and comments
on its major limitations.
CHAPTER XI

REVIEW, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The final chapter of this dissertation begins by reviewing the purpose, conceptualization of the two attendance behaviour constructs, characteristics of the sample, and the means of data collection.

The findings of the study are summarized, including testing of the two research hypotheses. Before the implications are considered, limitations of the study are pointed out. The implications of the results are suggested for practitioners, especially program planners, instructors, and counsellors, as well as administrators who have a responsibility for adult student re-entry programs. Implications for research are discussed, and suggestions for future research made.

Review

Following a brief description of the purpose of this study, previous attempts to conceptualize and operationalize attendance behaviour in adult education programs, particularly persistence and dropout and rates of attendance, are summarized before consideration is given to the design of this study. An explanation of the means by which data were collected is followed by a description of the sample. Finally in this section, the major findings are presented.
Purpose

Despite previous research findings, the problems of dropout and low rate of attendance have remained serious concerns for adult educators. This study was conducted at a time when there is a proportionate as well as an absolute increase in the number of adults over 25 years of age returning to educational institutions, particularly at the tertiary level, after having been away from them for ten years or more. Re-entry adults have been characterized as being highly motivated, but anxious about their abilities to keep up with younger students whose schooling is often an unbroken transition from secondary school to a tertiary institution. Adults are also faced with family, job, and community responsibilities which they fulfil as part of their multiple life-roles. Many, too, feel handicapped by their deficient study skills and, therefore, lack confidence in their ability to meet the demands of studying at a university or technical institute.

The principal purpose of this research was to measure the extent to which differences in attendance behaviour could be accounted for in terms of participants' years of schooling, state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem, and study orientation. These constructs were selected as manifestations of the interrelationships among background educational variables, psycho-social variables, and the experience in an educational environment.

A distinction was made in attendance behaviour between persistence and dropout on one hand and rates of attendance on
the other. These alternatives were considered because it was anticipated that some participants would continue to attend but irregularly, whereas others early in the course would cease to attend. Evidence was noted in previous studies which showed that this distinction was worth pursuing.

In chapter II deficiencies were pointed out in the ways in which persistence and dropout had been defined in previous studies. One serious fault has been a failure by researchers to state specifically the point at which continuous non-attendance constituted dropout. Instead these researchers have referred to students as having "failed to complete the course." In other studies to fulfil conditions of persistence participants had to satisfy attendance and course work requirements. This writer argues that the two criteria should be considered separately because the former refers to presence or absence while the latter represents a measure of academic performance. The definitions offered in some of the studies reviewed implied that even if a participant had numerous absences he would be considered to have satisfied the persistence criteria if the required course work had been completed. Several studies have operationalized dropout in terms of non-attendance at the last few sessions of a program. Yet such a definition does not take into account the length of the program. Research evidence has shown that withdrawal rates are greater in longer than in shorter courses. Some studies investigating attendance behaviour have followed the administrative practices of the providing institution in defining a dropout as a person who is
absent on a particular day, yet administrative convenience may not reflect the attendance behaviour of participants in adult education programs. On the basis of the definitions reviewed, this writer concluded that comparisons among dropout studies were very difficult, even when similar populations had been used, because the definitions were inadequate or inconsistent. In view of these criticisms the definition used in this study ignored work requirements; strictly required attendance at the first session so that the person who enrolled and never returned to the class after the first session was included; was flexible enough to be applied in other programs where the course length might differ from the ten sessions of the courses selected for this study; and was clearly stated, unlike other studies which have failed to define the term or have not been specific, stating that a dropout was someone "who fails to complete the course." A persister in this study attended the first session and at least one session in the latter half of the course; a dropout attended the first session but not even a single session in the latter half of the course. This definition is flexible enough to be applied to other studies in which the length of courses may vary. It also takes into account of the criticism made of definitions which required attendance at the last two or three sessions.

The second attendance construct examined in this study was rate of attendance. Few previous studies which have focused on attendance behaviour in adult education programs have considered alternatives to dichotomizing persistence and dropout. Most
studies which have used the notion of rate of attendance have failed to adequately operationalize the construct, and commonly have formed their categories after examining participants' course records.

Rate of attendance was used as an indicator of participant attendance in this study because it took account of the fact that some participants remained in the program but attended infrequently, while others did not attend after the first few sessions. Yet another group (of 83) attended most or all of the sessions. It was suggested that distinct phenomena may have operated for participants who withdrew soon after the course started compared with those whose membership of the course continued, although their presence was irregular. Although this construct had not been investigated to nearly the same extent as persistence and dropout, it has the utility of being able to investigate the proportion of total sessions attended.

A subsidiary task of this dissertation was to identify the demographic, educational, and psycho-social characteristics of the participants in the study and to relate these to persistence and dropout and the three rate of attendance categories. In view of the fact that many previous dropout studies have examined the effects of single variables on persistence and dropout, it was considered desirable to replicate and briefly discuss similar relationships in this study before proceeding to the multivariate analysis which more accurately reflects the complexity of human behaviour.
Design of the Study

The design of the study was influenced by four objectives. First, it was considered desirable to measure the characteristics typically applied to re-entry students, especially their anxiety, lack of study skills, and lack of self-worth. Second, these characteristics were related separately to two sets of attendance data, persistence and dropout, and rate of attendance. Third, in view of several previous research studies which have recommended a multivariate approach to analyzing attendance behaviour, a statistical technique embodying this notion was employed to test the relationships between attendance behaviour and five criterion variables. Fourth, interviews were conducted to verify the choice of the selected variables and to determine whether other factors might have been more important in accounting for attendance behaviour.

Instrumentation

Data on participant characteristics were obtained by administering a questionnaire to subjects present at the first session of the course. In addition four self-report standardized instruments were completed by participants to measure the constructs which had been identified, after reviewing previous research, as being related to attendance behaviour in adult education programs and relevant to re-entry adult students.

Anxiety was measured using the State-Trait Anxiety
Inventory (STAI) which conceptually distinguishes between state anxiety (that being felt at the time the instrument is completed) and trait anxiety (how the subject generally feels). In all of the dropout studies reviewed which had considered anxiety as a variable, the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale had been used and that instrument does not make the conceptual distinction between the two anxiety conditions as is done by the STAI. The original and modified versions of the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS) were used to obtain a measure from participants of the life events which they had experienced in the previous twelve months and an assessment of the effect of these events. Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale was administered to measure participants' self-worth. The Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (SSHA) was employed to measure study skills and attitudes to teachers and education.

Criticisms were made in chapter II of previous studies which had not collected data at the first session of the courses studied. When this had not been done some participants had already left the program by the time participant characteristics were measured. Furthermore, those people who have remained have had time to adjust, therefore, they may no longer be as anxious as they were at the beginning of the program. Alternatively, they may have had time to reassess their goals. This study avoided the possibility of some participants withdrawing before data were collected and of participants adjusting to the course by collecting information at the first session of the program. The characteristics of the sample obtained using the
questionnaire and the standardized instruments are reported in the next section.

