INFORMATION TO USERS

While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this manuscript, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted. For example:

- Manuscript pages may have indistinct print. In such cases, the best available copy has been filmed.
- Manuscripts may not always be complete. In such cases, a note will indicate that it is not possible to obtain missing pages.
- Copyrighted material may have been removed from the manuscript. In such cases, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, and charts) are photographed by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each oversize page is also filmed as one exposure and is available, for an additional charge, as a standard 35mm slide or as a 17"x 23" black and white photographic print.

Most photographs reproduce acceptably on positive microfilm or microfiche but lack the clarity on xerographic copies made from the microfilm. For an additional charge, 35mm slides of 6"x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography.

Order Number 8719176

Teaching writing to adults: A synthesis of research and a report on current practice in the North Carolina community college system

Sherrill, Sharon L., Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1987

Copyright ©1987 by Sherrill, Sharon L. All rights reserved.

U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

PLEASE NOTE:

In all cases this material has been filmed in the best possible way from the available copy. Problems encountered with this document have been identified here with a check mark __√__.

1. Glossy photographs or pages _____
2. Colored illustrations, paper or print _____
3. Photographs with dark background _____
4. Illustrations are poor copy _____
5. Pages with black marks, not original copy _____
6. Print shows through as there is text on both sides of page _____
7. Indistinct, broken or small print on several pages __√__
8. Print exceeds margin requirements _____
9. Tightly bound copy with print lost in spine _____
10. Computer printout pages with indistinct print _____
11. Page(s) _____ lacking when material received, and not available from school or author.
12. Page(s) _____ seem to be missing in numbering only as text follows.
13. Two pages numbered _____. Text follows.
14. Curling and wrinkled pages _____
15. Dissertation contains pages with print at a slant, filmed as received __√__
16. Other _____

University
Microfilms
International

TEACHING WRITING TO ADULTS: A SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH AND A REPORT ON CURRENT PRACTICE IN THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

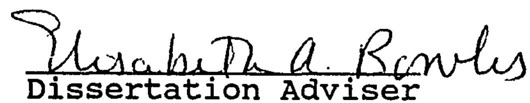
by

Sharon L. Sherrill

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Greensboro
1987

Approved by



Dissertation Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation Adviser Elizabeth A. Bowles

Committee Members Walter H. Beale

Jane T. Mitchell

Ernest W. Lee

March 20, 1987
Date of Acceptance by Committee

March 20 1987
Date of Final Oral Examination

(c) 1987 by Sharon L. Sherrill

SHERRILL, SHARON L., Ed.D. Teaching Writing to Adults: A Synthesis of Research and a Report on Current Practice in the North Carolina Community College System. (1987) Directed by Dr. Elisabeth Bowles. 131pp.

The purpose of this study was three-fold: (1) to synthesize the literature on teaching writing to adults, (2) to survey English instructors in the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) to determine how they perceive adult students and if they change their teaching methods to accommodate adult learners, and to discover their background and training in teaching writing to adults, and (3) to conclude what classroom practices are or should be used by NCCCS English instructors with adult learners.

A questionnaire given to 193 full-time English instructors in the NCCCS provided the data for the study. Several hypotheses were made about the surveyed population: (1) They were not trained in adult education methods and theories; (2) They teach writing the same way to all students, regardless of the age of the students; (3) They tend toward the traditional method of composition pedagogy; and (4) They perceive adult students to be significantly different from traditional-aged students.

The major conclusion of the study was that the survey respondents did find adult learners to be better than traditional-aged learners in study habits, responsibility, motivation, desire to learn, attitudes, self-direction, and behavior. Other conclusions were that most of the surveyed population was not academically trained to deal with adult

students, though they believed themselves to be aware of the major principles of adult education. These principles were learned through collegial relationships and professional development activities. Most of the respondents taught writing the same way to all ages of students and did not change their methods to accommodate adult learners. The majority of respondents used a process approach in teaching writing. Because of the higher motivation and maturity of adult learners, NCCCS instructors behaved differently toward them: they expected better behavior, worked harder to reduce anxiety in the adults, and provided more encouragement.

Future studies should control for the variable of age in the student population, try to determine differences in adult writers in two-year and four-year settings, examine more closely the differences in instructors' "methods" and "behaviors," and seek more information on how and when instructors are teaching grammar and mechanics.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer is grateful to Dr. Elisabeth Bowles, who provided guidance and patience during the writing of this dissertation. Thanks are also extended to other committee members, Dr. Jane Mitchell, Dr. Ernest Lee, and Dr. Walter Beale, for their time and helpful comments.

Special thanks and appreciation, however, are given to the faculty and staff of Forsyth Technical College, without whom this study would not have been completed. Instrumental in the planning and writing of this dissertation, the following friends will be remembered and appreciated: Ethel Flynt, Ann Frye, Carolyn Schneider, Susan Taylor, and Laura Wyatt. For my family who encouraged me along the way, thanks are extended.

