

**A STUDY OF STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN TRANSITION FROM
COLLEGE/TECHNICAL INSTITUTE TO UNIVERSITY**

By

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We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 STUDY BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

I have been either a learner or teacher of adults almost all my life. My formal learning, following secondary school, provided me the opportunity to acquire knowledge and develop skills and abilities at a college, a technical institute, a professional accounting body and two universities. I have also been fortunate to be a provider of education, teaching at a college, a technical institute and a university.

Having experienced, and continuing to experience the many facets of learning and teaching, I am one of the converted, believing what many of the experts have researched and written for years; in order to work, live, grow, and prosper, members of society must be constantly engaged in “lifelong learning”, whether it be in a formal or informal environment. Below is a sampling of comments made by writers in adult educational research over the past 20 years.

Almost 30 years ago, lifelong education was a topic of an UNESCO report which stated

“The idea of lifelong education has gathered great strength over the past ten years, although it is an illusion to think it a discovery of our time....most men are not sufficiently equipped to face the conditions and vicissitudes of life as lived in the second half of the twentieth century. Hundred of millions of adults need education, not only for the pleasure of perfecting their capacities or contributing to their development, as before, but because the demands for over-all social, economic and cultural development of twentieth-century societies required the maximum potential of an educated citizenry.” (Faure, 1972, pg. 142)

Jerold W. Apps, Professor of Adult Education at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, writes, “Interest in lifelong learning continues to grow. The idea that people can and do learn from birth to death has wide appeal.” (1979, pg. 1)

Raymond J. Wlodkowski believes that continuing motivation is potentially as much of an educational outcome as the attainment of any learning objects. He says “. . .it may be equal to or even greater than the acquisition of a particular skill or concept. In an increasingly complex society where continuous education is a reality, to foster the continued willingness of people

to learn may be of greater consequence than to ensure the fact that they have learned some specific thing at a certain point in time.” (1993, pg. 281-282)

Phillip C. Candy, in his research, views self-directed learning and lifelong education as being reciprocal. He says

“ . . . on the one hand, self-directed learning is one of the most common ways in which adults pursue learning throughout their life span, as well as being a way in which people supplement (and at times substitute for) learning received in formal settings. On the other hand, lifelong learning takes, as one of its principal aims, equipping people with skills and competencies required to continue their own ‘self-education’ beyond the end of formal schooling.” (1991, pg. 15)

As demonstrated by the above quotes, “lifelong learning” has become a necessary part of today’s society to ensure we have the necessary skills, abilities, and behaviors to maintain a “quality of life”. “Lifelong learning”, depending upon the individual, may be either formal or informal, and may be motivated internally or externally. This practice of continual learning has motivated many post-secondary schools to create new and different programs that provide varied options and opportunities for individuals, of all ages, to acquire new knowledge.

The University of Lethbridge, an innovator in education, recognized the need of adults to become continuous learners, and, thus, identified and implemented a program where graduates of a college or technical institute would receive full credit for previous learning (two year diploma). This new program created a seamless transition into the University to complete a Bachelor of Management degree. In order to provide this ‘continual learning’ to a greater number of students throughout the province, the university opened satellite campuses in Calgary and Edmonton in 1996.

When I commenced employment with the University of Lethbridge in March, 1998, as Program Manager, Calgary Campus, I became curious and interested in the challenges that a student may face in this transition process. Was there anything that the University could do to assist these students in their quest of “continual learning”? Was there anything that the University could do to enhance “continuing motivation”? What type of a study would answer these questions?

A special thanks to Dr. Tammy Dewar, my academic advisor at Royal Roads University during the second summer residency, who influenced my thinking around the methodology of gathering the data and formulating the following research question:

What are the major challenges that a student experiences in transition from a college/technical institute to a university?

The superior approach to answering this question and drawing conclusions, is to go straight to the source; the students. This study will focus on an analysis of student comments, thoughts, and feelings as they pertain to this experience.

1.2 BACKGROUND

In the early nineties the Province of Alberta (Premier Ralph Klein) made a commitment to the people of Alberta to strive towards a balanced yearly budget. As a result of this election promise, significant cuts were made to the funding of post-secondary education. Institutions were encouraged to seek out new and innovative ways to increase revenue, other than the traditional means of fee revenue. The Department of Advanced Education created access funds that are available to post-secondary schools. Allocation of the funds is determined by reviewing each proposal to assess the program's potential to provide learners with the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that lead to employability and personal growth.

This change in educational philosophy motivated Dr. George Lerner (Dean of the Faculty of Management, University of Lethbridge, at that time) to pursue funding to allow students to transfer courses and recognize prior learning at a college/technical institute in business related education. In 1995, the University of Lethbridge submitted a proposal to the Department of Advanced Education to implement a Post-Diploma Bachelor of Management Degree. This proposal was in response to the document, "New Directions for Adult Learning in Alberta", dated October 1994, which set out 22 strategies to help achieve the following four goals:

1. Increased accessibility
2. Improved responsiveness
3. Greater affordability
4. More accountability.

The proposal was approved and the University of Lethbridge began delivering the program in Lethbridge, Edmonton, and Calgary in 1996. The new satellite campuses in Edmonton and Calgary would provide province wide access for individuals to participate in this unique program. The Post-Diploma Bachelor of Management Degree specifically addresses the goals of increased accessibility and improved responsiveness in that it provides students who graduate from a college or technical institute an opportunity to continuously learn in a university environment without losing credit for any courses taken. The popularity and legitimacy of the program has proven itself with the

students, the colleges, and the University (appendix A-10). It has been a stepping stone to explore further linkages and partnerships that will enhance the educational development of Albertans.

The essence of the proposal to Alberta Advanced Education is that students who complete a two-year business diploma and have a minimum GPA of 3.0 can apply for acceptance into this Post Diploma Bachelor of Management program and receive 2 full years of credit towards a degree. If their GPA is between 2.5 and 2.99, they can gain admittance as qualifying students who must then complete a 4-course qualifying program before being admitted as Faculty of Management students. These latter students must maintain a 2.5 GPA average on the qualifying courses. The program requires the student to successfully complete 10 management courses and 10 courses in the liberal arts (Fine Arts, Arts, and Sciences).

1.3 PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study assessed the challenges that students experienced as they made the transition from two years of post-secondary education at a college/technical institute to a university (in this instance the University of Lethbridge). In "An Update on Adult Learning Theory", the author writes, "it is important to involve learners in the process of setting their own directions and means of learning and evaluation as a way of facilitating their personal autonomy and self-direction." (Merriam, 1993, pg. 19) Although it is not possible in a university setting to allow students to solely determine their learning outcomes, a clearer understanding of the challenges they face will be beneficial in the future planning of the program. By engaging in meaningful discussions with the students, I hope to gain insights into what these students need to enhance their learning experience.

If the challenges that students experienced are significant and ongoing, they will detract from a successful learning environment. In "The Fifth Discipline", Senge provides a system model that may be applied to this research question. It is called "Limits to Growth", and describes how learning detractions can create barriers to achieving educational goals. There are also constraining systems with the larger system referred to in "Limits to Growth" that have varying degrees of impact on the student's educational progress. (Senge, 1990, pg. 129-133) The possible constraints that I have identified (not necessarily all encompassing) are negative self-awareness, cultural change, and previous learning experience. I believed these are the most significant constraints that the majority of students may experience when moving from a college/technical institute environment to a university

The purpose of the student attending the university, as illustrated in Figure 1-1, is to obtain a degree by acquiring new learning and growth (reinforcing loop on the left). This process can be limited in that there may be

one or more constraining factors that cause the student difficulty, or even result in failure in achieving this goal (balancing loop on the right which reacts to imbalances imposed on it by the growth loop). The corrective action, resulting from the study, identified what the challenges are that students faced in the transition process from college/technical institute to university. The challenges identified, may be an opportunity for the University to assess and develop an improvement plan (outside the scope of this research).

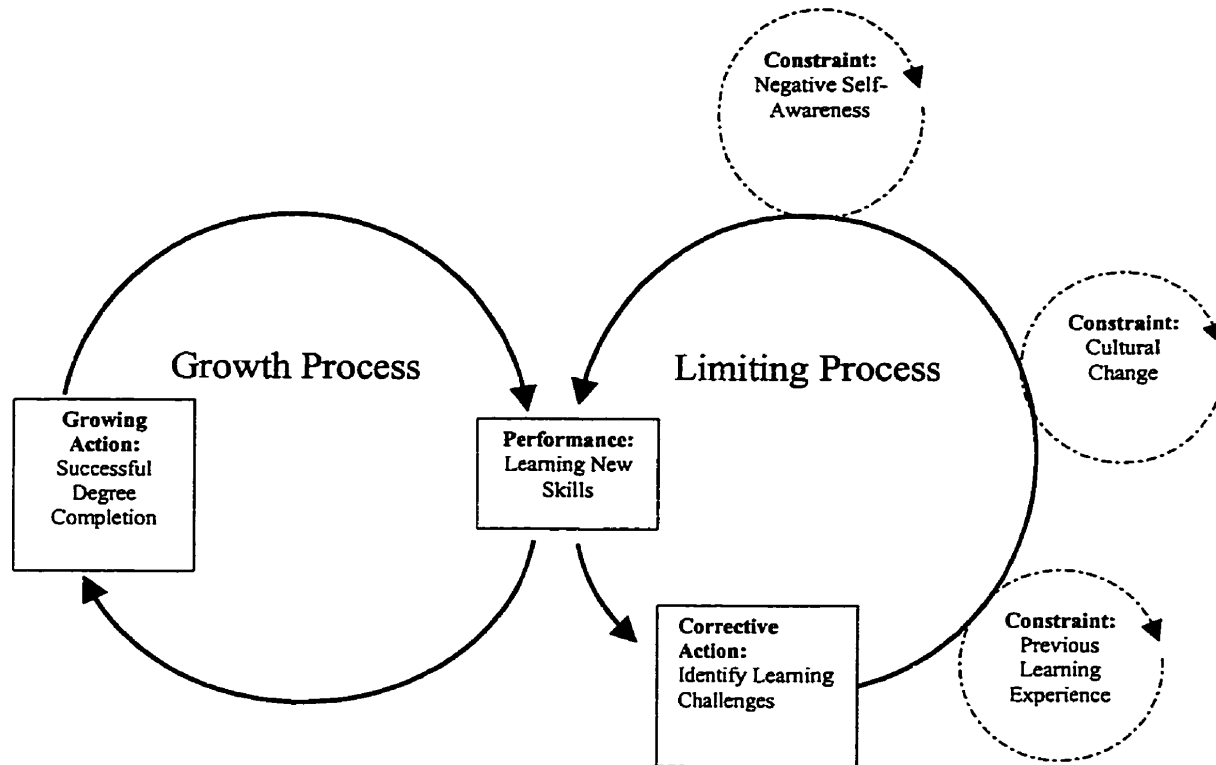


Figure 1-1. Limits to Growth

If students are significantly affected by the two or more of the constraining factors identified in Figure 1-1, they may not be successful in completing a degree. They may not have the academic and psychological level of readiness. This study was designed to determine whether or not these students, who graduated from a college/technical institute program, felt they had this academic and psychological level of readiness for completion of the 3rd and 4th years of the program. The academic readiness incorporates the student's ability to perform independent critical thinking, analysis and synthesis of new ideas and concepts, and integration of a business and liberal arts education. The psychological readiness encompasses whether or not the student's mental

attitude is open and flexible enough to make the necessary changes that are generally required when an individual enters a new learning environment. A new learning environment may cause a student to experience many of the feelings that occur when an individual is moved out of his/her present comfort zone: anxiety, fear, risk, pain, or failure.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Students who chose to acquire higher level education by completing a college/technical institute program of studies are generally gaining skills and knowledge to prepare them for the workplace. The course content has a high level of concentration on the practical application of the discipline which the student has chosen. In a university setting, there is a strong emphasis on development of the mind as well as on gaining knowledge in a particular field of study. Development of the mind incorporates the ability to analyze, integrate, critically think, synthesize, and communicate in a meaningful way.