**Characteristics of the sample**

A description of the demographic characteristics and educational background of the women in the study was presented in chapter V (and is elaborated in appendix D). Wherever relevant these characteristics were compared with data for adult women in New Zealand. One of the major features of the sample which emerged from these comparisons was that women in the study appeared to have come from households whose income was above the New Zealand average, yet the women themselves were less qualified educationally than the New Zealand adult female population. This status discrepancy may have accounted for the importance many of them ascribed to education and to teachers (as measured by the SSHA).

The psycho-social characteristics of women in the New Start Program and their study orientation were reported in chapter V. Comparisons with the New Zealand adult women population on these measures were not possible because of the lack of published normative data. Scores on the psycho-social variables showed considerable range, but, as reported in chapter VI and chapter VIII, few were significantly related to the attendance behaviour measures used in this study.

**Results**

The attendance behaviour of women in this study, as
represented by their persistence and dropout, and rate of attendance category membership, is reported before the major findings are reviewed.

Attendance behaviour

In keeping with the study's definition of a dropout as a person who failed to attend even a single session of the second half of the course after having attended the first session, persisters were separated from dropouts when course records were examined at the conclusion of the course. There were 115 persisters and 30 dropouts (21 percent of the sample).

Based on the number of sessions attended, women were assigned to low (one to three sessions), medium (four to seven sessions), and high (eight to ten sessions) rate of attendance categories. Many courses offered by adult education agencies in New Zealand are of ten weeks' duration, therefore, in this regard the New Start Program is similar to other adult education courses.

Forty-five women attended all sessions of the course, and thirty-eight others attended eight or nine sessions making a total of eighty-three, 57 percent, in the high rate of attendance category. Thirty-five women, 24 percent, comprised the medium attendance category. Finally, twenty-seven women, 19 percent of the sample, formed the low rate of attendance group.

Subjects in this study were drawn from 159 women who enrolled in the New Start Program at that time. Six women who were not present at the first session were excluded from the
study, as were four more who, after enrolling, did not attend any sessions in the course. Two women provided insufficient data to be included, and another two declined to participate. Therefore, 145 women formed the sample for this study.

Accounting for persistence and dropout

Both of the research hypotheses in this study used years of schooling, state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem, and study orientation as criterion variables and a form of attendance behaviour. It was argued that membership of an attendance group would be accounted for in terms of the five criterion variables considered together. The MANOVA technique which was used to test the hypotheses takes into account the integrative effect of these variables.

The first research hypothesis stated:
Women enrolled in the New Start Program who persisted in the course would obtain a statistically significant different group centroid from women who dropped out of the program.

Two operational hypotheses were used to test the research hypothesis. The first showed that the population dispersions of the two groups, persisters and dropouts, were equal within the range of chance. This hypothesis was tenable. Hence persisters and dropouts were homogeneous groups. The second operational hypothesis showed that the population centroids of the two groups were also equal. This hypothesis, too, was tenable. Accordingly, differences between persisters and dropouts could
not be accounted for on the basis of their years of schooling, level of state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem, and study orientation. The research hypothesis was not accepted.

It was noted that there is research evidence to suggest that those with low self-esteem, under conditions where anxiety is induced, have greater affiliation needs than those with high self-esteem. Given this finding and drawing on self-enhancement theory, two explanations are possible to explain why self-esteem was not significantly associated with persistence and dropout. First, the interactive effect of low self-esteem and anxiety may have contributed to persistence by those with low self-esteem attempting to satisfy their needs for affiliation. Second, self-enhancement theory suggests that women with low self-esteem would have remained in the program as long as there was a prospect of their being successful. Nearly half of those interviewed reported feeling more confident about their abilities at the end than at the start of the program. Hence this theory, rather than consistency theory, may have been applicable in this study. The interviews also revealed that progress toward achieving their goal was a major factor contributing to participants' continued attendance.

Although the impact of undesirable life events was in the expected direction, it had not been anticipated that participants would have experienced more desirable than undesirable events in the previous twelve months. As adults undergo life transitions it is important that the impact of the
accompanying changes be assessed because of the consequences for human performance that have been shown. To date, the emphasis in life change research has been on the negative outcomes of undesirable changes. This study indicated that periods of transition in adults' lives can be viewed positively.

When the demographic, educational, and psycho-social variables were considered, only scores on the Teacher Approval scale of the SSHA were significantly related to persistence and dropout. Women who rated the behaviour and influence of teachers highly tended to persist, while those who gave low ratings to teachers were inclined to drop out. When the educational background of participants was related to their scores on the scales of the SSHA, it was found that formal educational qualifications were significantly related to scores on the Teacher Approval scale. Those who had the highest levels of qualifications were more likely to rate teachers highly than women with lower formal educational qualifications. Hence it appeared that those with higher qualifications attributed some of their achievements to the contributions of teachers. For these participants remaining in the program was consistent with their belief that instructors could help them achieve their goals.

Several factors may explain why relationships in this study were not statistically significant when they have been found to be, although not consistently, in other studies. First, the definition of "dropout" was not the same as used in other research. Because of conceptual and operational deficiencies in
previous definitions, none of these was used in this study.

Second, the nature of the population was different from that which had been the focus of most previous studies. Generally, the populations which have been the focus of research have enrolled in programs for adult basic education, vocational training and upgrading, and adult evening classes. In those studies younger adults have been shown to have greater dropout rates than older adults. Most women in this study were over 25 years of age and, has been shown, this age group is more likely to persist than adults under 25 years.

Third, although the constructs used in this study had been found to be significantly associated with persistence and dropout, the standardized instruments used in this study to measure anxiety, self-esteem and study skills had not been used previously in dropout studies. The SRRS had been used in Garry's study, but not with the modifications which recent research has suggested is desirable to allow for personal assessment of the events experienced. However, the instruments selected have been widely used in social science research; and their validity and reliability are firmly established. Therefore, it is unlikely that different findings compared with other studies are a function of the instruments used in this study.

Fourth, the statistical analysis did not take into account countervailing or intervening variables which were revealed in the interviews as enhancing persistence. It was apparent that persisters were characterized by personal qualities which were
not measured directly. The interviews revealed these women as being determined and highly motivated to overcome some of their deficiencies and to complete the program. The importance of social support, shown as a mediating variable in social stress research, was evident among persisters. This support was most keenly felt coming from a source that was valued, particularly partner and family. It also manifested itself in sub-group membership within the class and partnership in a shared travelling arrangement to the class.

Fifth, predictions are made difficult when unanticipated events intervene. Some women in the dropout category had not expected their family would have to move to another town, or that the pressures of employment would change dramatically, or domestic relationships would alter. Again, the type of social support that subjects were able to draw on may have modified the impact of these events.

Accounting for attendance category differences

In relation to the number of persistence and dropout studies, little research has focused on rates of attendance. The second research hypothesis was concerned with the relationship between rate of attendance category membership and five criterion variables: years of schooling, state anxiety, undesirable life events, self-esteem, and study orientation. It was predicted that differences among women in the three groups would be accounted for in terms of the criterion variables. Specifically, the second hypothesis stated:
Women whose persistence, in terms of their rate of course attendance, was high would obtain significantly different group centroids on all five criterion variables taken as a whole from women whose rate of attendance was low. 