And, for being the person she is, this work is dedicated with love to Alex.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
APPROVAL PAGE		ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS		iii
CHAPTER		
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Statement of Problem	1
	Purpose of Study	7
	Definition of Terms	9
	Plan of the Study	10
II.	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	12
	Background	12
	The Adult Learner: Definition	13
	The Adult Learner: Characteristics	15
	Differences in Adult and Traditional-Aged Learners	20
	Methods of Teaching Adults	25
	The Adult as Writer	35
	Methods of Teaching Writing to Adults	48
	Process Approach to Composition	51
	Summary	56
III.	METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF DATA	58
	Introduction	58
	Purpose	58
	Population Selection	59
	Preparation of the Questionnaire	60
	Rate of Return	63
	Demographics of Respondents	63
	Academic Degrees of Respondents	65
	Teaching Experience of Respondents	67
	Sources of Information on Methods	68
	Changes in Methods or Behavior	71
	Responses to Likert Statements	76

CHAPTER Page

IV. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING 103

Purpose of Study 103
Questionnaire 103
Hypotheses 104
Conclusions 104
Recommendations 107
Implications for Teaching 109

BIBLIOGRAPHY 111

APPENDIXES 117

A. Letter of Introduction 119

B. Return Postcard 122

C. Questionnaire Cover Memorandum 124

D. Survey on Adult Students as Writers 126

E. Questionnaire Follow-up Postcard 131

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

One of the most important changes to occur in higher education in the last quarter century has been the emergence of a group of older students in the classroom. In typical four-year colleges and, more significantly, in two-year community colleges and technical institutes the student population is older and stands every chance of remaining that way for years to come. As noted in the Community, Technical, and Junior College Journal, "nearly 40% of all postsecondary students taking courses for college credit are enrolled at community, technical, and junior colleges" (3A). Shearon et al., who developed a profile of the "typical" student in the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS), say that "forecasts suggest that the traditional college-age population will continue to decline during the next decade, with a concomitant increase in older adult enrollments" (3).

Epstein notes that males between 18 and 22 no longer dominate enrollment, that women are now in the majority, and that adults 25 and older equal over 41% of total college enrollment (3). By 1990, 70% of the U.S. population will be over 21 (Lasker et al. foreward), a figure which confirms

Shearon's belief that the trend toward increasing enrollment by adult students will, if anything, continue. Because many schools have been geared to serve the traditional-aged student (the 18-to-22-year-old who leaves high school and immediately enters college), the older adult who has gaps between high school and college and who has fully established other aspects of his life--home, family, job, social and recreational pursuits--has been neglected in traditional educational pedagogy.

Though the adult education field has, over the last 25 years, offered help for instructors of adult students by establishing guidelines for classroom practice, there are several weaknesses in those guidelines. First, there is widespread disagreement among adult education specialists over the soundness of probably the most well-known set of assumptions about adult education, Malcolm Knowles' concept of andragogy, or the art and science of helping adults learn. For Knowles, teaching children (and by implication traditional-aged students) is essentially different from teaching adults because adults have different needs, motivations, and responses to learning from children. The function of age, he implies, sets adults apart from children to such an extent that classroom practice must be different as well.

Not everyone in the adult education field agrees with Knowles, however. Elias worries that adult education theory

has not been based on empirical research and that data gathered from observation of classroom practice lack some credibility. Andragogy, he says, "is not to be taken seriously as education theory" (255). Others, most notably K. Patricia Cross, have argued that "the usefulness of andragogy as a set of guiding assumptions for adult education is at present up in the air" (225). Darkenwald and Merriam question the theoretical constructs for adult education and believe that "there exists no single conceptual framework, no single set of basic assumptions and principles from which all educators view the field" (35) and that:

> many adult education practitioners engaged in the daily tasks of...teaching have little time to reflect upon the meaning and direction of their activity. The educator is generally more concerned with skills than with principles, with means than with ends, with details than with the whole picture. Yet all practitioners make decisions and act in ways that presuppose certain values and beliefs .... Thoughtful practitioners know not only what they are to do, but why they are to do it. (37)

The meaning of these diverse opinions is significant for instructors of adult students. Either there is theory which should be the foundation for current practice and which educators should be aware of or there is not a commonly accepted set of beliefs to guide practice. If the latter is true, then all practices with adults are valid and the current literature is limited in its usefulness for instructors.

Another limitation of the current guidelines in adult education literature is that all adults who participate in any learning activity are frequently included by implication in the material. This means that adult basic education, continuing education, and extension education students may be the target population for an article on adult education practice. This can be a problem, for an instructor of degree-seeking adult students who reads the literature searching for appropriate methods and strategies for a course in math or English or reading is most likely to find materials which lump together all students by virtue of their age rather than by virtue of their needs in a particular course of study. In much adult education literature, in other words, there is no differentiation of methods based on type of course offered, type of end product sought (diploma, certificate, or degree), or academic competence of the student.

A third limitation of current guidelines in the adult education field is the lack of research-based data. Many practices in adult education have derived from trial and error approaches in classrooms which included a wide range of students with a wide range of academic objectives. "The concepts of andragogy and pedagogy as defined by Knowles are comparatively new and have primarily evolved out of subjective observations rather than a research base" (Holmes 18). What may work in an English class for adults seeking a

high school diploma may or may not be sound for an English class for adults seeking a two- or four-year degree. Until studies are set up with specific, targeted populations and with the variable of age being controlled, an instructor may never be sure what teaching method is best.