Do all post-diploma students have the necessary skills and abilities to be successful when they enter university? Is there the necessity to develop a bridging program/course that will facilitate this transition from a college/technical institute environment to a university environment? Or is there only a need to have faculty and administrators reach a deeper understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the students in transition?

Merriam argues in her book, "An Update on Adult Learning Theory", that adult learning may not transfer across contexts. In other words, a student who acquired knowledge and skills at a college may have difficulty transferring this learning to the university classroom.

"To assume that under ideal circumstances people's underlying capacities or processes can be attributed to their internal functioning without concern for the context of their activity is unrealistic. In other words, knowledge and learning do not easily transfer across contexts. Knowledge and learning have to be understood as inextricably integrated with the setting in which they occur. An understanding of adults' activity in a particular setting is central to an understanding of their learning." (Merriam, 1993, pg. 73)

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INFORMATION REVIEW

2.1.1 New Directions in Post-Secondary Education

Economic restructuring, technology and global competition are having a significant effect on the knowledge and skills required by all Canadians. It is no longer possible to attain an initial post-secondary education, whether it be in a college/technical institute or a university, and believe it will be sufficient to maintain active and continuous employment. We are quickly moving into an age of lifelong learning. In a static world, we can learn virtually everything we need to know in life by the time we are fifteen, but in an ever changing world, we can never learn it all, even if we keep growing into our nineties. (Kotter, 1996) "As the rate of change increases, the willingness and ability to keep developing becomes central to career success for individuals and to economic success for organizations." (Kotter, pg. 178)

In a review of the two Western Provinces, the Ministries of Education in Alberta and B.C. have taken separate initiatives to prepare their provinces for the shift towards a knowledge and information-based economy. On the one hand, this shift brings new and exciting opportunities; but meeting those opportunities requires a highly skilled labour force and ongoing skills' retraining and upgrading.

"Charting A New Course", the initiative developed by the British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training is a "strategic plan for the college, institute and agency system, to ensure that all British Columbians are prepared to participate in today's changing society; find productive employment in a competitive labour market; have opportunities for continuous learning; and receive value for the investment made in public post-secondary education and training." (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1996, pg. 1)

"New Directions for Adult Learning in Alberta", the initiative developed by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, states that

"Alberta's adult learning system contributes to society in an infinite number of ways. Learning helps us to realize our individual potential, it helps us to develop our economy, it helps to increase our capability for good citizenship, and it helps us to better understand the world in which we live. Learning is vital to personal growth and to building communities of caring and responsible individuals. In all respects, learning is vital to

human advancement.” (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1994, pg. 11)

The initiatives by B.C. and Alberta set the stage for post-secondary institutions in these two Provinces to take a leadership role in developing and delivering innovative program that would address the needs of continuous retraining and upgrading. Financial support was available for those schools who could design these new programs which would provide alternative means of learning and allow students to build on the education they presently have attained.

As previously mentioned, The University of Lethbridge seized the opportunity to provide learners, from a college/technical institute accessibility to a degree program and, thus, demonstrated collaboration among providers of education and responsiveness to the needs of society.

2.1.2 University of Lethbridge Overview

The University of Lethbridge has been actively establishing its position as a leader among mid-sized undergraduate universities for the past 31 years. The University's prime mission is to provide a learning environment where students can be successful in obtaining their first degree. The energy and resources of the institution go into providing the best undergraduate education possible. Recognition of the University's growing maturity and excellence was documented in Maclean's magazine, ranking the University of Lethbridge as sixth overall in its 1997 survey of Canada's 19 primarily undergraduate universities.

The University of Lethbridge is a nondenominational, coeducational university incorporated under the provisions of the Universities Act of the Province of Alberta. It is a provincial university with membership in the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. The University of Lethbridge participates with the universities and other post-secondary institutions of Alberta in a variety of cooperative programs and activities.

2.1.3 Statement of Philosophy

“In the process of transmitting and advancing higher learning, the University of Lethbridge endeavours to cultivate humane values; it seeks to foster intellectual growth, social development, aesthetic sensitivity, personal ethics and physical well being; it seeks to cultivate the transcendental dimension of the scholar's personality.

Flexibility and openness to innovation will be the distinguishing feature of the University of Lethbridge.

Notwithstanding its intention to offer diverse subject matter contributing to the acquisition of professional skills, the University regards learning as an end in itself, not merely as a means to material ends. Its primary aims are to foster the spirit of free inquiry and the critical interpretation of ideas.

The undergraduate is, and should remain, the focus of the University's endeavour. Students are invited to participate in all phases of university life. The highest degree of interaction between students and faculty is encouraged, and should not be confined to the physical limits of the campus.

The University asserts its right and responsibility for free expression and communication of ideas. It is self-evident that a university cannot function without complete autonomy in this domain." (University of Lethbridge 1998-1999 Calendar)

2.1.4 Mandate Statement

"The University of Lethbridge is a Board-governed institution functioning under the Universities Act, as a member of the system of Alberta universities. It offers instructional programs at the Bachelor's level in the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences and mathematics, within its Faculty of Arts and Science. It also awards undergraduate degrees in Education, Fine Arts, Health Sciences, Management, and Nursing. As well, it offers a Master's degree in Education, and Master of Arts and Master of Science degrees. It stimulates and supports basic research and scholarly activity in all disciplines in which it gives instruction, and conducts certain lines of applied research of special relevance to the region or to the province.

The university offers collaborative programming with various community colleges, including post-diploma degrees in Agricultural Studies, Environmental Science, Fine Arts, Management and Nursing. It encourages, through its Management Education and Arts and Science Faculties, active development of educational opportunities in Native American studies for Native American students through off-campus and on-campus programs." (University of Lethbridge 1998-1999 Calendar)

The philosophy and mandate of the University provide further evidence of its commitment to provide quality education while maintaining a standard of academic credibility. It is also evident from the philosophy and mandate statements that the University endeavours to develop the "whole person," while still providing a set of skills for the workplace.

In an effort to determine the differences between the focus of education at a college/technical institute to that of a university, I reviewed the Mission Statement of the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology which states "To offer

career education that fulfills the goals and expectations of our students while serving the needs of the economy.” This mission statement would suggest that the primary focus is on developing skills and abilities for employment purposes. The identification of what skills and abilities are required is largely determined by the employer. These changes in attitudes and values between a university philosophy, specializing in cognitive development, and a college philosophy which primarily specializes in “hands-on applied learning” (part of The Southern Alberta Institute of Technology’s mission statement), may contribute to the challenges that students face in the transition phase.

2.2 INITIAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

A focus group was conducted on Wednesday, August 5, 1998, with colleagues at the Royal Roads University who are also enrolled in the Master of Arts program. These individuals were specifically recruited because of their expertise in the education system, at both the primary and secondary levels. The objective of the focus group was to determine their perception of the challenges that students may face in transition from college to university. The participants were as follows:

Ken Gatzke	Vice-Principal, School District #6 (Rocky Mountain), Golden
Ros Rechstein	Education Programmer, Camosun College, Brentwood Bay, Victoria
Lynne Viczko	Instructor, Camosun College, Victoria
Christina Cederlof	Instructor/College, University College of Cariboo, Kamloops
Gord Vaxvick	Program Head, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science & Technology, Saskatoon

This is the question that was posed to the group: **“What are the major challenges for students in transition from college/technical institute to university?”**

In summary, the discussion focused around the following key areas which have been grouped with the previously-mentioned constraints of negative self-awareness, cultural change, and previous learning experience. Although there is a sound argument that some of these challenges may be applicable to more than one constraint, my grouping is indicative of the ensuing conversation surrounding each statement.

Negative Self-Awareness

- Larger class sizes which may negate a “community spirit”.
- Feeling of lower status (coming from a college environment).
- No established connection with other students in the program.

Cultural Change

- Less personal contact with faculty at a university, less support, and a higher expectation for independent learning.
- New system of evaluation.
- Change in size of campus - possible relocation.

Previous Learning Experience

- College attracts students who have different educational objectives than those attracted to a university.
- In a university there is more competition.
- In a university there is more risk of failure.

The results of this focus group formed the basis for the three domains selected for literature review in this study. These domains, negative self-awareness, cultural change, and previous learning experience were previously identified in Senge’s archetype, “Limits to Growth”. Although there may be numerous other limiting factors that detract from the student’s learning process in a university, for purposes of this study I limited my literature review to these three key areas.

2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.3.1 General Overview

A student in transition from college to university is not a new phenomenon in the post-secondary education system. John D. Dennison conducted "A long range study of the subsequent performance and degree attainment of students who transferred from Vancouver City College to the University of British Columbia from 1966-1969". Although this study was generally quantitative (did not identify any particular challenges the students faced) and based on grade point average, it did reflect a point of view that is largely the driving force for the new initiatives of today's education system. ".....all of society benefits from its citizens being educated to the highest possible potential. It is, therefore implied that the community colleges can be a determining force in the development of a better educated citizenry." (Dennison, 1970, pg. 56)

Dennison further states, "Community colleges are making it possible for an increasing number of high school graduates to begin working for the baccalaureate degree who would not otherwise be able to do so for reasons of academic deficiency. For example roughly 50 percent of the transferring students had a pre-college academic record below the achievement required for direct admission to U.B.C." (Dennison, 1970, pg. 56-57) Dennison concluded his study by recognizing there was room for improvement in certain aspects of the transfer situation but did not elaborate on the specifics. In general he believed that the education system, at that time, needed to continually evaluate the process with a view to ensuring a positive learning experience for the student. There should be a concentration on removing as many obstacles as possible in the student's transition process from college to university.

Finola Finlay, Special Advisor to the British Columbia Council on Admissions & Transfer, wrote "A Discussion Paper" in April 1997, on college transfers to university. The paper concentrated on issues and options and did not identify any particular challenges that students may experience in this process. Of interest, was the observation that some form of bridging coursework may be advantageous should there be considerable gaps in the content that is required by the receiving program (university).

2.3.2 Self-Awareness

Knowledge of self is critical to success. Critical in the sense that if we, as learners, are cognizant of our strengths and weaknesses, we can tap into our true potential. Senge, in his book "The Fifth Discipline" coins the phrase "Personal Mastery", which elaborates on the discipline of personal growth and learning. He further states

“When personal mastery becomes a discipline—an activity we integrate into our lives—it embodies two underlying movements. The first is continually clarifying what is important to us. We often spend too much time coping with problems along our path that we forget why we are on that path in the first place. The result is that we only have a dim, or even inaccurate view of what’s really important to us.

The second is continually learning how to see current reality more clearly. We’ve all known people entangled in counterproductive relationships, who remain stuck because they keep pretending everything is all right.” (Senge, 1990, pg. 141)

If students transferring from a college program have little or no “Personal Mastery”, they may experience a lack of confidence, low self-esteem, and anxiety which can manifest in low motivation and an unclear vision.

Extensive studies have been conducted on the correlation between motivation and learning and the effect low self-esteem (or negative self-awareness) has upon a student’s motivation to learn. John Kotter, in his book “Leading Change”, states, “Motivation is not only important because it is a necessary causal factor of learning but because it mediates learning and is a consequence of learning as well.” (1996, pg.4) If motivation affects the learning process and low self-esteem affects motivation, it is clearly apparent that there is a causal relationship between self-esteem and successful educational pursuits.

He further elaborates on this premise of self-knowledge as being an integral piece of the learning puzzle by identifying other barriers to learning called dispositional barriers.“dispositional barriers are those related to attitudes and self-perceptions of people regarding themselves as learners.” (1994, pg. 9)

Kouzes and Posner in “The Leadership Challenge” discuss self-development as “an inner quest to discover who you are”. (pg. 336) Through self-development students will be able to gain awareness and faith in their power to accomplish their educational pursuits.