As with the first research hypothesis, two operational hypotheses were used to test it. The first operational hypothesis showed that the population dispersions of the three groups were equal. Hence this hypothesis was tenable. Members of the three categories had homogeneous characteristics.

The second operational hypothesis was also tenable. It showed that the population centroids for the three groups were equal. Thus there were no significant differences in the mean scores on the criterion variables taken as a whole among each of the three groups. Therefore, the second research hypothesis was not accepted.

When the summary of mean scores was examined, the pattern was not as clearly defined as it had been for the differences between persisters and dropouts. For the second research hypothesis only self-esteem had mean scores in the expected order with the highest score being recorded by members of the high rate of attendance category and the lowest by those in the low attendance category.

Four variables were found to be significantly related to the number of sessions participants attended: marital status; number of children cared for; number of adult education courses attended in the previous three years; and the number of days
prior to the beginning of the New Start Program that participants had enrolled.

While the statistical analyses revealed some differences among the three categories, the interviews revealed other important distinctions. Social support was an important factor accounting for membership of the high attendance category. The goals of women in the high attendance category were more specific than for women in other categories. This finding provided support for Cunningham's (1973) research on specificity of goals and their relationship with attendance category membership and for Londoner's (1972a) research on the importance of goal statements. It was also found through interviews that members of the high attendance category assessed their progress as being closer to attaining their goals than members of the other two categories.

Women in the medium attendance category had modified to some extent their original goals in attending the course. Therefore, faced with conflicting pressures between attending a session and taking part in some other activity, the latter may have been preferred. Women in this category reported becoming more selective in the sessions they attended.

Unanticipated demands placed on them were reported by many women in the low rate of attendance category as contributing to their having attended few sessions in the course. Having to meet unexpected workloads in jobs, not realising additional work would be required outside of class hours, being unaware of the level of work required, moving to another town, and being
involved in unexpected domestic difficulties were all given as explanations for limited attendance. In some cases positive social support may have counteracted the negative consequences reported.

Women who encountered these difficulties were forced to re-assess their goals. Some decided that they would not be studying in a tertiary educational institution, at least in the foreseeable future. Others felt that the difficulty which had interfered with their attendance in the New Start Program would be overcome, and that tertiary study would be undertaken.

The purposes, design and findings of this study have been reviewed. The next section suggests limitations of this study.

**Limitations**

The limitations of this study arise from three sources, limitations due to the conceptualization and operationalization of the attendance behaviour measures, the limitations due to social conditions at the time the study was implemented, and not being able to link attendance behaviour to academic performance, either at the end of the New Start Program or subsequently.

In this study a dropout was a person who attended the first session of the course but not even a single session in the latter half of the course. This definition was formulated to take account of inadequate definitions noted in previous research. Criticisms were made of studies which, in effect, regarded the second or later session as the start of the course by collecting data at that point even after some dropout had
occurred. By insisting on attendance at the first session participants who attended only that session were included in this study. The definition is flexible enough to be applied to other studies in which the course may vary in length from the ten sessions of the New Start Program. Yet the point at which withdrawal occurs is not effectively addressed by this definition. Further, no distinction was made between those who may be considered to have drifted out of the course and those who were unequivocal about withdrawing. A woman may have attended only ten percent of the course or as much as 50 percent and yet still been counted as a dropout.

The other construct, rate of attendance category, was based on pre-determined criteria. Being able to readily convert a continuous variable, the number of sessions attended, into three categories proved to be more insightful than the dichotomous distinction between persisters and dropouts because of the extra dimension that was added.

There was considerable overlap between membership in the dropout and low rate of attendance categories, so there was no advantage in this study in making this distinction for those who attended few sessions, all but one of whom withdrew in the first half of the course. However, conceptually the importance of the distinction has not been established. Among persisters there were distinguishing characteristics revealed statistically and through the interviews which separated women in the medium rate of attendance category from those in the high rate category. Hence the distinction for those who attended more than 40
percent of the number of sessions held had utility, but this
distinction was limited for those attending less than this
proportion.

Ten women did not take part in the study even though they
enrolled and attended the program. Six of these women were not
present at the first session. It was not administratively
convenient to obtain the same demographic, educational, and
psycho-social data from them as were provided by the 145
participants who completed the questionnaire and standardized
instruments at the first session of the course. The other four
women provided insufficient data or declined to participate in
the study. Apart from those who were absent from the first
session, the course records showed that the attendance pattern
of these women was similar to others who had enrolled. Most
attended the remaining nine sessions, although two did not
attend after the third session and another one after the fourth.

A potentially more serious limitation arises from the fact
that the MANOVA testing both research hypotheses was limited to
117 participants because missing data were excluded. All but
one of these data were accounted for by participants not
completing the SSHA. Non-completers of the instrument had lower
formal educational qualifications than completers, and came from
households where family income was lower, although the
differences were not statistically significant. Further, there
were no significant differences between completers and non-
completers on any of the variables used in the MANOVA. A
potential bias in the results did not appear to have eventuated.
In generalizing the results of this study, note must be taken of the population which comprised the study and the social context in which it was conducted. The program studied was designed to prepare those contemplating returning to formal educational study with the skills to make the transition from domestic or paid employment to being a student. Within the New Zealand context the lack of research in adult education and development has meant that no published norms exist for the standardized instruments which were used in this study. Therefore, comparisons had to be made with samples reported in the manuals for the instruments and in other United States studies. In most of these cases college populations, different in age and background from the sample in this study, provide the normative data.

In this study attendance behaviour was related to participants' educational and psycho-social characteristics. No attempt was made to relate attendance behaviour to performance either in the short or long term. In the short term an end-of-course test might have been given to assess the academic competence of participants in the program. Their attendance records could have been related to scores on this final test. A positive and significant relationship between the number of sessions attended and scores on the final test would have suggested the benefits of attending regularly.

In the longer term, attendance in the program might have been related to subsequent enrolment in a tertiary educational institution given the fact that recruitment into these
institutions was put forward as one goal of the New Start Program. Additionally in the long term, the success of this program might have been shown by the pass rate of New Start participants compared with an equivalent group of students in a tertiary educational institution who did not take part in the program.

The relationship between attendance behaviour and academic achievement is one topic which could well be the subject of further research. The next section considers the implications for adult education practice and future research in the light of this study's findings and limitations.

**Implications**

In this section implications for practitioners, program planners, instructors, counsellors, administrators, and researchers are suggested. Implications for the latter group are considered as a prelude to suggestions for further research.

**Implications for Practice**

In the context of New Zealand adult education provision, program planners often fulfil a counselling function as well as have responsibilities for initiating, developing, and evaluating programs. In other contexts the roles of program planner and counsellor may have been separated. Readers will need to interpret these implications as they apply to their own circumstances. All staff involved in agencies which provide and promote adult education should be aware of the complexities of
the factors which influence attendance behaviour so that interventions can be made to reduce dropout and enhance persistence. Drawing from the findings of this research project, this section suggests steps which could reduce dropout in similar re-entry programs.