The last significant limitation within current teaching methods and strategies is that, of the controlled research that has been done, numerous contradictions exist between commonly accepted beliefs about teaching adults and what the research says about teaching them. What were thought to be sound principles for instructors to abide by are not necessarily validated by empirical research. As one example, Knowles and other humanist educators have argued for years that the lecture method is the least preferred learning style of adults. Some fairly current research (Roelfs in 1975 and Conti, Relationship Between, in 1985) has concluded just the opposite. Another common belief in adult education practice is that most adult learners are self-directing, but many practitioners and researchers have found that adults frequently tend to be passive learners, dependent on the instructor for guidance, approval, and regular encouragement.

College instructors at both two- and four-year institutions now stand an excellent chance of finding many adult learners in their classrooms. And if these instructors are fairly typical, their own original academic

training did not include courses in adult education principles, practice, or methods. While they may be interested in teaching adults successfully, many instructors, regardless of degree level or specific academic areas, are not trained to deal with adult students in the classroom. Those instructors seeking help from the professional literature may not find information in their content area or may find that what they read contradicts what they experience in the classroom. Guiding principles for classroom practice in specific content areas have not been a major part of adult education literature.

There is, however, a growing body of research in written composition. Though it is just emerging, a number of articles on teaching composition to adults have appeared in the last few years. There is no problem finding general information on teaching composition, since the last twenty years have witnessed an explosion of research on writing, particularly the writing process, the rhetorical nature of the writing act, and the shift from grammar as isolated drill to grammar as an integrated part of the complete writing process.

What is not clear, though, is how, where, or if the basic principles of adult education can or will work in a content specific area like writing and if the guiding principles of composition theory are sound for all populations, regardless of age.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to examine the literature from adult education and from composition theory and to synthesize what is currently known about teaching writing to adults. Specifically, the paper will set forth the basic principles of teaching adults, synthesize the data on teaching writing to adults, and determine which, if any, principles of adult education provide the basis for teaching writing to adults. As a descriptive study, this dissertation will try to "answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study" (Gay 153). A field-study questionnaire administered to 193 full-time writing instructors in the NCCCS will attempt to determine current instructors' attitudes about adult writers, changes in methods these instructors have implemented in their writing classrooms where adults are part of the population, training and education the instructors have had in adult education, and their beliefs about teaching writing in general. A favorable return on the questionnaire should indicate, in one major community college system at least, how well prepared writing instructors are to handle the influx of adult students in their classrooms.

Several questions will guide the overall study:

1. Are adult learners different from traditional learners? If so, how?
2. If there are differences in the two populations of learners, are there also differences in methods and strategies to use with these learners?
3. What do we know about teaching writing to adults? Should adults be taught writing differently from traditional-aged writers?
4. Are current North Carolina Community College writing instructors changing their teaching methods to accommodate adult learners? If so, how?
5. How are adults perceived as writers by the NCCC instructors?

Several hypotheses will also guide the study:

1. Most of the surveyed population are not trained in adult education methods.
2. Most of the surveyed population know little about adult education theory.
3. Most of the surveyed population teach composition the same way to all students, regardless of age.
4. Most of the surveyed population tend toward the traditional method of teaching composition and have little training in composition methods.
5. Most of the surveyed population do perceive adult students as being different from traditional students in many ways.

Definition of Terms

For purposes of this dissertation, an "adult student" is defined as one who is over 22, has been out of school for several years, has a full or part-time job, and sees himself as fulfilling the major responsibilities of adults. To use Darkenwald and Merriam's definition, "an adult is a person who performs socially productive roles and who has assumed primary responsibility for his or her own life" (8).

A "traditional-aged" student is one who is 18-22 years of age, has begun college directly from high school, typically holds at least a part-time job, but has not assumed all the roles usual with adults: spouse, parent, full-time worker.

(The review of the literature will include data from both two- and four-year colleges since both settings have seen growth in adult enrollments. In general, data dealing exclusively with adult basic education, continuing education, or extension education will be excluded as the focus of this paper is on the adult returning to the classroom to seek a degree.)

The "writing" classroom is one where paragraphs and/or essays, plus grammar and mechanics, are taught. Literature courses have been excluded from the questionnaire and from the review of research. "Writing" is synonymous with "composition."

The "process" method of teaching composition implies emphasis on finding and developing ideas and on the writer's

method of producing a final product rather than on grading the final product. Practical considerations of the "process" approach include invention strategies, dividing the whole process into pre-writing, drafting and editing, focusing on audience and purpose, establishing appropriate tone, and delaying corrections until ideas are clearly formulated.

A "method" is a pedagogical action on the teacher's part to bring about learning on the student's part. It is the way content material is presented to learners and has its roots in pedagogy, not behavioral psychology. In other words, using groups for problem-solving activities is a method; encouraging good work is a behavioral strategy but it is not a method.