Brookfield’s previous research in “Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning”, supports Kouzes and Posner’s findings that this belief in self will result in a sense of personal power and self worth which is seen as a fundamental purpose of all education. “Only if such a sense of individual empowerment is realized will adults possess the emotional strength to challenge behaviors, values, and beliefs accepted uncritically by a majority. Both causally antecedent to, and concurrent with, this developing sense of self-worth in the individual comes an awareness of the contextuality of knowledge and beliefs.” (1986, pg. 283-284)

The literature strongly suggests there is a correlation between negative self-awareness and challenges in the learning process. Students who question their abilities to succeed as learners may lack the personal power, motivation, and self-worth to meet the rigorous requirements of a Post-Diploma Bachelor of Management Degree. The literature also validates the perceptions of the initial focus group conducted at Royal Roads University who unanimously agreed that students may suffer from possible feelings of inferiority if they enter the university with a low self-esteem.

2.3.3 Cultural Change

“Before you can begin something new, you have to end what used to be. Before you can become a different kind of person, you must let go of the old identity. Before you can learn a new way of doing things, you have to unlearn the old way. So beginnings depend on endings. The problem is, people don’t like endings.

Yet change and endings go hand in hand: Change causes transition, and transition starts with an ending.” (Bridges, 1991, pg. 19)

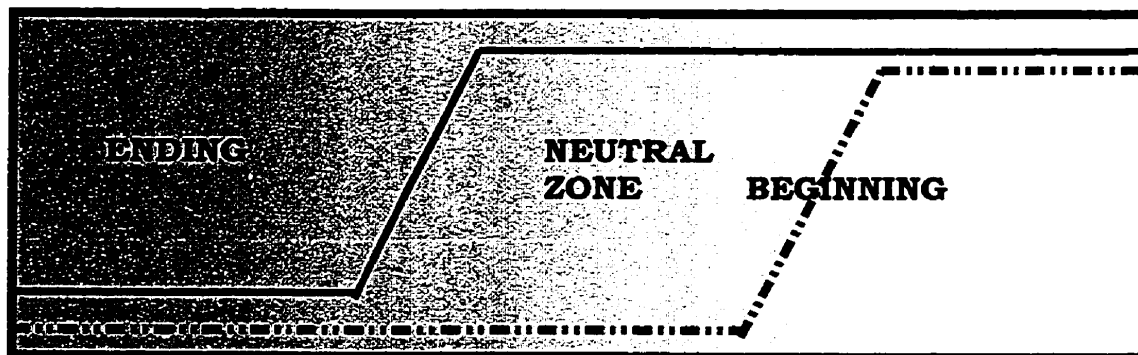


Figure 2-1. Three Phases of Change

Students in transition from college to university will experience the three phases of change as indicated in Figure 2.1: an ending to the college environment, a phase where they do not connect with the new culture, and a beginning within the university. The period of time in the neutral zone may be a particularly challenging time. Students will be leaving friends, structured classes, familiar instructors and an environment where they are comfortable and secure. They will be embarking upon a new journey of learning where there is a new environment, new evaluation methods, and new faculty which

may cause difficulty in the transition out of the neutral zone and assimilating to the new beginning.

Peter Vaill, in his book "Learning As A Way of Being" succinctly describes this cultural change with the following quote:

"When you undertake a learning process of any kind in our present culture, the object is to move from the state of being a beginner to the state of being an accomplished performer, no matter what the activity is. The most popular word for the goal of learning is 'competence'. 'Mastery' is another term we hear and there are doubtless many others, all of which refer in some way to getting out of the state of being a beginner. People who remain beginners for too long are dubbed 'slow learners', and for the most part, we are unconcerned about the cruelty just beneath the surface in all our kidding of such people. Doubtless each one of us has at one time or another been in such a position or, at least, has striven mightily not to fall into it." (1996, pg. 29)

Vaill uses the analogy of "permanent white waters" to describe continual change which parallels the process that students face when entering the new environment of the university. These cultural changes intensify the dilemmas of the beginning student who is faced with the uncertainty of learning new skills and knowledge in a school which may have "unfamiliar attitudes, and perhaps controversial new values". (Vaill, 1996, pg. 29)

Novokowsky further complicates the transition and change process of the students by adding the element of "reality". My reality is not necessarily the same as your reality.

"We solve problems and determine paths of change based on our concept of how we think the world works, what is *real* to us. People successfully apply many differing concepts about what is real and how to interact with others. Your version of reality may be strikingly different from your teammates or opponents. When people hold strikingly different fundamental assumptions about what is real, even the simplest changes can lead to conflict and prevent resolution." (1996, pg. 10)

If a student believes (his/her reality) there is little difference in the learning process at a college/technical institute vs. that of a university and then discovers significant change, the ability to resolve this conflict may be extremely difficult. This unresolved conflict may manifest itself in various forms, all of which may prevent the student from experiencing positive learning outcomes. Novokowsky argues that if we can determine what people believe is real, we should be able to better understand and resolve any resulting conflicts that arise. Dialoguing with the students to determine their realities and beliefs may provide the university with a clearer understanding of how to address and

solve these conflicts. The challenge that presents itself is that these differing beliefs are associated with a distinct set of world views. Novolowsky suggests that grouping people according to their typical patterns of beliefs will allow us to understand their responses and better anticipate their actions.

The difference between individuals' realities, based on how they approach a situation and the behavior that they demonstrate, can be described with four different world views. The labels attached to these views may be new but the underlying philosophy has been with us for centuries. Medieval Europeans would have called them humors; Jung calls them archetypes. Oriental cultures identified the four ways of being with the four directions; American Indians refer to the four winds. The four Realities that determine our beliefs are listed as:

1. Unitary,
2. Sensory,
3. Social, and
4. Mythic.

A brief description of each one of these realities follows:

Unitary Reality – takes as most fundamental a set of truths such as the existence of God, science and numbers and a set of ethical rules of behavior. Things do not exist independently; they are defined according to principles and rules.

Sensory Reality – takes as given the impressions received through the sensory – “seeing is believing”. (So is feeling, smelling, hearing and tasting.) This is the reality of our rational behavior, based on facts.

Mythic Reality – invents the world. It is the reality of ideas, dreams, plans, hopes and their expression in art work, inventions, organizations, and cultures. By naming and symbolizing, we create objects that have not been “seen” before.

Social Reality – recognizes only that which matters. “If it doesn’t matter it doesn’t exist”. In this belief, whatever exists for us is created by one or more people caring about it. Values are created by the intentions of groups of people. (Novokowsky, 1996, pg. 11-14)

Although it is not important for purposes of this report to go into any further detail about these realities, it is important to understand the challenges that students may face in their transition to the university, given their reality preference.

“Everyone comes into adulthood with a particular set of preferences. You become attached to a preferred world view and its Reality becomes a part of your personality.” (Novokowsky, 1996, pg. 13) Characteristics of each reality and how they vary may be illustrated by examining the following question:

“How are you about accepting change?”.

(Illustration on following page)

HOW ARE YOU ABOUT ACCEPTING CHANGE?**NO BASIC
CHANGE**

Unitary beliefs do not include any acceptance of change. They allow for no change in the modern sense, only reinterpretation of established principles and the deductions that follow from these principles. Accepting that many people hold this belief will help you understand the widely experienced resistance to change.

UNITARY**NO UNCAUSED
CHANGE**

Sensory Reality does not believe people have control over change. Change occurs based on what happened in the past, and is restrained by current technology. What is going to happen, is going to happen. This is the dogma of the scientific age as expressed by planners, supervisors, and those who repair our cars.

SENSORY**MYTHIC****"EVERYTHING WAS AND IS
AS I WILL IT"**

Mythic Reality believes there is no change because whatever is perceived at the moment is the way the world is. A Mythic person's world is not subject to rules or limited by data of earlier times and places. Observers may see the Mythic's world as completely unstable and even more unpredictable than that of the Social Reality.

SOCIAL**FULLY ACCEPT
CHANGE**

Social Reality accepts ongoing change as human beings express their feelings, which modifies what is real. A varying mixture of people's needs will produce a change in values, and thus changes in the perception of Reality.

The foregoing reflects Novokowsky's views that we all have our reality preferences. If we relate his view to how it pertains to students, we can conclude that some students make change happen while others experience considerable resistance to change. A clearer understanding of this change phenomena can only heighten our awareness of the interpersonal conflicts some students may experience in their transition to university.

Where the student falls on the a continuum between the two extreme realities as indicated in the chart; unitary, where there is no acceptance to change, and social, where change is fully accepted, will determine the ability of how students address and cope with the changes that occur in the transition process from college/technical institute to university. The fact that the university requires a liberal arts component in the successful completion of a degree would cause "unitary reality" students a greater challenge of learning than students who fall under "social reality". Diploma programs are generally structured where students have few choices in the type of courses they can take, whereas the university allows students considerable flexibility in the majority of majors. Here again, a student's reality will determine his/her reaction to this change.

2.3.4 Previous Learning Experience

"The modern discovery of inner experience, of a realm of purely personal events that are always at the individual's command and that are his exclusively as well as inexpensively for refuge, consolidation and thrill, is also a great and liberating discovery. It implies a new worth and sense of dignity in human individuality, a sense that an individual is not merely a property of nature, set in place according to a scheme independent of him . . . but that he adds something, that he makes a contribution. It is the counterpart of what distinguishes modern science, experimental hypothetical, a logic discovery having therefore opportunity for individual temperament, ingenuity, invention. It is the counterpart of modern politics, art, religion and industry where individuality is given room and movement, in contrast to the ancient scheme of experience, which held individuals tightly within a given order subordinate to its structure and patterns."

John Dewey, Experience and Nature

David Kolb uses the above quote to qualify this statement:

"Human beings are unique among all living organisms in that their primary adaptive specialization lies not in some particular physical form or skill or fit in an ecological niche, but rather in identification with the process of adaptation itself—in the process of learning. We are thus the

learning species, and our survival depends on our ability to adapt not only in the reactive sense of fitting into the physical and social worlds, but in the proactive sense of creating and shaping those worlds.” (Kolb, 1984, pg. 1)

He argues that learning, previous and current, involves transactions between the person and the environment, rather than the traditional approach of a person-centered psychological view of learning. He again uses a quote from Dewey to describe this theory:

“Experience does not go on simply inside a person. It does go on there, for it influences the formation of attitudes of desire and purpose. But this is not the whole of the story. Every genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had. The difference between civilization and savagery, to take an example on a large scale, is found in the degree in which previous experiences have changed the objective conditions under which subsequent experiences take place. The existence of roads, of means of rapid movement and transportation, tools implements, furniture, electric light and power, are illustrations. Destroy the external conditions of present civilized experience, and for a time our experience would relapse into that of barbaric peoples. . . .”
(Dewey, 1938, pg. 39)

Kolb’s research on experiential learning clearly indicates how previous learning can affect current learning. If the student’s learning is a product of both the internal and external environment, and the external environment has extensively changed, difficulties may occur in the learning process. Students who make this transition from college to university would have spent a minimum of two years in a college or technical institute. During this period of time they would be submersed in a learning environment which prepares the individual with the necessary skills and abilities to primarily secure employment in a particular discipline. These same students continue their education in a new environment, the university, which mandates a different educational process. As an example, the University of Lethbridge, in particular, holds the philosophy that there is value added to an individual’s learning by fulfilling a General Liberal Education Requirement prior to graduation. This requirement provides the opportunity for individuals to gain an appreciation of the humanities and the natural social and mathematical sciences. The Post-Diploma Bachelor of Management Degree requires each student to complete 20-24 courses at the university in addition to a recognized diploma. Of these 20-24 courses, 10 must be in the disciplines of humanities, fine arts and arts and sciences. Could this be a challenge for those students whose previous learning experiences have primarily concentrated on a skills based program?

The literature supports the premise that students may experience difficulty, particularly if they do not readily adapt to the new approach to learning. The assumption that “people do learn from their experiences” is valid. There are countless journal articles, dissertations, studies, and books devoted to this subject all of which can be summarized as follows:

“Of perhaps greatest statistical significance is the general finding that it is previous educational attainment and participation that is the most statistically significant variable in determining future participation in formal education.” (Brookfield, 1986, pg. 5)

Brookfield’s research has confirmed this statement by examining a host of studies in Britain (National Institute of Adult Education, 1970; Hanna, 1964; Trenaman, 1957; Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education, 1982) and in America (Boaz, 1978; Carp, Peterson and Roelfs, 1974; Johnstone and Rivera, 19675; Aslanian and Bricknell, 1980).