Program information, giving details of the goals of the program and likely demands on participants, published several months before the course commenced would seem to be justified for re-entry adult students because of the other activities in their lives they have to contend with. Some of their commitments are likely to be in conflict with the demands of the course in which the re-entry student is enrolled.

The ready availability of program coordinators or counsellors for pre-course interviews would provide a valuable service to potential enrollees. Such an interview would serve as an integral part of the planning process enabling the coordinator to assess the needs of participants, to learn of their goals, and to appreciate their life plans. The course can be modified to take account of participants' plans. At the interview course coordinators may take the opportunity to explain the purposes of the program in more detail than can be set out in a publicity brochure, identify some of the skills which would be developed in the course, and point out demands that might be made of participants in the program. In the largest class in the study, where opportunity for personal contact was least, participants who took advantage of the pre-course interview reported the benefits of this interview and
were noted to have had better attendance records than those who did not take the interview.

Course coordinators have an important role in developing a cohesive and supportive class spirit. In addition, the development of support groups wherein members can discuss tasks, reflect on their goals, and share ideas on how to tackle assignments assumes importance in view of the findings of this study in regard to the beneficial effects of belonging to a supportive social network. This study also suggests categories of individuals who may be more vulnerable in regard to withdrawing. Hence an additional effort may be needed, for example, to help form a support group for single women.

The providing institutions in this study did not hold end-of-course interviews. The writer conducted interviews as part of the research for this dissertation. It was apparent that some women, irrespective of whether or not they had attended all sessions, still had some doubts about the skills they had acquired or the steps they should take next in the process of returning to a formal educational institution. In these cases the writer noted the doubts that interviewees expressed and sought their permission to pass the information to course coordinators before taking that step. These participants expressed gratitude that after the course had concluded apparently busy people still cared for them and were willing to help them tackle problems which remained unanswered. Undoubtedly, there would be a positive response to the opportunity for post-course interviews in other programs of a
similar type. Additional advice given in the light of course experiences and when a course coordinator has become familiar with a student's needs and goals is likely to be appreciated by as well as beneficial to the student. Interviews held at this stage would also provide the course coordinator with feedback and contribute to a summative evaluation of the program.

As the roles of program planner and counsellor may overlap, a similar situation may apply to course coordinators and instructors wherein the same person may fulfil both roles. Prior to and at the start of the course, coordinators should take notice of program planning principles which advise that heed be taken of the learner's needs and interests. In this study those who had not participated in adult education programs in the previous three years were shown to have significantly higher state anxiety scores than those who had taken such courses. Some participants expressed the view that they were not made to feel at ease because of the manner and actions of one of the instructors. Course coordinators should advise instructors of the characteristics of the learners in their classes so that instructors can take steps to help participants adjust to the learning situation with which many of them are not familiar and, therefore, about which they feel apprehensive.

The first assignment loomed for many as a major hurdle, not because of what the task involved but because participants keenly felt they were being judged for the first time. It is important, therefore, that instructors provide tasks which are easily managed early in the course and that they promptly give
positive feedback so success is reinforced and continued attendance encouraged. Regular attainable tasks may serve several functions. First, they would assist the student break down long term tasks into manageable units. Second, experiencing regular success and being rewarded for it would reinforce the development of sound study habits and skills. Third, progress toward an ultimate goal may seem more readily attainable as skills are mastered and rewarded in the process.

This study showed the assessment that participants believed they made of their progress toward achieving their goal was a major factor influencing their persistence and rate of attendance category membership. Londoner's (1972a) and Cunningham's (1973) research showed the importance of goals and continued attendance. Therefore, instructors and course coordinators should be aware, from information gathered at pre-course interviews, discussions held early in the course, or from open-ended questions as were used in the questionnaire in this study, of the goals that participants have, help them make their goals more specific as the course progresses and facilitate the positive assessment of the steps which have been made to attain those goals.

Instructors may wish to take into account the finding in this study that positive attitudes to teachers and their actions, as represented by high scores on the Teacher Approval scale, were positively associated with persistence and high attendance category membership. These participants attributed to their instructors a vital role in their educational progress.
Instructors may wish to confirm this positive role by being sensitive to the needs of people in their class and responding accordingly.

Administrators responsible for adult education programs need to be made aware of the complexities involved in the attendance behaviour of students for whom they have a responsibility. Students who are forced to withdraw or attend irregularly through some personal or external factors should not be denied opportunities for re-entry given the finding in this study that previous dropout was not predictive of dropout from the program studied. In light of a limitation of this study that attendance behaviour was not related to academic achievement, it can not be concluded that absence from sessions affected academic performance. It is possible that some participants who were absent from sessions compensated by making up for the work they missed at the class. Arrangements might be formalized to enable participants to make up for sessions which they are unable to attend.

In allocating resources to units working with adult re-entry students, administrators should take into account the time that should properly be spent on counselling and advising these individuals. Interviews, diagnostic testing, advising, and following up with the client as well as working with other agencies are appropriate, but time-consuming activities. Post-course interviews would not normally have been conducted, yet were carried out as part of the data gathering process in this research project. At least one-quarter of those interviewed
were still in doubt about their study skills or their ability to cope with tertiary educational study. Counselling sessions conducted after the course has concluded may be as necessary for some participants as pre-course interviews. Staffing and financial allocations need to be made by the institutions providing re-entry programs to take this work into account.

Implications for Research

In view of the findings of this study, future research is recommended in four areas: the importance of social support; time factor orientation; alternative variables; and re-analyzing previous research data.

One of the most important factors in this study which accounted for differences in attendance behaviour was the social support received by participants, particularly from someone whom they regarded as being significant to them. Neither the nature and extent of this support nor its practical manifestations were examined in depth in this study. The construct is being increasingly used by social stress researchers and life cycle developmental psychologists to account for differences in coping with stress and life stage transitions. It is suggested, therefore, that future research focusing on attendance behaviour in adult re-entry programs take heed of these findings and those by Jones, Schulman, and Stubblefield (1978) who measured the construct using a standardized instrument.

A second area which persistence and dropout research could investigate is the time perspective of participants and the
relationship of this perspective to the development and revision of goals prior to, in, and following adult education programs designed to facilitate life transitions. This suggestion arises from two findings in this study as well as from previous adult education research which has drawn attention to the importance of participants' goals in their remaining in a program. In this study women who enrolled well in advance of the course's beginning attended more sessions than those who enrolled closer to its commencement. It was suggested, but not confirmed, that time was required to allow women to make adjustments in their lives to cope with the demands of the program. Clarification of the importance of this time element would give adult educators involved in programs designed to facilitate life transitions a clearer understanding than they have at present of the dynamics involved in making and acting upon decisions to prepare for such changes as updating skills, re-entering the labour force, or preparing for retirement by participating in adult education programs.

The notion of time perspective also appeared to have relevance to the progress that participants believed they were making toward their goals. The interviews revealed that a major factor differentiating among women in each of the three rate of attendance categories was their revised assessment of goal statements they reported in answer to the open-ended question in the questionnaire completed at the first session. Women who remained or became convinced they would enrol in a tertiary educational institution in the following year were aware of the
advantages of attending most sessions. Women who had decided against full-time or part-time study in the near future tended to attend few sessions.