Plan of the Study

The remainder of the dissertation is organized as follows:

Chapter II reviews the literature and presents the major findings and principles related to adult learners, their characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses. Current research on adults as writers is summarized, and a brief review and explanation of current composition research are included.

Chapter III discusses the development of the "Survey on Adult Students as Writers," which was given to 193 full-time instructors in the NCCCS. Methods, procedures, and data analysis are presented. In addition, findings on how

current practice within the NCCCS correlates with the research from adult education and composition theory and practice fields are given.

Chapter IV presents major conclusions of the study, implications for teaching writing to adults, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Background

The adult learner is a phenomenon whose time has come. Thought of for years as fit for continuing education or extension classes only and practically nonexistent in four-year colleges, degree-seeking adults are now returning to two-year and four-year schools in record numbers, and the trend is expected to continue. By 1990, for example, the median age of the population in the U.S. will be close to 33 (Apps 19). The traditional-aged students, the 18-year-olds who graduate from high school and enroll immediately in an institution of higher learning, are a shrinking pool from which colleges can recruit. "By 1990 almost 40% of all students in higher education will be 25 and older" (Magarrell 3). "By the year 2000, the largest age group will be 30 to 44 year olds, with a rising curve for 45 to 64 year olds" (Cross 3). With adults clearly dominating college classrooms in a way never before experienced in U.S. education, information about these adult learners has increasing implications for instructors and their pedagogies. Much is known about adult learners in general, their characteristics, particular needs, strengths, and weaknesses. The purpose of this chapter is to identify and

describe those learners as they are commonly known in adult education literature, to differentiate between adult and traditional-aged learners, to review what is currently known about adults in the composition classroom, and to review briefly the currently methodology for teaching composition. The chapter will conclude with a summary.

The Adult Learner: Definition

Who is the adult learner? Although the actual age of an "adult" learner is an arbitrary figure, much of the literature uses 25 as the minimum age. Often called "returning" students, these men and women are assumed to have stopped their education upon high school graduation, to have married, to have had children, and to have become employed. At some later point, again there is no specific length of "time away," these people return to college in search of a degree.

Returning women students now make up the "fastest growing segment of the adult education movement," according to several studies (Iovacchini 43). In the North Carolina Community College System, for example, the typical curriculum student is 25, white, female, married or single, head of household, full or part-time worker (white collar), earning less than $4 per hour, with a family income of $12,000 per year. She enrolls in 1-2 courses in the daytime, achieved a B average in high school, and is in a technical program (Shearon et al. 117).

Why these adults return to college after assuming many other responsibilities in their lives is fairly well documented. Cross, who has studied adult learners and their motivations for participating in adult learning situations, notes that adults "in the age ranges of 25 to 45 are concentrating largely on occupational and professional training for career advancement" (57) and that "learning that will improve one's position in life is a major motivation" (96). Jerold Apps, in The Adult Learner on Campus, reports on the results of a periodic three-year survey done by the National Center for Education Statistics to assess participation in adult education. For the year ending May 1978, 38.9 percent of adult education participants wanted to improve or advance in their job; another 10.5 percent wanted a new job; 3.3 percent had other job-related reasons (17). In short, over 50 percent of the adult learners in that survey at least had vocational goals in mind when they enrolled in course work. The next largest category was personal or social reasons, with 31.2 percent (17).

Other studies from the early 1960's through the late 1970's also confirm that vocational/occupational situations are frequently the primary motivators for adults returning to school (Long 98). Darkenwald and Merriam report that "when adults have been asked to give the single most

important reason for their enrolling in a course or other activity, work-related motives emerged as dominant" (132).

After occupational motives come what is called in the literature "life change events" (Knox 514), which prompt men and women, predominantly women, back into the classroom. Adults seek learning activities in direct response to changes in their lives: moving to a new location, getting married or divorced, losing a spouse, having children leave home (Aslanian and Brickell 72). Zemke believes that "adults who are motivated to seek out a learning experience do so primarily because they have a use for the knowledge or skill being sought. Learning is a means to an end, not an end in itself" (3).

What the research has uncovered as reasons for adults' return to the classroom is important because these motives strongly affect the adult as a learner in that classroom, often making him unlike the traditional-aged learner.

The Adult Learner: Characteristics

Possibly the most important characteristic of the typical adult learner is his high degree of motivation, his propensity for self-directedness. An adult undergoing significant changes within his life is already a good candidate for returning to an educational institution. Schooling can mean a job, a better job, a new job, higher self-esteem, or the chance to establish independence. An

already-motivated adult, therefore, frequently has what Kuh and Ardaiolo call a seriousness of purpose (333).

The concept of self-directedness is a fundamental tenet in the adult education movement. First identified by Malcolm Knowles (1970) as a major difference between adults as learners versus children as learners, self-directedness means movement away from dependency in learning situations to independence. Adults, Knowles and others in the movement believe, will seek learning tasks on their own, and once involved in the task will direct themselves without requiring didactic intervention from an instructor. This assumption works well when applied to learners from all areas of "adult" education, as Allen Tough has demonstrated in The Adult's Learning Projects. Tough discovered that up to 90% of the adult population have at least one learning project per year (qtd. in Darkenwald and Merriam 84). Darkenwald and Merriam themselves believe that "in contrast to those of children, adults' self-concepts are more independent, are more self-directed, and are defined by an accumulation of life experiences" (86). Shearon et al. found that older learners are more independent, have a great deal of experience that is useful in the classroom, and are problem oriented in their learning (131).