Brookfield further states that through these past experiences, “individuals construct the meanings and value frameworks that in turn determine how they code new stimuli and information.” (Brookfield, pg. 29) This provides strong evidence that prior learning experiences have the potential to enhance or interfere with new learning. This may be one of the challenges that students might face in transitioning from a college to a university environment. The methodology and approach to learning in a college environment may affect the new learning that occurs within a university.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 CONDUCT OF RESEARCH STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research process that I used in this study is called “action research” which can be described as “a process that engages people who have traditionally been called “subjects” as active participants in the research process”. (Stringer, 1996, pg. xvi) Other characteristics of this process include the necessity of being able to interpret the results and formulate practical and theoretical outcomes that provide conditions for continuing action. The approach to inquiry is one that explored systematically the real-life problems of the students when they made the transition from a college/technical institute to a university. This study was largely qualitative which can be described as having “the aim of understanding experience as nearly as possible as its participants feel it or live it”. (Blaxter, Hughes, Tight, 1996)

I have consciously deviated from the conventional rules of scientific research which places significant emphasis on statistical methods of analyzing data. This methodology would be sound if a researcher was working within a reality that was both concrete and tangible. (Stringer, 1996) Stringer believes that the premise of reality is useful in the physical sciences, but is irrelevant when you are investigating the area of human inquiry because it fails to penetrate the experienced reality of individuals in their day-to-day lives. The study that I conducted depended mainly on mental constructions and mental interpretations of the students which Stringer describes as follows:

“Constructions are created realities that exist as integrated, systematic ‘sense-making’ representations and are the stuff of which people’s social lives are built. The aim of inquiry is not to establish the ‘truth’ or to describe what “really” is happening, but to reveal the different truths and realities, constructions, held by different individuals and groups. Even people who have the same ‘facts’ or information will interpret them differently according to their own experiences, worldviews, and cultural backgrounds.” (pg. 41)

3.2 RESEARCH METHODS

As stated previously, “action research” involves the subjects as participants in the investigative process of determining the “root” causes of real-life problems. Once these problems have been identified, a framework can be established to formulate effective and sustainable solutions. The process of gathering the data to be analyzed was in the form of focus groups. Each focus group consisted of a maximum of 8 students who were encouraged to freely

express their thoughts, ideas and opinions of the challenges they face in the transition process from a college/technical institute to a university. Further clarity on this process is provided by Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996).

- Researcher immerses her/himself in the setting (researcher present at all focus groups).
- The contexts of inquiry are natural (students are made to feel comfortable and relaxed before and during the focus group).
- Participants will speak for themselves and provide their perspectives in words and actions.
- Process is interactive where the participants teach the researcher about their experiences.

The above evaluation methods emphasize the somewhat “naturalist” nature of this qualitative research, which may be simplified by the following descriptors:

- Qualitative research is conducted through contact with a life situation.
- The researcher’s role is to gain a “holistic” (systemic, encompassing, integrated) overview of the context under study.
- A main task is to explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations.
- Many interpretations of this material are possible, but some are more compelling for theoretical reasons or on grounds of internal consistency.
- Relatively little standardized instrumentation is used at the outset. The researcher is essentially the main “measurement device” in the study.
- Most analysis is done with words. The words can be assembled, subclustered, broken into semiotic segments. They can be organized to permit the researcher to contrast, compare, analyze, and bestow patterns upon them. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, pg. 5)

The data has been gathered in the ‘natural setting’ of the university where student participation is voluntary and responses are at his/her own discretion.

3.3 DATA GATHERING TOOLS

The use of focus groups with a variety of students who have made the transition from a college/technical institute to the university was the primary tool of this action research. Five focus groups were held, consisting of 2-8 students per group. Each student participated in only one focus group. Four of the focus groups were located on the Lethbridge campus and one on the Calgary campus. The recruitment process of the student participants consisted of an e-mail sent to all Faculty of Management students, asking for volunteers on specific dates when the focus groups were scheduled. The criteria for student volunteers was two-fold:

- transferred to the university from a college environment.
- in the 3rd year (1st or 2nd semester) of study at the University of Lethbridge.

The student participants in each one of the focus groups were required to:

- 1) Sign a Letter of Agreement (appendix A-7).
- 2) Fill out a questionnaire (appendix A-9).
- 3) Provide comments and opinions on a number of questions provided in a handout (appendix A-8).

Each focus group consisted of a two hour time frame and was recorded on tape. These tapes were later transcribed and further organized into a set of responses on each question from all group participants. I acted as the facilitator of each group and restricted my comments and questions to only those that would ensure that other students, as well as myself, understood what the speaker was saying or was not saying. Much of my presence was silent, interjecting only when all students may not have had an opportunity to comment or determining when it was time to proceed to the next question.

3.4 STUDY CONDUCT

I originally planned to conduct this study with students who were engaged in learning and pursuing a Bachelor of Management degree on the Calgary campus. After several discussions with individuals involved in this project, it became evident that students on the Calgary campus may not experience the same challenges as those attending the Lethbridge campus for the following reasons:

- 1) Approximately half the students on the Calgary campus are part-time learners.
- 2) The Calgary campus only delivers the program in the evening and on Saturdays.
- 3) All the students in the program were living in Calgary prior to making application to the university.
- 4) The Calgary campus is not a “true” university environment. It is a satellite campus which delivers quality education in the degree program by mostly sessional instructors.

The thinking behind doing *one* of the focus groups on the Calgary campus, was to compare the student responses on both campuses to ascertain what challenges may be similar. I did not conduct a focus group on the Edmonton campus as the structure and delivery of the program is virtually identical in these two centers.

The chronological steps taken to complete this research project and gather the data are outlined below.

September 30, 1998 – Submitted documentation to the Human Subject Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge to obtain approval that my study met the required guidelines to ensure that ethical principles and standards respecting the personal welfare and rights of the students had been recognized and accommodated (appendix A-2). Approval was received on October 2, 1998 (appendix A-4).

October 14, 1998 – Letter of Agreement prepared and subsequently signed by the Project Sponsor, Dr. Toni Nelson, and Faculty Advisor, Dr. Sam Lim (appendix A-5).

Schedule of Focus Groups

Lethbridge Students	Focus Group 1	October 21, 1998
Lethbridge Students	Focus Group 2	November 5, 1998
Lethbridge Students	Focus Group 3	November 17, 1998
Lethbridge Students	Focus Group 4	November 26, 1998
Calgary Students	Focus Group 5	December 7, 1998

During each focus group the students were apprised of the purpose of the study and the methodology used. Students were also advised that comments and opinions a) would be held in the strictest of confidence and no names

would be published in the final results, and b) would have no adverse affect on his/her grades or learning outcomes with the University of Lethbridge.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 SEARCH STUDY RESULTS

4.1 STUDY FINDINGS

4.1.1 Questionnaire Analysis

At the onset of each focus group participants were asked to complete a questionnaire in order to establish a demographic benchmark for the characteristics of the students. The results revealed the following average profile of the 27 students (11 male and 16 female) who participated:

- Lives in apartment alone or with others.
- Age is between 20-25.
- Relocated from either Calgary or Edmonton.
- First two years of post-secondary education received in Alberta (various institutions represented).
- Entrance GPA above 3.3.
- Currently taking 5 courses.
- Majoring in either Marketing or Human Resources & Organizational Behavior, although many majors represented.
- Not working.

Details of the questionnaire are produced in graphic form below.

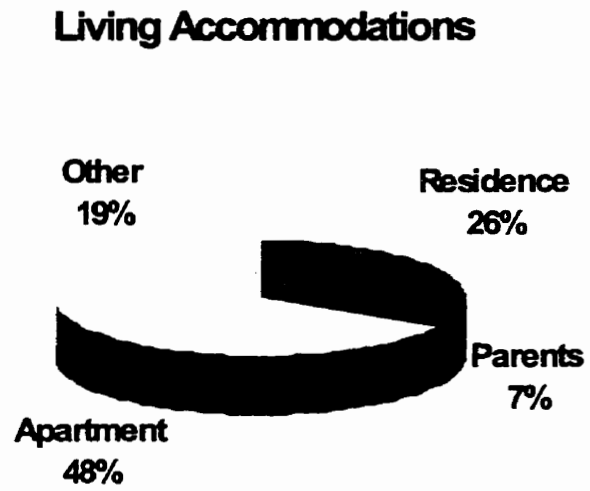
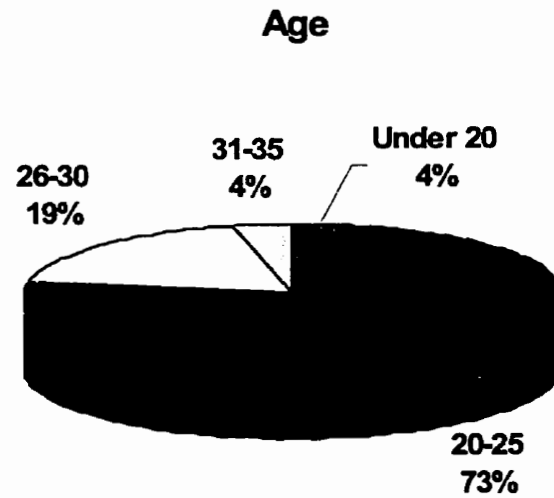
Figure 4.1: Living Accommodations of Participants**Figure 4.2: Age of Participants**

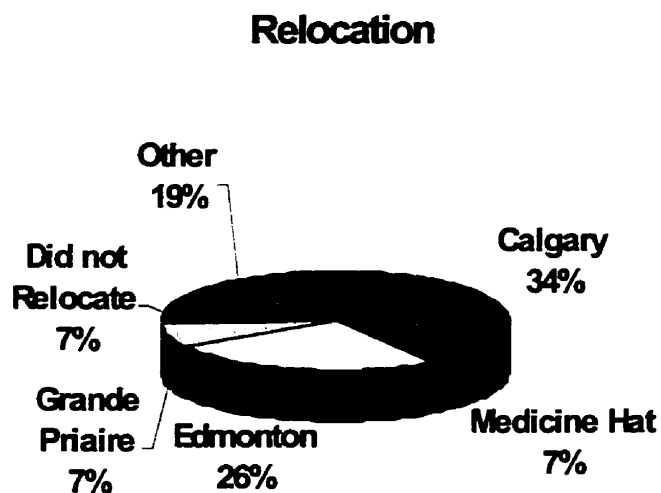
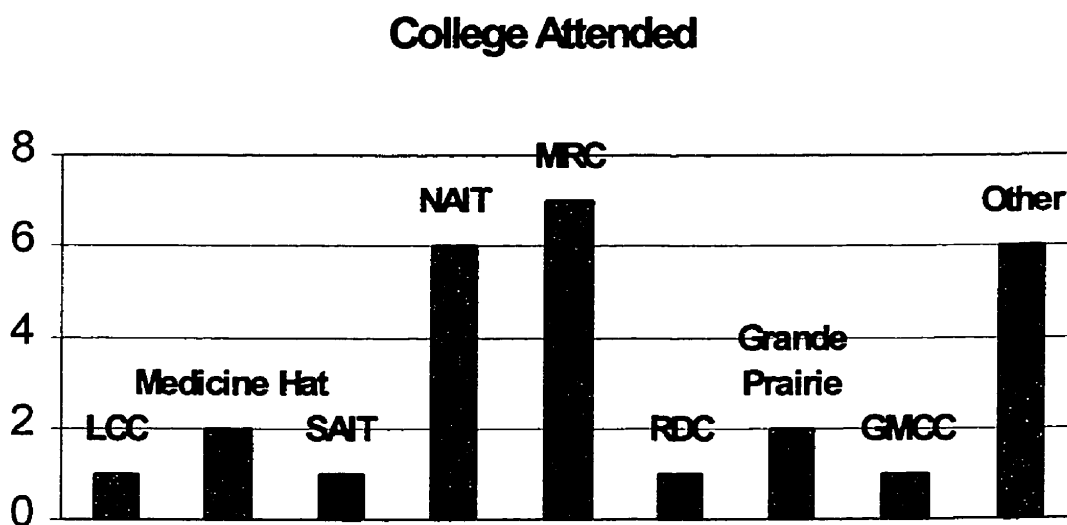
Figure 4.3: Location of Participants Prior to Moving to Lethbridge**Figure 4.4: College Previously Attended by Participants**