Several research questions arise from these findings. First, how were goals influenced and modified by participation in an adult education program? For example, it was found that sub-group membership was associated with having attended at least half of the sessions and being in the high or medium rate of attendance category. What was not clear was the extent of the influence of other participants on goals being revised. Second, how closely were participants' and program planners' goals matched? Women in the low attendance category may have attended few sessions because they concluded that their goals were not in accord with those of the program planners. Previous research has drawn attention to the importance of goal specificity and instructor awareness of participants' goals, but goal congruence or incongruence between participants and program planners has not been satisfactorily investigated. Future research could be directed at examining the match between planner and participant goals at the beginning of the program, what and how changes are made during the program, and the relationship of these changes to attendance behaviour.

An additional dimension that might be considered is the strength of determination to attain goals. In the interview conducted as part of this study women who were classified in the high attendance category revealed more determination than was shown in interviews with members of other attendance categories.
The operationalization and testing of some form of intentionality scale may have application to other studies as well as those dealing with attendance behaviour.

The third area which future research might be directed follows from the findings associated with some of the variables used in this study and the instruments used to collect data. For example, instead of years of schooling and level of formal educational qualifications, recency of educational experience may be a more relevant variable accounting for attendance behaviour in view of the fact that the number of adult education courses attended in the previous three years was significantly and positively related to the number of sessions attended in this course. While most research evidence to date supported the variables chosen in this study, they may not be as appropriate for a re-entry adult student population as they have been for other populations studied. The life experiences which participants have had and other factors, such as a supportive social network, appeared in this study to have offset prior formal educational experience gained up to twenty years prior to enrolment in the New Start Program.

Although the number of undesirable life events experienced in a fixed time period had been shown in other research to be associated with performance deficiency, the number of undesirable life events reported by subjects in this study was not significantly related to either persistence and dropout or to rate of attendance category membership. Furthermore, women in this study reported having experienced more desirable than
undesirable events in the past twelve months. Therefore, for many women the past twelve months had been a period in which changes in their lives had been viewed positively. For many of them this constructive period also included preparing themselves for a possible further transition to becoming a student, either full-time or part-time, in a tertiary educational institution. Rather than considering negative aspects, as undesirable life events and dropout may be considered, it may be worthwhile to consider desirable life changes and personal psycho-social assets and relate these to persistence.

The modification of the original SRRS had been justified in social psychological research concerned with the effect of life changes. However, researchers involved in this field of social stress have acknowledged that further theoretical development and refinement of instruments are necessary preludes to a better understanding of the relationship between life changes and human performance. Future research in adult education dealing with the impact of change in a society in which the rate of change is ever increasing will need to take account of the developments in social stress research.

Researchers in the future are cautioned about using the SSHA for re-entry adult students. Although it has been shown in other studies to be significantly related to achievement, the amount of the variance that it has accounted for has been small. Further, there was some justification to the claims of those who had been away from an educational environment for many years, as was the case for some subjects in this study, in that the
questions are primarily designed for those making a transition from secondary school to college rather than the change from not studying to being enrolled in an educational institution. Nevertheless, the instrument has merit in measuring subjects' assessment of their study skills as well as their attitudes to the agent of instruction and the value of education. Given the increasing numbers of re-entry students an instrument more appropriately reflecting their situation and shorter in length than the SSHA would appear to be a worthwhile research development, especially if the instrument devised were to retain the research, diagnostic, and counselling functions claimed for the SSHA.

The fourth area in which future research might be conducted is a reconsideration of data from research that has already been conducted. The findings in this study failed to confirm some results which had been reported previously. An unresolved matter is the extent to which previous researchers' conceptualization of dropout, which has been criticized by this writer, contributed to their findings. For example, studies which required participants to complete course work as well as meet attendance criteria might be re-examined focusing solely on the attendance behaviour of the participants. Similarly, studies which were influenced by administrative convenience in fixing a specified date to determine a participant's attendance status could be reviewed to examine the overall attendance pattern of those who enrolled. Findings of dropout studies could then be reviewed on the basis of a consistent
conceptualization of the concept being studied.

Data from previous studies could also be re-analyzed using the statistical techniques which have been made more readily available by computer technology. Writers concerned with attendance behaviour in adult education programs have consistently referred to the complex and interrelated variables attendance reflects, yet many studies have relied on bivariate statistics to explain this behaviour. The use of more sophisticated techniques could be applied to data previously collected as well as future research.
REFERENCES


Boshier, R.W. "Participation and Drop-out in Adult University Extension Classes." New Zealand Journal of Educational


---


Donnarumma, T.; Cox, D.; and Beder, H. "Success in a High School Completion Program and Its Relation to Field


Harper, W.E. "Liking for Evaluators as a Function of Self-


---


---


Spielberger, C.D. "Theory and Research on Anxiety." In Anxiety


Truesdell, L.R. "Persisters and Dropouts in the Canada Manpower Training Program." Adult Education 25 3 (Spring 1975):149-60.


Wen, S., and Liu, A. "The Validity of Each of the Four Scales of the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (SSHA) for Each of Two Samples of College Students under Each of Two Treatment Conditions Involving Use of Released Class Time." Educational and Psychological Measurement 36 2 (Summer 1976):565-8.


Appendix A

Text of Covering Letter
Explaining Purposes of the Study
and Procedures to Participants
Dear Participant:

Increasing numbers of adults are returning to educational institutions after a period of domestic or paid employment. Some people enrol directly in these institutions. Others, like you, opt to take part in an exploratory programme before making a decision about further study or future employment. Not all people, however, complete the programme in which they have enrolled. This series of questionnaires is designed to find out why some participants do not complete the course. It is hoped that the information gained from this study will help other adults in the future with their programmes and in attaining their educational goals.

The questionnaires are designed to measure such characteristics as self-esteem, attitudes to education, anxiety, recent life events, and previous schooling. It will take approximately an hour to complete all sections. All information provided will be kept in the strictest confidence, although each of you may obtain your own results.

Your participation in this study is not mandatory. However, the information that you provide will be extremely valuable and very much appreciated. It must be emphasized that involvement in the course will not be affected by your declining to take part in this study.

As your participation in this course will be followed up after its conclusion to find out how the course may have influenced your vocational or educational decisions, it would be helpful if you would supply your name, address, and telephone.
number.

If you consent to take part in this study, please sign below. Many thanks for your help.

Signature: ___________________ Name: _________________________

Telephone: _________________ Address: _________________________

On behalf of the university departments carrying out this study,

David M. Guy
Continuing Education Registrar
University of Waikato
Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. How did you first learn about this programme? (Tick One)

   From:  
   (a) friend  
   (b) previous course participant  
   (c) public advertising  
   (d) university staff member  
   (e) vocational counsellor  
   (f) other (please specify)  

2. How soon before the course began did you enrol?

   ____ days

3. What means of transport do you use to attend this programme? (Tick One)

   (a) public transport  
   (b) private car--alone  
   (c) private car--with another course member  
   (d) walk  
   (e) other (please specify)  

4. How far is it from your home to the course venue?

______ km

5. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed? (e.g., School Certificate, adult apprenticeship, etc.) ________________

6. How many courses or seminars have you attended in the past three years? ________________

7. How many courses have you withdrawn from previously? ________________

8. In what year were you born? 19 ____

9. I am female/male ________

10. I am married / single / separated / divorced. ________________
11. I care for (circle appropriate number): 0 / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / more than 4 children.