Unfortunately, not all adults are self-directing, while many children are, a fact which weakens Knowles' basic assumption. In addition, when considering adults returning

to the college classroom in quest of a degree rather than all adults who undertake just any learning task, the notion of self-directedness becomes arguable. Michael Moore, for example, believes that some adults, these same people who are now populating college classrooms, often are passive learners, having been trained to function that way during grade school and high school, under the "sit there, be quiet, and I'll tell you what you need to know" school of thought. "Adults," he says, "are typically not prepared for self-directed learning: they need to develop an independent stance in educational transactions" (qtd. in Boyd and Apps 24). Research by Kuh and Ardaiolo acknowledges that older students are more autonomous but cautions that "whether their independence will be reflected by their classroom behavior (i.e. little need/desire for structure) has not yet been empirically substantiated" (333).

The apparent conflict between the two positions is not an all right/all wrong dichotomy. Knowles and those whose support his contention are correct that self-directedness is important to adults, for it is often the compelling factor that motivates an adult to reenter school, that is, to get him into the classroom. Moore's camp is also correct since having adults in a classroom is no guarantee that they will be independent learners. Considering the pressures and situations which are primary motivators for returning adult students, it is not unreasonable to assume that the adult

learner would need encouragement, reinforcement, and understanding from the instructor, until the time that his natural independence takes over.

Within the total population of returning adult students, returning women are unique in their motivation and self-directedness. Cross reports that in many surveys she examined, "women express more interest in learning than men do" (59). Apps discusses the findings of the College Board's study of returning students and their major features: "those interested in further learning are predominantly female" (23). Returning women students were found by McClain "to be more successful academically, more self-motivated, more goal-oriented, efficient, and more positive towards education and work" than traditional students (6). These findings are important for adult educators since "women now form the majority of all college students" (Epstein 3). This is no surprise considering that life change events prompt students to return to school. The recently divorced or widowed homemaker, the woman experiencing empty nest syndrome, the woman trying to enter the job market for the first time--it is these highly motivated women who are enrolling in degree programs in two- and four-year colleges. Interestingly, they often bring with them problems unique to their group: "an undue amount of self-inflicted pressure to obtain perfect grades; test anxiety; and lack of emotional and/or physical support from other family members" (Rogers 3).

Besides being more motivated and frequently more self-directing than traditional students, adult learners as learners manifest other differences. Kasworm has identified many features of the adult learner. Significantly, in more than ten studies which she examined, adult students were at least equal or superior to traditional students in ability to learn and in grade point average (35). She refers to a 1962 study by Halfter who found that "10, 20, or 30 years of absence from formal academic study had no effect on the grades or performance of the mature (those 40 and over who were tested) woman" (35). Twenty-two years later Hogan and Hendrickson examined study habits of adult college students and reported that adult students "have slightly higher GPA's than do younger students" (10).

Kasworm goes on to note that "in a variety of institutional settings and special population categories, older undergraduates do perform adequately and effectively, as assessed by gradepoint average, in competitive undergraduate environments" (37). Finally, Roelfs found from responses to a survey devised by the Educational Testing Service that "older students, particularly those over 30, are less likely to experience academic problems" and they are "six times as likely as students under 22 to be satisfied with instruction" (3).

What all these studies suggest, and rather strongly in a longitudinal sense, is that adults in the traditional

classroom are more than capable of quality, competent work in academic areas, and that age alone is not a harbinger of lessened ability to learn or to compete academically. Knowles has concluded that "the research to date of adult learning clearly indicates that the basic ability to learn remains essentially unimpaired throughout the life span" (1980, 55). Apps asserts that intellectual ability does not decrease with age (39). Thus returning adult students, regardless of primary motivation, length of time away from the classroom, age, or sex, are perfectly capable of successful academic performance.

The adult learner is unique in that many of his basic characteristics are two-dimensional; that is, the same characteristic has both positive and negative effects. This makes working with adult learners more difficult for instructors and often makes reading the research on adult learners an annoying and frustrating experience since the findings of one study are frequently contradictory to another study on the same characteristic.

Differences in Adult and Traditional-Aged Learners

What learning problems adults may have (as of course they do) result from variables other than age and competence. Apps has identified four major differences between traditional and adult students: life experience, motivation, academic behavior, and problems faced (41). By virtue of their chronology, adults have more experiences to

use as a resource for learning than do traditional-aged students. If the adult can draw on a wealth of life experience for use in the classroom, he may have a distinct advantage over traditional students; the adult who has experienced marriage, childbirth, divorce, death of loved ones, and/or unemployment is a very different student from the young person whose experiences have been limited to school and normal social activities. Adults see and perceive their world differently from traditional-aged students and behave differently because of it. Broader experience, Apps argues, may give an adult a deeper understanding of some courses (42).