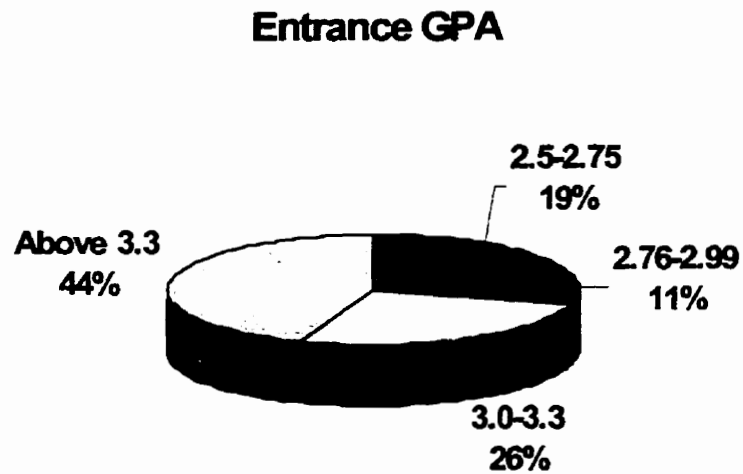
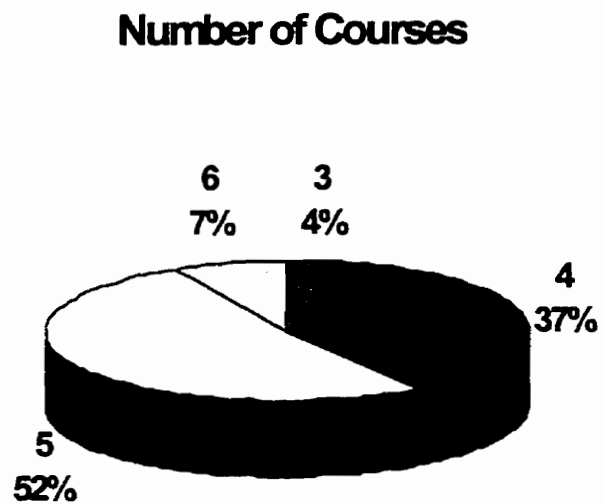
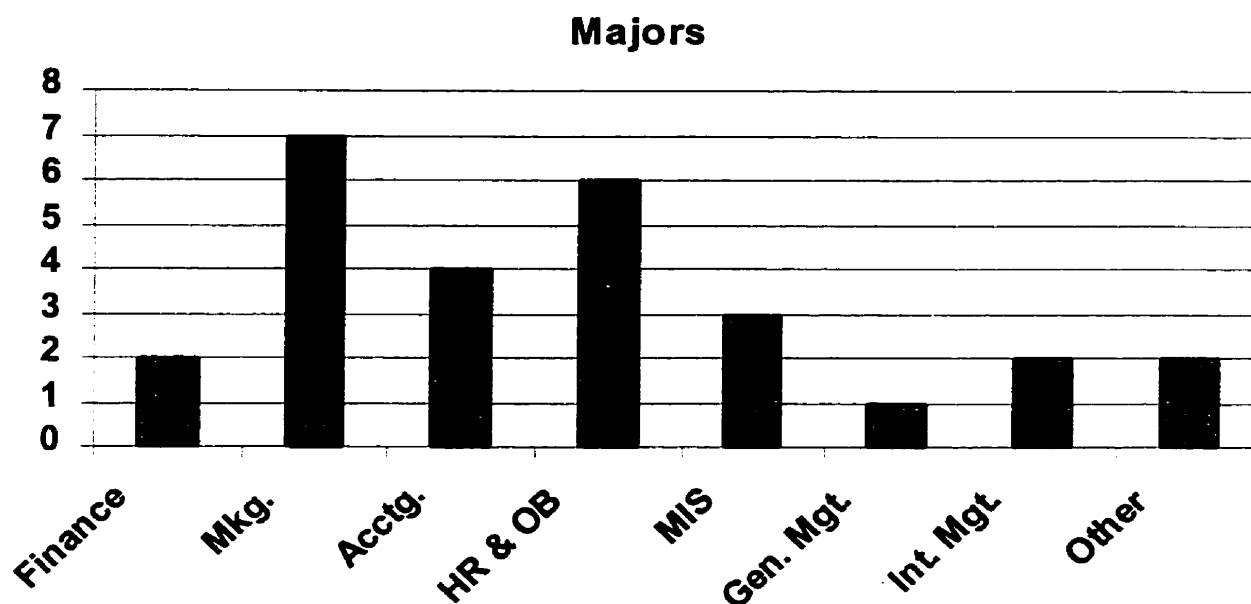
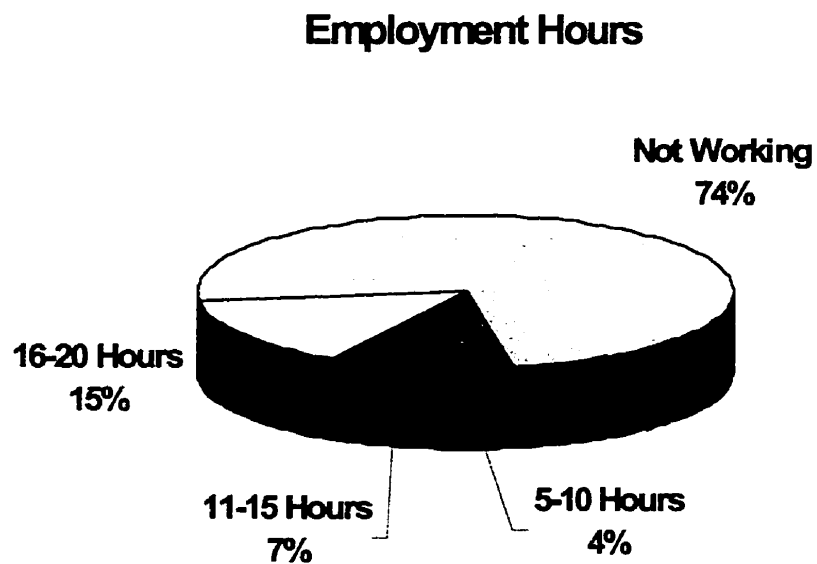
Figure 4.5: GPA On Entrance to University**Figure 4.6: Number of Courses Enrolled In**

Figure 4.7: Major of Students**Figure 4.8: Employment Hours of Students**

4.1.2 Data Analysis

Lincoln and Guba's book, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 1985, discusses an approach to qualitative research that closely parallels the methods I have used in this study.

- 1) Gather data in a familiar environment where the participants are comfortable and relaxed (University of Lethbridge).
- 2) Engage the participants in discussion about their experiences and record the data.

I struggled, to some extent, in how I might report the results of this study. Some of the traditional methods (statistical) did not seem appropriate as, I believe, it is essential to report the findings as closely as possible to exactly what the students have said regarding their experiences.

As I had written earlier, a quote from Blaxter et al, "the aim of understanding experience as nearly as possible as its participants feel it or live it" is the essence of my decision to communicate the results in a narrative format. This decision was further validated by reading Dr. Tammy Dewar's dissertation, *Women and Graduate Adult Education: A Feminist Poststructuralist Story of Transformation* (1996). I believe this approach allows the writer/researcher to capture the dialogue of the students and engage the reader in a thoughtful journey of some pedagogical and social issues that students may face in transitioning from a college/technical institute to a university.

The process/steps I have used to analyze the data are as follows:

- Compilation of data from all focus groups into individual questions.
- Analysis of data to determine key issues/concerns.
- Identify number of repetitious comments on each issue/concern.
- Promulgate issues/concerns where there was consensus by all focus groups.
- As previously mentioned, the Calgary campus program reflects a somewhat different learning environment from the Lethbridge campus and, therefore, I will attempt to isolate student comments (Calgary campus) where applicable.

To assist you in your reading, I offer the following guidelines:

Quoted Segments – Actual comments from the students. Student comments are selected from the five focus groups and are not repetitious from any single student nor are all comments quoted on a particular issue/concern.

Italicized Words – My reflections, thoughts and summarization of the student comments as they pertain to each discussion question.

4.1.3 The “Narrative”

I did not know that my academic journey some 13 years ago would take me down a path that would lead to this opportunity to determine the challenges that students experience in their transition from a college to a university. As an educator of adult learning, it is my opinion that the more we learn about how and why students respond to particular situations and stimuli, the more prepared we will be to ensure their education pursuits are positive and rewarding.

What questions would I ask the students to glean out their thoughts and feelings? How could I gather some meaningful data to identify the challenges that students experience in transition from a college to a university? In discussion with Dr. Toni Nelson, we determined two major areas where issues may arise for the students; pedagogical and social. I developed 8 discussion questions which would reflect pedagogical issues and 7 questions that would get at the essence of any social concerns (appendix A-8).

*Each focus group started out the same way. The students would be somewhat nervous and apprehensive about the process and expectations. These anxious feelings quickly diminished when I explained the purpose of the study and that their participation was voluntary and completely confidential. The first question I asked the students was “**What are the major differences in the teaching process at the university vs. that of the college?**” This question consumed the largest portion of time for any one question and resulted in a forthright response by all the students. This question was designed to explore the many facets of the teaching process at university that fundamentally differ from a college/technical institute environment. I quickly learned that the students are unaccustomed to the requirement of research that is expected from tenured professors and they believe that it can interfere with the teaching process. They are even more unaccustomed to the way some professors enthusiastically discuss their research in the classroom. This dual responsibility of the professors in university adds an element that is not prominent in colleges and thus represents a cultural change for the students.*

"I find that professors are really caught up in their research. They are very strict with their office hours. Sometimes their office hours are limited to two hours a week."

"Yeah, here it is mostly research and it always seems.....like don't get me wrong, some of my classes are really good."

"But at university the teaching ability is not as important as the publishing ability, it seems. They (*university*) won't even hire someone unless they get published, or in order to get tenure they have to be putting out so much and a lot of time that makes poor teaching."

". . . a lot of time the professors is more concerned about their research because that is what gets them either a) a promotion or b) the fact that they are able to stay in the university."

"The first thing that I noticed is that the professors here are more research orientated and the ones at the college were there to teach."

"He (*professor*) admits that he is there because he is doing research. He has no interest in what he is teaching."

"Professors seem to be in academia here. You see them as sort of full-time scholars."

"I would much rather go to the ones (*professors*) that bring in job experience and a mentor, someone you can talk to rather than someone who does strictly social research."

The students spend two years in a college environment where structure, form, and requirements of learning are focused and delineated clearly for all students. As a result of this previous learning environment, students may find adjusting to more independent learning and less structured approach, a challenging experience.

"I think that university courses are less structured that they are at the college level."

"I just found that they (*professors*) stressed that you read before the class. Like in college I could get by without reading a chapter, but here, I have to read it before I go to class to know what he is talking about."

"I find that they give less notes and you are responsible to make notes and do the reading."

“More of a lecture oriented and not so much of a structured learning environment.”

“At the college they are actually writing the problem on the board, giving you the solutions whereas here you have to do it yourself.”

“It is almost like you are in charge of your own learning here. Like they are not taking you by the hand and leading you.”

“I went to (*college*) and the teaching was a lot more, they held you by the hand and spoon fed you more or less and here it is you are taking what you want, make your own schedule, just a really nice change.”

“The law course I am taking here, I mean, you have to read a novel every couple of weeks and it is just trying to remember all of this.”

“I think university is a big plus and being able to generate your own ideas because when you are in a college, they say here it is and this is the way to do it, and this is the way you will do it.”