12. What is your approximate family income? (Tick One)

(a) less than $5,000

(b) $5,000-$9,999

(c) $10,000-$14,999

(d) $15,000-$19,999

(e) $20,000-$24,999

(f) $25,000 or more

13. My occupation is

14. How would you describe your partner's attitude to your enrolling in this programme? (Tick One)

(a) highly supportive
15. What factors or circumstances do you think are likely to affect your attendance in this programme? ______
16. Briefly state what you hope to achieve as a result of participating in this programme. ____________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________
Appendix C

Life Events Questionnaire
LIFE EVENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

For each of the following events CIRCLE the number of the events which you have experienced in the past 12 months and indicate, by CIRCLING the appropriate answer, whether you found each of these events to be highly undesirable, undesirable, neutral, desirable, or highly desirable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>Highly Undesirable</th>
<th>Undesirable</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
<th>Highly Desirable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Troubles with the boss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Detention in jail or other institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Death of spouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Major change in sleeping habits (a lot more or a lot less sleep, or changes in part of day when asleep)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Death of a close family member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Major change in eating habits (a lot more or a lot less food intake, or very different meal hours or surroundings)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Foreclosure on a mortgage or loan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Revision of personal habits (dress, manners, associations, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Death of a close friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Minor violations of the law (e.g., traffic tickets, jay walking, disturbing the peace, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Outstanding personal achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Pregnancy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. Major change in the health or behavior of a family member

15. Sexual difficulties

16. In-law difficulties

17. Major change in number of family get-togethers (e.g., a lot more or a lot less than usual)

18. Major change in financial state (e.g., a lot worse off or a lot better off than usual)

19. Gaining a new family member (e.g., through birth, adoption, or elder moving in, etc.)

20. Change in residence

21. Son or daughter leaving home (e.g., marriage, attending college, etc.)

22. Marital separation from mate

23. Major change in church activities (e.g., a lot more or a lot less than usual)

24. Marital reconciliation with mate

25. Being fired from work

26. Divorce

27. Changing to a different line of work

28. Major change in the number of arguments with spouse (e.g., either a lot more or a lot less than usual regarding childrearing, personal habits, etc.)
29. Major change in responsibilities at work (e.g., promotion, demotion, lateral transfer)

30. Beginning or ceasing work outside the home

31. Major change in working hours or conditions

32. Major change in usual type and/or amount of recreation

33. Taking on a mortgage greater than $20,000 (e.g., purchasing a home, business, etc.)

34. Taking on a mortgage or loan less than $10,000 (e.g., purchasing a car, TV, freezer, etc.)

35. Major personal injury or illness

36. Major business readjustment (e.g., merger, reorganization, bankruptcy, etc.)

37. Major change in social activities (e.g., clubs, dancing, movies, visiting, etc.)

38. Major change in living conditions (e.g., building a new home, remodelling, deterioration of home or neighborhood)

39. Retirement from work

40. Vacation

41. Christmas

42. Changing to a new school

43. Beginning or ceasing formal schooling
Appendix D

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample,
National Comparisons,
and Anticipated Attendance Behaviour
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE, NATIONAL COMPARISONS, AND ANTICIPATED ATTENDANCE BEHAVIOUR

Introduction

In this appendix the demographic and educational characteristics of the sample (N = 145) are discussed. Unless otherwise indicated, the data presented refer to the 145 women who took part in this study. In this appendix wherever possible, comparisons are made between the characteristics of the sample and published data, particularly New Zealand statistical information. The anticipated attendance behaviour is also forecast.

Demographic Characteristics

The sample is described according to its age, marital status, child-caring responsibilities, after which the most relevant of its educational background characteristics are explained.

Age

Women in the sample ranged from 20 to 66 years of age. A grouping of participants by decades is shown in table 25.
TABLE 25
SAMPLE IN TEN YEAR AGE GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (In years)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 35.6 years  Median 32.9 years

Given the findings of previous research, it was expected that dropout would be more prevalent among younger than older participants. It had been anticipated from previous programs that the majority of women would have been in their thirties. In the year in which the study was conducted an unexpectedly high proportion of participants were in their twenties. Enrolments in future years would need to be monitored before it could be concluded that 1981 marked the beginning of a new trend or was atypical.

Marital status

The marital status of participants is shown in table 26.
TABLE 26
MARITAL STATUS OF THE SAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For New Zealand women sixteen years and older in 1971, 66.6 percent were classified as 'Married', 19.5 percent as 'Never married', 1.5 percent as 'Legally separated', 10.9 percent 'Widowed', and 1.5 percent as 'Divorced' (Department of Statistics 1976:33). Changing matrimonial law in the 1970s would account for some of the difference in the distribution of the marital status categories between that reported for 1971 and the sample, particularly in the percentage of separated women. Another major reason for the differences would arise from the age range in the national statistics which included all women aged sixteen years and older. The ages of women in the sample, as was noted in the previous section, ranged from 20 to 66 years. It is reasonable to assume that the greater age range of the former group would result in it including a higher proportion of women who were widowed, primarily those older than 66 years of age. Because the national statistics included women between 16 and 21 years of age (the youngest woman in the study was 20 years old) it could have been expected that this group would have included a higher proportion of single women than the
sample. In fact, the reverse applied. Therefore, the sample in this study appears to have included a greater proportion of separated and, surprisingly, single women than the national average (even allowing for the fact that two women reported they were cohabiting). Widowed women were underrepresented.

It was expected, in view of previous research reported in chapter II, that married women would persist to a greater extent than women in other marital status categories.

Children

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of children whom they cared for rather than the number of children in their family. This response was sought because it was felt that current responsibilities for children were more relevant to course attendance than taking into account children who might have left home. The distribution of child-caring responsibilities is shown in table 27.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It had been anticipated by program planners that the majority of participants would be women in their thirties contemplating improving their educational qualifications to enhance their employment prospects and for personal development. In the past many of these women have undertaken this step as their children have become more independent. In recent years greater economic pressures and changing social attitudes have resulted in women returning to employment while their children are still relatively young, especially compared with a decade ago.

Against this background it was expected that many women would have child-caring responsibilities and that these responsibilities would affect their attendance in the program. Forty-two percent of participants having none of these responsibilities was higher than expected but was accounted for by single women and women whose children had left home.

Educational qualifications

The responses to the question asking participants to indicate the highest level of formal education they had completed are presented in table 28.
TABLE 28
HIGHEST LEVEL OF FORMAL EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than two years secondary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two years secondary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three years secondary</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Certificate</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Form Certificate</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete tertiary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete tertiary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Entrance</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All but two participants responded to this question. Ten of these women, mainly from the older age group, had had two years or less of secondary schooling. Thirty-five had gained School Certificate, a qualification that is earned by national examination sat after a minimum of three years' secondary schooling. Some students may require a second year in some fifth form subjects to complete all the requirements for entry into the sixth form. In the study, 20 women completed three years' secondary schooling without qualifying for School Certificate. For 25 women their highest qualification was the Sixth Form Certificate, awarded to the majority of sixth form students who satisfactorily attain the required standard. In contrast to the School Certificate requirements which, until recently, were met entirely by external examination, eligibility for the Sixth Form Certificate is assessed by each secondary
school for its own students.