Life experiences can, however, exert a negative influence on the adult learner, although this is more the exception than the rule. Apps also found that adults have more complex responses in test situations than traditional students because they do, in a real sense, know more and bring more variables to a test-taking experience (40). Adults may read more into a question than an instructor ever intended.

An adult's perception of his previous schooling is also a powerful factor when he returns to the classroom; those who enjoyed their school experience and have a positive attitude toward learning find returning to the classroom a much easier transition than those who had problems in previous learning situations or who did not particularly

enjoy going to school. Adults can be rigid to change, with habits already formed; they want to reach goals quickly, do not want isolated facts, are aware of past successes and failures in the classroom, and must see relevance in learning (Etheridge, qtd. in Rand 13). Davis believes that "adult learners expect the skills they acquire through their life experiences to be valued and recognized by their instructors" (qtd. in Prager 144).

Verner and Davison (qtd. in Adam and Aker) believe that "the rate at which learning occurs is influenced by many factors, including the ability of the learner, his interest and previous experience with learning, and the nature and difficulty of the material" (21). How adults behave academically is "influenced by informal education" (Apps 43). Returning students have engaged in informal learning while out of school through the media, community, or church. The traditional classroom, where the instructor dominates and controls what is learned, how it is learned, where it is learned, and at what rate it is learned, can be so different from those previous informal learning sessions that the adult has trouble adjusting and getting control of the situation. Returning students, unlike traditional students, may have problems settling into the college routine simply because they have been out of the setting for a while (44). Other problems noted by Apps include "unrealistic goals, poor self-image, social-familial problems, and a sometimes

excessive practical orientation" (49). All these factors suggest that adult learners are somewhat idiosyncratic.

Apps' inclusion of unrealistic goals by the adult as a problem area is consistent with much of the literature in adult education. Because adults return to school primarily for vocational or life change reasons, they occasionally come to the classroom with goals that exceed their abilities. The classic case, well understood in the two-year schools in particular, is the woman desiring to enter a nursing program because she's always wanted to help people, or because in her regular life she's been a nurse to spouse and children. But wanting to be a nurse and being capable of becoming a nurse are very different. Being able to provide good bedside care is not equivalent to being able to pass a difficult chemistry, anatomy, or physiology course. Thus, even though the adult was strongly motivated to enroll in school (manifesting self-direction), she may experience academic difficulties if her goal is inappropriate for her capabilities.

The adult learner with a poor self-image can also have academic problems. Many returning students are not comfortable at the beginning of their new schooling with their role. They question their abilities, worry about being in class with students young enough to be their children, and can develop a dependence on the instructor. As Zemke notes, "self-esteem and ego are on the line when they

[adults] are asked to risk trying a new behavior in front of peers and cohorts. Bad experiences in traditional education, feelings about authority, and the preoccupation with events outside the classroom affect in-class experience" (52).

The social-familial problem discussed by Apps is one more frequently found among returning women students whose families (spouse, children, and sometimes even parents) are not supportive of the woman's attempt to further her education. If the family resents the time spent away from home or on studies while at home, it is easy to see how pressure on the woman could cause difficulty in the classroom. "It seems that women who have families and return to school have more than their share of problems--many of them related to lack of acceptance of what they are doing by their husbands and by their children" (170).

Though it would seem from some of the adult education research that adult learners must be ill at ease and often at odds with themselves and the learning situation, this is not consistently the case. <u>Some</u> adults have poor self-images which can affect their learning, <u>some</u> adults may come to school with unrealistic goals, <u>some</u> adults may be negatively affected by previous school experiences, and <u>some</u> adults may not be supported by family members in their quest for a degree. But not all adults, or even a majority, have

all these problems, and of those that do, careful counseling and advising can help remedy them.

It is clear that there are fairly significant differences between adults and traditional-aged students as learners. What is less clear is whether these differences are important enough to require new methods and teaching strategies in classrooms where adults participate. Should instructors, in other words, change their methods to accommodate adult learners?

Methods of Teaching Adults

Malcolm Knowles, probably the leading authority in adult education in regard to methodology, believes teaching methods should be adjusted for adult students. In the 1970 edition of The Modern Practice of Adult Education: from Pedagogy to Andragogy, Knowles argues that the traditional pedagogical foundations are often inappropriate for adult learners, offering what he called new assumptions about adult learners (41). These became known in adult education circles as andragogy or "the art and science of helping adults learn" (43). Knowles was soon taken to task on his definition, however, as instructors of children began to tell him of successes they had in using andragogical principles with child learners. Climate setting tactics to make the children more at ease, contract learning, group work, and using the instructor as a resource are several examples of those principles. In addition, theorists argued

that pedagogy and andragogy were not dichotomous, as Knowles had clearly implied in his 1970 edition. In his revised edition (1980), Knowles speaks of the two as being "two ends of a spectrum" (43), a division which has made many adult education proponents more comfortable.

Regardless of whether andragogy is or is not sound theory, in the last twenty years Knowles' principles have been the foundation for much practice in the field of adult education. The crucial question about andragogy, though, is not whether the assumptions themselves are correct, but whether they are correct because of the function of the age of the learner.