“University is like totally your own initiative.”

“They want you to learn to become a leader.”

“This goes back to the difference between a college and university. You have to find that stuff out on your own.”

The mission statement of most college two-year diplomas in business stress the importance of a skills based program to prepare the students for employment. This results in a more practical approach to learning than what you may find within a university classroom.

“At the university it seems a way more theoretical whereas at the college, I found that the instructors actually did what they were teaching.”

“It is more theoretical.”

“More lecture orientated.”

“It is a lot more theory. I am coming from (*college*) so the university here is pretty much all theory. It is kind of hard to get any practical experiences. Lots of reading.”

“The delivery of material in college is more real life whereas here there is more theory. That is what I found the most prominent about the college vs. the university.”

“When we were at (*college*) and taking courses, we actually learned how to do it and here you learn how to think about doing something.”

“Well, what I find is that in most of the classes, doesn’t matter what they are, whether they are 1000 or 3000 classes, they are mostly taught as lecture classes and that is quite different than it was at (*college*).”

The second question “What are the differences in the learning process at the university vs. that of the college?” generated some points of view that were unanimous in some areas, but in others, there were varying experiences. Class sizes of the introductory courses, particularly arts & sciences, were significantly different than in a college system.

“I would say here (*university*) the interaction in the class is probably a lot less than in the college class, because the college classes were smaller. I had a class of 20 at (*college*). Like here I still have one class of 20, but I have classes of maybe close to 100 easily. It is kind of hard to get to know the teacher.”

“I found at college that I learned really well by asking questions and, again, it is a small class. I feel that some of the classes I am in right now they are so big, if I ask too many questions I am taking up other students’ time.”

“I just find the low level courses, especially in the university here are really impersonal because of the size.”

“The first thing I noticed when I came here was the mass amounts of people and it would have been worst at another university (*larger university*), and that is why I came because I wanted to limit that.....the higher level courses, it is a lot different because there are fewer people, but the lower level ones are impossible.”

There was an ongoing discussion in each focus group as to whether there was more, less, or the same amount of group work at the university vs. the college. There was no definitive consensus. What the students did agree upon was that group work was prominent at whatever college they attended.

“University does assign more group projects and stuff like that and a lot more assignments.”

“Like when I took business it was all group projects, and here it is individual.”

“I haven’t been in one group project yet.”

“All we do here is be lectured to. In the college we had to do presentations, case studies, projects and group work.”

“I think that depends upon your professor though, because I have had a lot of projects.”

“I basically have the same amount of projects for my classes and I really like that because in projects, by the application from what you have learned in class, the theories or ideas and stuff like that, you actually get an understanding of how they work rather than in a simple lecture class.”

“Here I find a lot more textbook work, it is reading, pulling out of the textbook what is important and remembering that for exams, whereas at the college level it is how to apply what you have read into the projects or papers.”

Another challenge presented to the students is the higher level of difficulty they experience in completing the program. The continuing motivation and commitment required for success can be daunting for some students.

“I find that the 3000 level courses that I took in (college) that transferred to the 3000 level here were much easier at the college.”

“Here (university) it is more integrating, writing essays and stuff and it is a lot harder.”

“I found it easier at (college), they had it all structured and we knew what we needed to learn and here we have to read the textbook and it takes me about an hour to read one chapter.....”

“More difficult here.”

*It was difficult to separate the next two questions (3 and 4) “**What are the courses that cause you the most difficulty?**” and “**What are the courses that cause you the least difficulty?**” as they revolved around course difficulty. I was attempting to identify if there were particular types of courses that presented more of a challenge than others (heavier concentration on a particular learning style). What I discovered was two-fold; it primarily depends on a) the student and b) the professor. The courses that students find the least difficult are the ones that they perceive add value to their knowledge base. The other significant factor that determines the difficulty level is their perception of the professor, and his/her ability or style in delivering the course material. The most prevalent type of courses that posed concern for the students are those that have a heavier emphasis on the science components that stress numerical calculations, such as statistics or math.*

I sensed another difficulty students may have when they enter the university after spending two intense years in a college program. The college program, again geared to employment skills, concentrates on specifically business related courses. Students believe that this is the knowledge that is most desired by the employer (mostly because that is what they have been told) and may fail to see the connection or link between management courses and arts and sciences courses.

"I think, well I am in management and I have to fulfill these electives, and I am finding them a lot harder than I was hoping they would be."

".....coming here and having to take the electives, I am spending a lot more time on the electives than my core courses. As much as I am enjoying some of them, it is taking a lot of time for what I am really wanting to learn."

"I think that courses that are not geared towards my career path, like towards a designation for me, like the liberal arts classes, are the most difficult for myself."

"I too find that the courses that are not management, like the humanities, I have problems with. I find them the most difficult."

"I think I have the hardest time with my arts and sciences because I don't care enough about them to put in the time that they require, like, I don't want to read through a bunch of philosophy stuff and analyze it because I don't care enough."

"I find statistics the most difficult." (*This comment was reiterated several times; either statistics or math*)

"Corporate finance. He doesn't know how to explain it."

"The professor largely....." (*whether or not you find the course difficult*)

"The instructor largely determines whether a course is difficult or not for me."

"I think for me it is if there is any math at all in it."

And for some students, who perceive arts and sciences as value added courses, expressed these thoughts.

"I think that my arts options have been the best courses that I have taken at university because, as you say, you are learning about completely new things that you never did in high school and you never did in college and I think you are gaining a better understanding. I think personally the hardest courses are

the ones that the professors aren't available and are not willing to help and they shove it all off on to their TA's."

"Yeah, some of my arts courses actually helped me understand my business courses better."

"I don't think that your business courses can help you in your arts classes but your arts classes, can for sure, and it does expand your scope."

My music classes, I have two of them and they are fairly challenging, but I am enjoying them and I am here for diversification."

"...and I thought, if it wasn't for the fact that I have to go and see these plays (*drama class*), I might have missed out on some really neat opportunities and experiences."

"If you have an interest in it, then it is easy."

*My observations and analysis of question 5 **"What are the differences in the evaluation process?"** produced little consensus as the student comments were quite diverse. The dependent variable that determined their thoughts was the post-secondary school they attended prior to university. I give you a few examples that ensued throughout each focus group.*

"I found at (*college*) it was all multiple choice, whereas here there is no multiple choice."

"More multiple choice here."

"I have noticed the opposite actually." (*more multiple choice at college*).

"All my unit tests or midterms here have been lined sheets of paper with two or three questions."

*The basic answer to the next question (6), **"what does the university do to make your transition easier?"** was the student orientation session.*

"It has that student orientation that is helpful to get to know some of the stuff."

"The student orientation lets you get to meet other people and you can make some friends."

"Well, the university body has a student orientation which takes you through the different things in the university."

"You just don't come here and say OK you are here, they take your hand, so as to speak, in the student orientation. I think they do a lot."

*The central focus of the discussion encompassing question 7 **"What can the university do to make the learning process a more positive experience?"** was service. Service in the classroom by the professors and service out of the classroom by administrative staff. The following comments will isolate incidents that reflect the students' experiences.*

"I thought that the university was very good in sending me information."
(registration)

"A lady actually phoned me from Lethbridge and said 'I noticed you haven't registered for your courses yet. Are you still planning on coming down and if you need any help planning your courses, you can call me at this number.'"

"The lady who I was doing the registration and that GPA stuff with, well, I was freaking out when I was talking to her and she was so good to me."

"Like I am totally impressed by the service."

"I would like easier access to the advising area. They need to have more people where you can go to get a quick answer."

"When I am paying money at an institution I want some service."

*The last question (8) addressing issues in the pedagogical realm was **"Do you believe a transition course/program would be helpful in your transition process?"** The analysis of this question revealed no support nor necessity for a transition course or program. The student comments were more directed at providing information that would assist them in becoming acquainted with the university, staff and students.*

"It doesn't have to be a full blown course or program. It could just be a 2 hour presentation."

".....provide transitional information like course expectations, something involved in the learning process, how it differs and so on."

"...making it a little more informative before you actually get here."

".....provide more information or even literature that would help the transition."

The next group of questions were designed to determine if there were any social challenges that students experienced in their transition process. These

questions were intended to develop an understanding of any emotional/psychological trauma students may be feeling or have felt in the past. The students participating in the focus groups on the Lethbridge campus have moved from another location (only 1 student was living in Lethbridge). All of the students who attended the Calgary campus focus group were living in Calgary prior to attending university. Hence, the questions in this group are primarily geared to Lethbridge students. In fact there was very little discussion or comments in the focus group on the Calgary campus. I will separately identify any of these thoughts that I believe significant.

In the literature review I discussed the premise of self-awareness and how critical it is to have a healthy self-worth if you are charting a new course in academic endeavours. Students who perceive themselves as marginal will experience more anxiety than those that have high self-esteem.

*The first question **“What anxieties or concerns were you feeling before starting university?”** initiated discussion around finances, anticipation and expectations.*

“I just heard lots of really good things from people who have gone here.”

“I had the anxiety of always trying to be weeded out. I thought college students were a little inferior because they had to go to college first, so I was kind of concerned that they might try to weed you out.”

“My anxiety is not so much to do with the actual university but for me moving here.”

“For me it was financing.”

“I think just moving a way from home.”

Finances for me too.”

“My concern was, oh my God, am I too stupid for university cause a couple of my friends told me it is so hard.....”

“I think my main concern was really the money.”

“Just changing institutions is kind of tough.”

The biggest concern that I had was there are rumors in college that university is not for certain people and I was wondering if I was that certain person.”

Even though the students voiced a multitude of concerns prior to arriving at the university, the majority of them found that these concerns dissipated within the first couple of months.

*The second question **“Were you concerned whether or not you had the necessary abilities to be successful?”** produced comments that were a continuation of question 1. Almost all the students had a GPA above 3.0 which is a good indication that they have been successful in prior education at a college. The results suggested only a few concerns in regard to abilities.*

“Like the Alberta schooling system is different from Manitoba and I have heard it is more difficult, so I was really concerned with that.”

“I didn’t think that the education would be necessarily superior; I thought it would be different.”

“I was just worried about adapting to the academics, like different styles.”

“It depends upon your self-perception…….”

***“Were you concerned whether or not you would ‘fit-in’ and become part of the social scene?”** was the third question. This question was intended to identify any problems with establishing friendships and having an opportunity to ‘hang out’ with a peer group. The consensus among the students was little to no concern. One of the major factors for this was the students’ belief that the majority of their classmates had also transferred to Lethbridge from other locations. This was not the case in the Calgary focus group as they all lived in Calgary before registering in university and, thus, maintained their same social circle. The minor concerns are identified by these comments.*

“I guess I was worried that I wouldn’t fit in and I was a little intimidated by that because, I thought, you know, maybe I am just not ready to be scholarly.”

“It is easier to fit into college because you are always in groups.”

“I guess a little bit, I wasn’t worried that I wouldn’t meet anyone that I liked but I was worried.”

The students believe that there would be no firmly established social groups if almost everyone has moved to Lethbridge from another location. Most students would be in this same situation which would facilitate the forming new friendships. Comments in this vein are as follows:

“I think Lethbridge has a lot of transfer students, most everyone I talk to is not from Lethbridge.”

"Someone told me that the people that grew up and stayed in Lethbridge are a little hard to get to be friends with, but since everyone is coming from some where else, it is not a big deal."

"Like even when you go to the bars here. Everyone just starts talking to you."

"You don't have to be a special person to fit in here, you have to be just semi outgoing and you can meet a lot of people."

"Generally there is a certain attitude that I find in small town where it is really hard to fit in, but it didn't turn out that way here because, especially with the students, I thought that most of them would be local, but I would have to say that the majority of students here are transfer students."

*Continuing on the same thought process, I asked the students (number 4) **"Have you been experiencing any feeling of aloneness; missing friends or family?"** There was a strong agreement by the Lethbridge students on this question; once again, irrelevant for Calgary students.*

"Definitely"

"My mom, we really get along. Yes, I miss everyone."