The University Entrance qualification entitles a student to enrol at any New Zealand university. Students can qualify for University Entrance either by being accredited, a form of internal assessment in which each school judges its own students according to national criteria, or by external examination. In this study 36 participants (25 percent) had qualified to enter any university in New Zealand to study and, therefore, could have enrolled without having taken part in the New Start Program. The proportion of women with University Entrance who took part in the New Start Program was higher than expected. This finding might be seen as evidence of the claim that many re-entry women are anxious about their ability to cope and feel a lack of confidence in meeting academic demands. Instead of enrolling directly in university credit courses as they were entitled to do, these women chose to enrol first in the New Start Program. When those women with this qualification were interviewed after the course had been concluded many stated that they felt that having earned this right a decade or more earlier was irrelevant after having been absent from formal study for this time, hence they wished to improve on, develop or acquire study skills should they decide to enrol in a university or technical institute. One woman identified Higher School Certificate as her highest educational qualification. This Certificate is awarded for satisfactory completion of a year's study at a level immediately above that necessary for University Entrance.
Incomplete and complete tertiary qualifications (categories which exclude university degree credit) are listed in table 28 between Sixth Form Certificate and University Entrance because it has been, and still is, possible for students to leave secondary school with qualifications below the level of University Entrance and to enrol in a tertiary educational institution, such as technical institutes, teachers' colleges (for some subjects), and private institutions. Some occupational choices open to those opting for this educational path include those in technical fields, apprenticeships in numerous trades, nursing, jobs requiring certificate (non-degree) courses, secretarial and clerical work, and some roles in the armed services.

Direct comparisons between women who took part in the New Start Program and adult women in the total population are not possible because published statistics, for example, the New Zealand Yearbook 1980, make fewer distinctions among educational qualifications than was done in this study. For example, in 1980 women sixteen years of age and older who had only secondary school qualifications comprised 83 percent of the adult women population (1980:200). If the equivalent educational levels for women in the sample were combined, 88 percent would be similarly qualified. Nationally nearly 10 percent of women held non-university tertiary qualifications, and 11 percent of the sample had tertiary educational experiences. Nationally 7 percent of adult women had university or teachers' college qualifications whereas no one in the study had obtained these qualifications.
Therefore, the major difference between women nationally and women in the sample was the proportion in the latter group who had not obtained university or teachers' college qualifications.

**Years of schooling**

Table 29 shows the distribution of years of schooling for subjects in the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 11.9 years  S.D. 1.4 years  Median 11.8 years

For both measures of educational experience, level of qualifications and years of schooling, it was anticipated that women with higher qualifications and more schooling would exhibit more positive attendance behaviour than women lacking this educational background.

**Family income**

Women in the study were asked to indicate family income within categories of $5,000. Table 30 summarizes the responses.
For eighty percent ($N = 116$) of the women family incomes were less than $20,000.

**TABLE 30**

**FAMILY INCOME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $5,000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,000-$9,999</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-$14,999</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000-$19,999</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-$24,999</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 or more</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1980 New Zealand Yearbook reported that private households for census purposes are defined as "consisting of one complete family only (that is, consisting of husband and wife with or without unmarried children of any age living at home)" (1980:715). Table 31 shows total household income (before tax and excluding Social Welfare benefits) for the year ended March 31 1976, the latest year for which five-year census data have been published.
TABLE 31
NEW ZEALAND HOUSEHOLD INCOMES, 1976

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total household income</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0-4,999</td>
<td>121,072</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,000-9,999</td>
<td>235,200</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-14,999</td>
<td>126,051</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000-19,999</td>
<td>35,784</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 and over</td>
<td>20,346</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>9,018</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>547,471</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The figures in table 31 have to be viewed with caution when they are compared with the proportion at each income level in the sample. First, the data in table 31 are reported for all New Zealand households, whereas the sample is drawn from three of the five largest urban areas in the country. Second, since 1976 the annual rate of inflation has averaged over 12 percent so there is likely to have been an increase in the percentage of households at the higher income levels when the 1981 Census (the year in which the study was conducted) data are published. Third, the proportion of multiple income households has increased in New Zealand since 1976 as the proportion of married women in the labour force has risen. Despite these caveats, it is likely that the higher income levels in the New Zealand population were overrepresented in the sample, particularly in view of the evidence presented in tables 30 and 31 which show a
fifth of the sample came from families in which incomes exceeded $20,000, a much higher proportion than for total New Zealand households.

Even though the sample in this study differed from the national average, it was still expected that persisters would come from the higher income levels of those in the sample and dropouts would be more common from families at the lower end of the income continuum. Such an expectation was based on previous research, as was discussed in chapter II.

Occupation

Occupations listed were categorized according to the most commonly used scale in New Zealand, the socio-economic index first published by Elley and Irving in 1972 using data derived from the 1966 Census, and subsequently revised by them in 1976 (Elley and Irving 1976). The main purpose of the index has been to provide social scientists and other researchers with an objective scale to allow them to test the representativeness of research-based samples. The rationale for the scale rests on the fact that occupation has been found to correlate very highly with other indices of socio-economic status, such as educational level and income, material possessions, number of books in the home, location and type of home. The authors report a correlation of .90 being obtained with Blishen's Canadian scale (Elley and Irving 1976:29).

The major disadvantage of the index for this study was the fact that it is based on males in occupations. As yet a
comparable scale for female occupational distribution has not been published. Therefore, rather than derive a woman's socio-economic category from her partner's occupation, a separate category was created, as is shown in table 32.

**TABLE 32**

**OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic level: 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>145</td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only woman in socio-economic Level 1 was a secondary school teacher. Examples in this study of occupations in the second level were company director, primary school teacher, administration manager, and library assistant. Level 3 included bank officer, bookkeeper, clerk, and typist. Occupations in the fourth level were calculating machine operator, cashier, computer operator, nurse, and shop assistant. Level 5 included nurse aid, cook, and hairdresser. The last category was represented by cleaner, packer, and leather goods worker.

More than half of the sample (56 percent) was in some form of paid employment. The most common socio-economic level for
women in this study was the third level with many having jobs of a clerical nature. Many of the housewives interviewed said they were considering gaining or adding to their educational qualifications before returning to the labour force.

Previous research would have suggested that unemployed women as well as those in socio-economic Levels 4, 5, and 6 would have been more likely to drop out than housewives or those in Levels 1, 2, and 3.

Previous course attendance

Information on adult education course attendance in the past three years was sought in the biographical questionnaire. The results are presented in table 33.