A look at Knowles' assumptions and beliefs will establish his basic position. A summary of andragogical and pedagogical assumptions taken from the 1980 edition (43-59) follows.

In pedagogy, the concept of the learner is one of dependence. The learner's role depends on what the instructor wants him to do and to learn. In andragogy, however, the learner moves toward self-directedness as a consequence of his maturation.

The role of the learner's experience in pedagogy is of little worth since the primary method used in the classroom is lecture, transmission of information chosen by the instructor with minor regard for the learner's practical experiences. In andragogy, though, experience is a rich

resource for learning, teaching techniques are experiential and include discussions, case studies, field experiences, small group work, and simulations.

The student's readiness to learn in pedagogy is assumed to be relatively unimportant. Whatever society says is to be learned will be learned, chiefly through a standardized, step-by step curriculum. Andragogical principles, on the other hand, assume that people seek learning as a function of problem solving and that the proper curriculum enables learner to apply learning to their own lives.

In pedagogy the learners' orientation is subject-centered, useful at <u>some</u> point in their lives. In andragogy, education itself is process oriented and problem-centered. Knowledge is immediately applicable to life situations.

The andragogical foundations for practices of teaching adults cover many areas. The learning climate, for example, should be conducive to adult learning. It should be comfortable, informal, and offer a spirit of mutual respect and acceptance. The adult should diagnose his own needs, and the instructor should help the learner diagnose the gap between what competencies are needed and what competencies the leaner already possesses. Thus, both learner and instructor participate in the planning of learning experiences, the instructor becoming a facilitator of learning and a resource rather than the depositor of

information. As the learner conducts his learning, the instructor functions as a catalyst and coinquirer in the process. Self-evaluation by the learner follows, thus avoiding "the crowning instance of incongruity between traditional educational practice and the adult's self-concept of self-directivity," an instructor giving a grade to a student.

Andragogical methodology, therefore, emphasizes experiential techniques and taps the unique experiences of adults. It avoids pure transmittal techniques and concentrates on classroom learning as a rehearsal for application to real life.

Andragogy helps adults look at themselves more objectively; it is in step with the developmental tasks of adults (learners are grouped homogeneously according to their developmental task). Learning experiences are designed around the problems of the learners, not around subject aresa.

If Knowles' assumptions are correct, andragogy fosters better learning for adults because it is patterned after the unique learning needs of adults, not children. Instructors should, Knowles believes (and practices), apply the principles of andragogy to situations in which adults are learners. One confusing aspect of the Knowles' schema is that his assumptions were meant to cover all adult learning situations, from the local church group, to business

settings, to adult basic education classes, and presumably any other grouping of adults whose goal was "to learn." An obvious problem for classroom instructors, however, is that adult learners seeking college degrees are inevitably mixed with traditional-aged students who are also seeking degrees. Using two sets of methods for the mixed class is obviously impractical. But beyond that consideration is that many of the "adult education principles" are sound for instructors of all age groups. If one accepts that, by virtue of their age, adults have to have more experiences than younger students, then there is little left in the Knowles' set of assumptions that cannot be applied to all educational settings. Climate setting should not be less important for traditional-aged learners or for children than it is for adults. Different, yes, for the adult learner is often ill at ease in his return to the classroom. But many students are fearful of school and anxious about their abilities. Knowle's set of assumptions do not prove that age alone is a justifiable criterion for using different teaching methods.

If it is true that teaching methods for adults should not necessarily be different from those for traditional-aged learners or for children, the question becomes "Are there <u>any</u> differences in teaching adults and children?" Several studies have tried to answer this question. Beder and Darkenwald set up a study to determine whether teachers taught in different ways to children and pre-adults than to

adult learners. They found that they did. However, these differences might have been due to teachers responding to their preconceptions of adult and pre-adult differences in learning. Believing their adult students to be more motivated, task-oriented, and pragmatic, the teachers changed their teaching behavior. Their methodology was not changed, though, just their actions toward their students. The findings did not "warrant the inference that classroom practices differ sharply as a function of student age" (153).

Gorham followed up the Beder and Darkenwald study to determine what teaching differences might exist between adults and pre-adults. She discovered that "the cause-effect relationship of differences in learners resulting in differences in teaching is not apparent" (206) and, more important for adult educators, "the amount of knowledge of the theory and philosophy of adult education and of adult development and learning reported by teachers...was not related to a more student-centered approach in adult classes" (206). Teachers did not, in other words, refrain from using lecture as a method, nor did students seem to prefer more student-centered methods. This preference for lecture may result from the adult's having definite learning objectives when he enrolls; he wants data, he wants it presented clearly and logically, and he wants to be able to use the information immediately, all of which are realizable through the lecture method.

Darkenwald, whose research involved teaching behaviors toward adults and pre-adults, found that "teachers tend to emphasize responsive, learner-centered behaviors and de-emphasize controlling and structuring behaviors when teaching adults" (197). Perhaps it is this type of change, one in behavior, that is important for instructors of adults to try to manifest within a classroom, rather than methodological differences. Changes in an instructor's behavior derive from the differences in the adult's behavior--he needs less control exerted upon him, he requires little disciplinary action, but he does want encouragement from an instructor. On the contrary, traditional-aged students, even in college classes, frequently need more control exerted on them by the instructor.