"My parents, my friends."

"Yes, I miss my boyfriend and stuff."

"There is a feeling that you have lost a lot of your security."

"I miss my friends from the college."

"....you don't have that comfort zone that you had with your family at home."

"I felt really isolated in my first month."

*The next question **"What has the university done to help or hinder your transition to university?"** was to get the students' impressions as to what the university has done to either help or hinder this transition from a social perspective. All of the students who lived in residence believed that was a 'plus' to meet people and socialize. Another aspect that was beneficial to a positive social transition was the activities organized by the Students' Union and Management Society.*

"I think that being in residence really helps."

"I think it would be harder if you lived off campus. Because here (residence) you are placed in with people and you learn about people."

"The students' union has the pub there which brings in a lot of bands and has different cabarets, 80's nights, Halloween night and things like that."

My thinking with questions 6 and 7 "From a social perspective, what has been the most difficult part of your transition?" and "From a social perspective, what has been the easiest part of your transition?" was to 'wrap up' the social issues and identify the most difficult/easiest part of the student's transition. Comments and discussion by the students were somewhat paradoxical in that the easiest and most difficult part of the transition process was the move to Lethbridge. The Calgary campus students had no significant comments on either of these two questions.

"I don't know what has been the easiest part but I have found that everyone here is so friendly."

"The most difficult for me was just the move down here."

"I found it just really easy to get in." (*Registration process*)

"Like everyone, it was good customer service, every where you go, even like the whole city, not just the university."

"The most difficult part was leaving everything you know behind and coming over and starting fresh, but that as well has been my easiest because I am an outgoing individual."

"The most difficult part for me was trying to get from Edmonton to here."

"The most difficult part for me too is moving from your known community."

"Ditto for me, the move here."

"Well, I think the easiest for me was moving down here and no one knows you and you get to start over fresh."

"I would say the people here." (*Friendly and open*)

At the conclusion of each one of these two-hour focus groups, time permitting, I would ask the students if they had any closing comments. The thoughts of one student, clearly articulated the belief of the student majority regarding the post-diploma Bachelor of Management Degree.

“I think that if they (*Alberta Advanced Education*) are deciding to keep or do away with the post-diploma program, they have to keep it. It is the way of the future. You are going to get more and more people saying ‘I want to be a business major’. When I have kids and they are choosing what they are going to do, I will tell them their options that they can go to a university or a college. When I can get two years for a diploma which I worked hard for and then come to an accredited university, get my final two years and get a degree; that makes me very marketable. So they have to keep this”

4.2 STUDY CONCLUSIONS

Although this study confirms that student do experience challenges in the process of making the transition from a college/technical institute to a university, it is also apparent that some of these challenges are resolved once the student has moved out of the “neutral zone” and assimilates into the new environment. (Bridges, 1991) These challenges correlate directly to cultural change, previous learning experiences, and a negative self-awareness as outlined in the literature review.

The results of the study suggest the following challenges that students may face in the transition process. I have indicated the number of students who believed this to be a challenge as:

Most – greater than 75%.
 Some – approximately 50%.
 Few – less than 25%.

Cultural Change

- Accessibility to all faculty is more limited in a university than it was in a college/technical institute. (some)
- Larger class sizes of introductory courses in Arts and Sciences. (most)
- Relocation to a new city and new campus. (few)

Previous Learning Experience

- A greater emphasis on a lecture based teaching style in the university vs. what was experienced in a college/technical institute. (most)
- Less structured and more independent approach to learning in a university vs. a college/technical institute. (most)

- Emphasis on a theoretical approach to learning in a university environment. (some)
- Higher level of difficulty in most courses than at a college/technical institute. (some)
- Lack of understanding of the value added in successful completion of some of the arts and sciences courses. (few)

Negative Self-Awareness

- Self-perception of the necessary ability to succeed in university. (few)

The challenges that students face in the transition process from college/technical institute to a university are consistent with those identified by the initial focus group (educators and colleagues at Royal Roads University). What this initial focus group was unable to determine was how significant each challenge was to the student and how many students may be affected. The above data provides this detail and confirmation.

Even though the majority of students indicated there were three primary challenges, the data confirms that these challenges do not necessarily translate into major impediments in whether or not a student is successful in university. The reality of the students is that they have the necessary skills and abilities to complete a Bachelor of Management Degree. They do have the academic and psychological readiness. What may occur in the transition process, dependent upon which reality categorizes the student (unitary, sensory, mythic or social), is the ease of adjusting to the new environment and learning process.

The challenges that the students identified under previous learning experiences during discussion of questions 1 and 2 (pedagogical), primarily reflects the initial difficulty they encounter with some of the differences in the teaching and learning philosophy at a university. It is through past experience that individuals construct the meanings and value frameworks that in turn determine how they code new stimuli and information. Students that have positive self-concepts would be more responsive and/or motivated to new or different methods of learning. Every individual has an idiosyncratic learning style which would also account for many of the opinions and comments expressed by the students. For example, if a student has a greater dependency upon a structured learning environment and, in fact, has experienced that structure in the college environment, he/she would probably encounter greater barriers to achieving his/her educational goals in a university than the student who enjoys a more independent learning environment.

One of the outcomes of the study was to determine whether or not there should be a transition program/course for students who make the transition from college/technical institute to university. The comments, thoughts, and feelings of the students would imply that this is not necessary as it would not address the major challenges that are implicit in the reality of the students. Students are of the opinion that the student orientation session is valuable in their transition process, and possibly could be enhanced by including a “handbook” that would address the changes in philosophy and process that significantly differ in a university environment vs. their previous experiences at a college/technical institute.

4.3 STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

As the study indicates some differences in the teaching and learning process at a university vs. that at a college/technical institute, an encompassing recommendation would be to heighten the awareness of these differences with faculty and staff. While some of the differences are the result of the philosophical approach that the university embraces in education and should not be changed, there may be a possibility of changes in the teaching and learning process that would attribute to greater positive outcomes for the Post Diploma Bachelor of Management students.

Although this was not a question posed to students directly, one of the observations that I made during the facilitation of the focus groups was the reoccurrence of the concept of “service”, particularly in question 7 (pedagogical), **“what can the university do to make the learning process a more positive experience?”**. Students of today place greater demands on the educational system as they perceive the necessity of higher learning to compete in the emerging information-based global economy. This expectation puts pressure on educational institutions to continually develop innovative and effective teaching and learning strategies, as well as provide and deliver the necessary administrative services. The administrative services that students believe are key are those provided by the Registrar’s Office and Academic Advisors. The Registrar’s Office is the initial contact with incoming students and can make a significant difference in the perception that the student has about continuing his/her education in a university environment. The few comments that were voiced by the students where good service was acknowledged in these two areas, were quickly confirmed by all students as being essential in their educational process.

Academic services would include a learning environment that permits ongoing interaction between the student and professor, both in and out of the classroom. I agree with Brookfield in his statement regarding the “traditional” lecture approach in the classroom.

“A mass instructional technique such as lecture may be useful in presenting information in short, twenty-minute periods. However, the lecture is of little use if the educator is seeking to promote critical thinking or to encourage adults to be more flexible in their attitudes. A one-hour transmission of information in which there is no opportunity for questions, no small-group discussion of case study applications of ideas, no “buzz group” activity and no attempt to make connections between the audience members’ experiences and the lecture’s content is, therefore, poor facilitation. Educators who ignore the use of participatory techniques will find (unless they are stunningly charismatic performers) that their learners are physically absent in increasing numbers or are mentally absent in the sense of not being actively engaged with the ideas, skills and knowledge being presented. (1986, pg. 12)

As Brookfield alludes to in the above quote, lecture is an efficient and effective means of transmitting knowledge, but it must be supplemented with transactional and transformational approaches to involve learners in constructing knowledge frameworks for themselves. A model such as David Kolb’s model of experiential learning can provide the missing link between theory and practice, between the abstract generalization and the concrete instance, between the affective and cognitive domains. Kolb describes this model as follows:

“Experiential learning theory offers something more substantial and enduring. It offers the foundation for an approach to education and learning as a lifelong process that is soundly based in intellectual traditions of social psychology, philosophy, and cognitive psychology. The experiential learning model pursues a framework for examining and strengthening the critical linkages among education, work, and personal development. It offers a system of competencies for describing job demands and corresponding educational objectives and emphasizes the critical linkages that can be developed between the classroom and the “real world” with experiential learning methods. It pictures the workplace as a learning environment that can enhance and supplement formal education and can foster personal development through meaningful work and career-development opportunities. And it stresses the role of formal education in lifelong learning and the development of individuals to their full potential as citizens, family members, and human beings.” (Kolb, 1984, pg. 3-4)

I am of the opinion that a positive learning environment is created by professors/instructors who continually develop sound educational methods that can translate the abstract ideas of academia into the concrete practical realities of student’s lives. Educational methods that allow the student to test the relevance and application of new ideas and concepts against their own

accumulated experience and wisdom will provide a more productive arena for learning.

A recommendation that may address the social issues that some students experience when they relocate to the university in Lethbridge is to implement a “buddy” system for the first month or two for those students who feel particularly isolated from friends and family. This would be on a voluntary basis and could be a service provided to students in the registration process.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

5.1 ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

As the implementation of the recommendations is outside the scope of this study, I will limit my comments to the implications of the primary stakeholder; the students, if changes are not considered.

- Students will continue to experience the same initial challenges in the transition process from a college/technical institute to a university.
- Although the research did not indicate this to be a serious problem, students may pursue other learning opportunities if they perceive the challenges presented in a university environment difficult to overcome.

5.2 FUTURE RESEARCH

A number of research projects could be undertaken to enhance understanding of and to improve the learning experiences of students in this transition process. A list of possible suggestions for consideration, are as follows:

- A study of learning styles of college/technical institute students vs. learning styles of those individuals who start a four year degree with the university. Are there any significant differences?
- A study of why students choose a college/technical institute as their initial contact with higher education vs. why students choose a university as their first choice.
- A study of the major universities in Western Canada who have a similar post diploma program to ascertain if the student experiences are similar or different.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 LESSONS LEARNED

6.1 RESEARCH PROJECT LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned primarily concentrate on the data gathering process and the necessity to have quality equipment if you are planning to audio tape and later transcribe interviews, focus groups, or conversations. The transcribing equipment that I used produced inferior tape recordings and, thus, increased the transcribing time. I found myself having to reverse the tape on a constant basis in order to clearly hear what the student(s) had said.

Another lesson learned was in the recruitment process of student volunteers. In almost all of the scheduled focus groups some of the students did not attend, even though they had confirmed their willingness to participate. In future I would increase the number of students required for each focus group to ensure that each focus group represented 6-8 participants.

6.2 PROGRAM LESSONS LEARNED

“Beyond the horizon of time is a changed world, very different from today’s world. Some people see beyond that horizon and into the future. They believe that dreams can become reality. They open our eyes and lift our spirits. They build trust and strengthen our relationships. They stand firm against the winds of resistance and give us the courage to continue the quest. We call these people *leaders*.” (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, pg. 317)

The primary focus of this Master of Arts has been on leadership; leadership in your work life as well as leadership in your personal life. The concepts and principles incorporated in this program were also designed to allow the participants to develop a sophisticated understanding of various other topics including Systems, Learning, Technology, Organizations, and Research. During my personal learning, that has transpired over the past 2 years, I have had the opportunity to explore the many facets of effective leadership characteristics and develop an understanding of a “style”, that would exemplify the above quote by Kouzes and Posner.