TABLE 33
COURSE ATTENDANCE IN LAST THREE YEARS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of courses</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 or more</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 2.1 courses    Median 1.4 courses

For one-third of the sample who had not attended a course
or a seminar in the three years prior to their enrolling in and attending the New Start Program, the experience could have been expected to induce anxiety because the women concerned would be facing a situation with which they were unfamiliar. On the other hand, women who had attended programs recently were expected to feel comfortable in an adult education setting. It was also expected that those who had been recent adult education participants would have been more likely to persist than those without this background because the former group would be more familiar with the demands of attending. The relationships between previous course attendance and attendance behaviour in this program are discussed in chapters VI and VIII.

Previous withdrawal

On the assumption that past behaviour might predict future behaviour, respondents were asked to state the number of courses from which they had withdrawn previously. Table 34 shows the responses to this question.
These data suggest that most women in the program would not have been expected to withdraw given their previous reported behaviour and the assumption on which this question was based.

Publicity source

Participants were asked to indicate where they first saw publicity or obtained information about the New Start Program. The question was asked because it was considered possible that those who had received information from people with first or second-hand experience of the program might have been more inclined to persist or to attend more sessions because they could be assumed to have had a more realistic preconception of the program than those who had depended exclusively on brochure or media publicity. Table 35 summarizes the sources reported by women in the sample.
TABLE 35
SOURCE OF FIRST PUBLICITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous course participant</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public advertising</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University staff member</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational counsellor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own enquiries</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the providing institutions uses a variety of methods, including brochures, displays, news items on radio and in the paper, and paid advertising, particularly in newspapers, to attract participants to its programs.

The category, 'Friend', covers what might be described as a brokering function. Some friends have obtained their information from previous course participants or have seen public advertising and then persuaded the participant to attend. For some, 'University staff member' was a husband or workmate. For others, contact with university courses, particularly sponsored by the same department as that organizing the New Start Program, was the means of obtaining information on the program studied.

Human contact sources accounted for 60 percent of the sources of first publicity for women in the study. The largest single human contact source was a 'Friend', a category which was
indicated by 25 percent of the respondents. Non-human contact, specifically public advertising, was the first source of information about the program for 40 percent of the subjects.

It would be reasonable to assume that the latter group might have been more likely to drop out because they lacked sufficient information about the program given the necessarily limited course description that the media can present. This possibility would have been more likely if the first source was also the only source of pre-course information. As the interviews revealed, as is reported in chapter VII, about one-half of the participants took advantage of other sources of information, such as an interview, before the course began. Participants whose first source of information about the New Start program was human contact, for example, a friend or previous course participant, had more opportunity than those who relied on media sources of publicity to obtain a clearer picture of the goals and nature of the program. It could have been expected that women who learnt about the program from human sources would have attended more frequently than those who did not have these contacts because they would have enrolled having similar expectations to the program planners associated with the course.

**Time from enrolment to course commencement**

Participants were asked to state the length of time prior to the beginning of the course that they had enrolled. Underlying this question was an assumption that women who made
last-minute decisions and enrolled a few days before the course began may not have had sufficient time to make adjustments in their life patterns or to their commitments in different spheres to cope with the requirements of the course, especially the assignments and their related reading and written work. Conversely, women who had enrolled well before the course started would have been able to plan for any adjustments to their schedules which might have been necessary.

The date of enrolment does not necessarily reflect a woman's decision to enrol. A participant could make the adjustments to her life patterns well before enrolling. Hence caution is required in interpreting these data.

Table 36 summarizes the responses. Enrolments during the two weeks immediately prior to the beginning of the course are shown on a daily basis. After that time they are shown in groupings of one week.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time (in days)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-35</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-42</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-56</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57-63</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-70</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-77</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78-84</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-91</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92 or more</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 29.8 days S.D. 26.7 days Median 21.1 days Mode 30 days

More than one-third (N = 54, 39 percent) had enrolled two weeks before the course began, and over half (53 percent) had enrolled three weeks prior to the beginning of the course. At the other extreme seventeen women, 12 percent, had enrolled more than two months before the program began.

Although accurate records were not kept for programs offered in the same term as the New Start Program by the three institutions in the study, departmental administrators believed
that this program was unusual in the fact that more than one-third enrolled at least a month before the course began. Generally, course enrolments are concentrated in a shorter period before course commencement.

Several explanations are feasible for the enrolment pattern for this course. First, women who were seriously considering enrolling in a tertiary educational institution may have enrolled early to ensure that their enrolment would be accepted. Second, women might have known about the need for selection in previous years, especially at the University of Auckland (as was mentioned in chapter IV), and enrolled early in the hope that they might receive higher priority than late enrollees should selection have been necessary in the year in which the study was conducted. Third, women may have planned their year's schedule knowing that the New Start Program would be offered and they would be enrolling, so they acted soon after the course announcement was made.

Whatever prompted women to enrol at a particular time, it was anticipated that those who enrolled well in advance of the course's commencement would attend more sessions than those who enrolled closer to its starting because the former group would have had more time to make adjustments to cope with the demands of attending.

**Partner's attitude**

Respondents were asked to indicate, from a choice of five predetermined options, their partner's attitude to their
enrolling in the New Start Program. Table 37 presents the responses.

**TABLE 37**

PARTNER'S ATTITUDE TO PARTICIPANT'S ENROLMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner's attitude</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly supportive</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the women who considered this question was not applicable to them were single or separated, although there was not a perfect correlation between marital status and response to this question. The post-course interviews revealed two women who had defined themselves as single and one separated woman who had consulted their partners about participating in the New Start Program.

For the 89 women to whom this question applied, a total of 79 percent could be described as having been positively supported. On the other hand, only seven percent (N = 6) felt their partner's attitude represented opposition to their enrolling in the New Start Program. Therefore, participants in this study can be divided into two main groups, those whose partners were supportive of their enrolling and those to whom
the question did not apply. Very few enrolled in the face of a partner's negative reaction. The former may have been expected to count on this support continuing during their involvement in the program, thereby being encouraged to remain in the program. The continued attendance of the latter group might have been more at risk in the absence of a source of close support.

Means of transport

Four means of transport were used by women to attend the New Start Program. Table 38 shows the frequency each means was used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Means of transport</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public transport</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private car--alone</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private car--with another course member</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor cycle</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most participants (N = 125) travelled to the program by private car. A distinction was made between travelling alone and with another course member because it was anticipated that the commitment implied in the latter arrangement may have encouraged greater attendance than the former and other means of travel.
Distance to the course

Women in the study were asked to report the distance from their home to the location of the course. Distances varied from less than 1 kilometre to 63 kilometres. Table 39 summarizes the distances travelled.

TABLE 39
DISTANCE TRAVELLED TO THE COURSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance (in km.)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 35</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 14.1 km. S.D. 11.7 km. Median 9.7 km. Mode 8.0 km.

Over half (56 percent) went less than 10 km. to the location of the course. Even so there was sufficient range in the distance travelled to expect it to be a factor affecting attendance. Participants who had farthest to travel were thought to be more likely to drop out than those living closest to the location of the course.

The data presented in this appendix were gathered in the expectation that similar findings to other studies would be found. Future researchers may wish to draw on this information
given the fact that this study used some of the variables in the multivariate analysis.