There are numerous researchers who have attempted to define the concept of leadership according to their individual perspectives as it relates to the phenomenon they are studying. This has resulted in a multitude of definitions over the past 40 years as follows:

Leadership is “the behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal.” (Hemphill & Coons, 1957, pg. 7)

Leadership is “interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals.” (Tannenbaum, Weschler, & Masarik, 1961, pg. 24)

Leadership is “the initiation and maintenance of structure in expectation and interaction.” (Stogdill, 1974, pg. 411)

Leadership is “the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization.” (Katz & Kahn, 1978, pg. 528)

Leadership is “the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement.” (Rauch & Behling, 1984, pg. 46)

“Leaders are those who consistently make effective contributions to social order, and who are expected and perceived to do so.” (Hosking, 1988, pg. 153)

“Leadership is a process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose.” (Jacobs and Jaques, 1990, pg. 281)

As I examine each definition and relate it to “Leadership in the Classroom”, I am confident that each one, in whole or in part, reflect the responsibilities and functions of educators. As the world continually changes and moves into an “information revolution”, there becomes an even greater urgency for adults to practice “lifelong learning”. Along with this increase in post-secondary student numbers, comes the necessity for educators to examine their philosophy of adult education to ensure that present practices focus on “good” teaching techniques and effective learning strategies. Students can become the leaders of tomorrow if we, the educators, can assist them to reflect on the manner in which values, beliefs, and behaviors previously deemed unchallengeable can be critically analyzed. Students who develop a sense of personal power and self-worth through the learning process, will begin to exercise greater autonomy in personal relationships, in sociopolitical behavior, and in intellectual judgments. (Brookfield, 1986)

A significant part of my learning accrued through the study of the dynamics of “Systems Thinking”. Barry Oshry’s book, “Seeing Systems”, and Peter Senge’s books, “The Fifth Discipline”, provided the groundwork for exploring, understanding, and practicing the concept that all human beings live within a variety of systems; the family, the classroom, the organization, the community, and the nation. Each system is bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions. As we are part of these actions we tend to focus on specific parts of the system and wonder why our deepest problems never seem

to get resolved. “Systems thinking is a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that has been developed over the past fifty years, to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us to see how to change them effectively.” (Senge, 1990, pg. 7)

The MALT major project core competencies that required the student to identify, locate and evaluate research findings, as well as use research findings to solve problems was one of the highlights of my learning process. I gained new knowledge and a heightened appreciation of the value that new research can provide to an organization. I also was fortunate enough to develop new skills and abilities surrounding the research process that will enhance my personal and professional aspirations.

Learning is growing and growing is learning. I value the experience of attaining a Master of Arts through the Royal Roads University.

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APPENDICES

HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH APPROVAL

1998

September 30,

TO: Rex Moody
Office of Research Services
University of Lethbridge

FROM: Anne Jacobs

SUBJECT: Approval of Research to be conducted in Connection with Major Project to obtain a Masters Degree from the Royal Roads University

I would appreciate your approval of the following data, which parallels the guidelines set out in the Human Subject Research Approval document.

1. **Name of Principal Investigator:** Anne Jacobs
2. **Title of Research:** A Study of Student Experiences in Transition from College/Technical Institute to University
3. **Name of the Granting Agency Providing funding Support:** University of Lethbridge
4. **Approximate Start and End Date for the Research:** October 15/98 – January 15/99
5. **Research Objectives:** The study will assess the challenges that students experiences when they complete two year's of post-secondary education at a college/technical institute and transfer to a university (in this instance, the University of Lethbridge). If the challenges that students are experiencing are significant and ongoing, they will detract from a successful learning environment. Once these challenges have been identified (student perceptions), there will be an opportunity for the University to assess and develop an improvement plan. The study should determine whether or not these students who graduated from a college program have the academic and psychological level of readiness for completion of the 3rd and 4th years of the university program.
Research Procedures: The focus on action research for this study will be largely qualitative where the researcher is immersed in the setting. Students in Calgary and Lethbridge (post-diploma only) will be asked to participate on a volunteer basis in discussion of their experiences in this transition process.
6. **Subjects:** University of Lethbridge students – Three groups of approximately 10 students each. Two groups will participate on two different occasions.

7. **Method of Data Collection:** Data will be collected through discussion groups with some leading questions to focus the group.
8. **Informed Consent:** Through the use of a consent form (attached).
9. **Deception:** No deception required.
10. **Risk of Physical or Emotional Harm to Subjects:** N/A
11. **Withdrawal:** Withdrawal allowed.
12. **Confidentiality:** Data will be collected and organized by thematic analysis rather than by individual. No subject will be named in the study and recording of data will be confidentially stored and destroyed upon completion of the study.
13. **Personal Opinion and Attitudes:** Personal opinions and attitudes of individual participants will not be released in the public domain.
14. **Access:** I will be the only one who has access to the original data. It will be confidentially stored during the study process and destroyed upon completion.
15. **Feedback:** All subjects who participated in the study will have access to the results.
16. **Rights:** All rights of human subjects will be assured in accordance with the SSHRC guidelines.

Anne Jacobs

Anne Jacobs

From: Margaret McKeen[SMTP:mckeen@uleth.ca]
Sent: Friday, October 02, 1998 11:59 AM
To: Moody, Rex
Cc: Arms, Bob
Subject: Human Subject Approval - A. Jacobs



Card for Margaret
McKeen

Please advise Anne Jacobs that her protocol entitled, "A Study of Student Experiences in Transition from College/Technical Institute to University" has been approved on behalf of the Human Subject Research Committee.

The Letter of Agreement should be revised to include one or two sentences describing the types of issues to be discussed in the groups. It should also mention that participants have the right to withdraw at any time.

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

Organization Participating in the Study

University of Lethbridge
4401 University Drive
Lethbridge, Alberta
T1K 3M4

Project Sponsor

Dr. Toni Nelson, Associate Dean
Phone: (403) 329-5156
Fax: (403) 329-2038
E-mail: nelson@uleth.ca

Project Leader/Graduate Student

Anne Jacobs
Phone: (403) 284-8595
Fax: (403) 284-8057
E-mail: anne.jacobs@uleth.ca

RRU Faculty Advisor

Dr. Sam Lim
Phone: (250) 953-7442
Fax: (250) 953-7444
Cell/Voice: (250) 361-7583
E-Mail: sam.lim@gems2.gov.bc.ca

Roles and Responsibilities

The Project Leader, Project Sponsor and Faculty Advisor agree to participate in the successful completion of the proposed project and perform the roles and responsibilities identified in Attachment A.

Project Description, Action Steps and Milestones

The project goals, process and anticipated outcomes are described in the project proposal (attached). The project proposal highlights the activities to be completed, the study milestones and the involvement of the University of Lethbridge and their employees.

Confidentiality

The RRU Project Leader/Graduate Student agrees to honour individual and organization confidentiality and non-disclosure guidelines. The University of Lethbridge agrees to allow the Project Leader every opportunity to canvas and collect data from students as identified in the proposal.

The University of Lethbridge project participants will be asked to formally acknowledge that the information they provide to the researcher will be handled in a confidential and privileged manner, as described in the "RRU Guidelines for Conducting Research with Human Subjects".

Student identify will not be disclosed to the Applied Practitioner or any other members of the University of Lethbridge.

Intellectual Property

The University of Lethbridge agrees that the final project report and supporting materials will remain the intellectual property of the author (Graduate Student). The commercial potential of all products will be assessed upon completion of the project and if deemed necessary, mutually agreeable arrangements will be identified to exploit the product in the commercial marketplace.

Deliverables

The Project Leader/Graduate Student will provide the University of Lethbridge a copy of the final project report. In addition, the Project Leader will be available to provide formal briefings to individuals or groups identified by the Project Sponsor.

Organization Commitment

The University of Lethbridge agrees to provide the Project Leader with support that is necessary to successfully complete the project as outlined in the project proposal.

Endorsement

We, the undersigned agree to abide by the arrangements and statements contained in this letter of agreement.

Project Sponsor

Dated

Faculty Advisor

Dated

Graduate Student

Dated

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

I _____ agree to participate in:

“A Study of Student Experiences in Transition from College to University”.

The study will be conducted over the period from October 15, 1998, to January 15, 1999. Participation will involve expressing your opinions and thoughts in two-hour discussion groups. Discussion will focus on the pedagogical and social challenges experienced in this transition process.

Student comments and opinions will be held in the strictest of confidence and no names will be published in the final results. The completed results of the study will be available in May, 1999. If you wish to obtain a copy of these results, you may contact me at (403) 284-8595.

Student participation is voluntary and responses in the discussion are at his/her own discretion. Students may withdraw from this research any time. Students' comments and opinions will have no adverse affect on his/her grades or learning outcomes with the University of Lethbridge.

Anne Jacobs
Program Manager
Calgary Campus
University of Lethbridge

Student Signature

Date

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Pedagogical Issues

1. What are the major differences in the teaching process at the university vs. that of the college? E.g. professor expectations, delivery of material, etc.
2. What are the differences in the learning process at the university vs. that of the college? E.g. course work, difficulty level, etc.
3. What are the courses that cause you the most difficulty? Why?
4. What are the courses that cause you the least difficulty? Why?
5. What are the differences in the evaluation process?
6. What does the university do to make your transition easier?
7. What can the university do to make the learning process a more positive experience?
8. Do you believe a transition course/program would be helpful in your transition process? Before you enter the university? If yes, what would the program look like?

Social Issues

1. What anxieties or concerns were you feeling before starting University?
2. Were you concerned whether or not you had the necessary abilities to be successful?
3. Were you concerned whether or not you would “fit in”? Become part of the “social scene”?
4. Have you been experiencing any feeling of “aloneness”? Missing friends, family, etc.?
5. What has the University done to help or hinder your transition to university?
6. From a social perspective, what has been the most difficult part of your transition?
7. From a social perspective, what has been the easiest part of your transition?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Please circle the applicable response:

1. I live: (please circle)
 - (a) In residence
 - (b) With parents
 - (c) Apartment (alone)
 - (d) Apartment (with others)
 - (e) Other _____ (please specify)
2. My age is:
 - (a) Under 20
 - (b) 20-25
 - (c) 26-30
 - (d) 31-35
 - (e) 36-40
3. I have relocated to Lethbridge to complete my degree from:
 - (a) Calgary
 - (b) Medicine Hat
 - (c) Edmonton
 - (d) Red Deer
 - (e) Other _____ (please specify location)
4. The college where I completed my initial education is:
 - (a) Lethbridge Community College
 - (b) Medicine Hat Community College
 - (c) SAIT
 - (d) NAIT
 - (e) Mount Royal College
 - (f) Grant MacEwan Community College
 - (g) Red Deer Community College
 - (h) Other _____ (please specify)
5. My entrance GPA is:
 - (a) 2.5 – 2.75
 - (b) 2.76 – 2.99
 - (c) 3.0 – 3.3
 - (d) above 3.3

(Turn Over)

6. I am currently taking:
- (a) 3 courses
 - (b) 4 courses
 - (c) 5 courses
7. The major I am currently pursuing is:
- (a) Finance
 - (b) Marketing
 - (c) Accounting
 - (d) Human Resources & Organizational Behaviour
 - (e) Management Information Systems
 - (f) General Management
 - (g) International Management
 - (h) Other_____ (please specify)
8. I am working part-time:
- (a) 5-10 hours a week
 - (b) 11-15 hours a week
 - (c) 16-20 hours a week
 - (d) Other_____ (please specify)

Thank you for your co-operation and participation.

Anne Jacobs
Researcher

**Number of Post-Diploma Students by
Campus of Program**

Campus	Sp' '96	Fall '96	Sp' '97	Fall '97	Sp' '98	Fall '98	Sp' '99
Lethbridge	62	111	117	139	187	220	209
Calgary		55	65	96	123	135	143
Edmonton		68	89	96	127	160	160
Total	62	234	271	331	437	515	512

Number of Post-Diploma and Qualifying Students by Campus of Program

	Spring 1998	Fall 1998	Spring 1999
Lethbridge			
Post-Diploma	158	184	188
Qualifying	29 (15.5%)	36 (16.4%)	21 (10%)
Calgary			
Post-Diploma	97	113	121
Qualifying	26 (21.1%)	22 (16.3%)	22 (15.4%)
Edmonton			
Post-Diploma	102	129	137
Qualifying	25 (19.7%)	31 (19.4%)	23 (14.4%)
Total	437	515	512
Post-Diploma	357	426	446
Qualifying	80 (18.3%)	89 (17.3%)	66 (12.9%)