Significantly, "class size, subject matter, learning goals, formality of the learning environment, and teachers' attitudes or beliefs about teaching are just some of the factors that are also likely to affect responsiveness and control. In fact, variables such as these might well be more important influences on teacher behavior than the age or maturity of the learners. Further research is needed that controls for these competing hypotheses before we can know under what circumstances and to what extent adultness per se influences teacher behavior in actual practice" (Darkenwald 203).

Another study by Galerstein and Chandler found that "the faculty surveyed do not differentiate among students on the basis of age" (136) and concluded that it was not necessary to change methods for older students, even though adults were different in that they were more motivated and "willing to do serious college work" (137). Mishler and Davenport discovered that faculty members enjoyed mixed age classes, that having adults in class resulted in more mature discussions, and that faculty did not change teaching style, assignments, or tests (6).

An adult's learning style may also affect an instructor's methods and classroom behavior. The learning style of an adult, according to Dorsey and Pierson, who used Kolb's Learning Style Inventory to determine "dominant adult learning styles" (8), involves learning by doing and trial and error methods. At age 33 and beyond, an adult "will profit more from student-involved experiential learning than from pure lecturing" (10). Career changes (one of the prime motivators of adult learning) can also affect an adult's learning style. He may become more aggressive, more active than passive, and exhibit more concern about the instructor's methodology (10).

However, not all studies support experiential learning as a preferred method by adults. Zemke found that "lectures and short seminars get positive ratings" (48) from adults engaged in learning tasks. Another study by Check likewise

found that adults' "favored mode of learning was through the lecture and discussion approach" (5). They did not want too much freedom of choice in course content. Roelfs determined that "preference for instructor-centered instruction, where the teacher determines course content and learning activities and generally uses class periods for lectures, is much more prevalent among older students" (7). In a study of the learning rate of GED students, Conti found that "contrary to the adult education literature, students in the most teacher-centered group overwhelming [sic] achieved the greatest gains" (Relationship Between 226).

Adults, despite their extra years, are just as capable as learners as are traditional-aged students. The ability to learn does not decrease with age; so any adult in a classroom has as great a potential for learning as any other student. The experiences accrued by an adult learner, in fact, have been shown to be one of their primary advantages over younger students. Since learning styles are as diverse for older learners as for younger ones, a variety of teaching styles and strategies is likely to be useful. Lecture, long a bad word in adult education circles, has been shown to be a preferred learning technique by many adults who need and want specific data that has immediate application to their lives. Adults' motivation, demonstrated to be more intense than that of traditional-aged students', is extremely influential first

in getting the adult to return to higher education and second in keeping his interest in his work high. Many adults are self-directed, a characteristic long noted in the literature.

Probably the most intriguing factor about adult learners, however, is that each characteristic is two-sided. For every positive result of being an adult returning to the classroom, there is potential for a negative effect as well. Though experience is the characteristic which most strongly separates adult learners from traditional-aged learners (meaning simply that adults have more of it), bad experience is often more influential than good experience. Self-directedness and high motivation from an adult learner do not necessarily sustain themselves once an adult is in a specific course of study. The adult's desire for collaborative learning techniques, another fundamental assumption of adult educators, is not borne out by much of the research.

While much of the literature in the adult education field is useful in codifying basic traits of adult learners and in identifying fundamental differences between them and traditional learners, it should not be assumed to be accurate for all adult populations in all educational settings. How generalizable the data are may be open to dispute, especially in regard to adults who return to degree-seeking programs in two- or four-year colleges.

Knowles' assumptions about adult learners, in particular, are helpful in establishing important foundations for practice, but are limited when viewed in context of all academic areas.

The Adult as Writer

If the adult learner is a phenomenon whose time has come, the adult learner in the composition classroom is a phenomenon whose time is just beginning. It is only within the last ten years (and mostly the last five to seven) that researchers have studied writers and controlled for the variable of age. Because of increasing interest in writing as a process and the desire to understand how writers go about their tasks, a substantial body of literature now exists in composition theory and practice. Therefore, learning about writers and their writing is much simpler than it was twenty years ago. Unfortunately, much of this research in composition has been done for traditional-aged students, mostly on elementary, junior high, and high school students (Pianko 5). Most of the research done in college classrooms, both two- and four-year, does not focus on the age of the group studied. Age, rather, often appears as part of the general demographic data, but rarely is part of the overall design of the study. This is unfortunate since so many studies in community college and technical institute composition classrooms have been undertaken in recent years. Miller says, "those of us who study college-level

composition and composing have for some time worked at a disadvantage because we still have no agreed-upon definition of what it means to be an able adult writer and no accepted model of how such ability is acquired during post-adolescent maturation" (1). Had researchers been looking at age as a factor in the writer's development and production, the literature on the adult writer would be as thorough as that on the writer in general.

Whatever limitations do exist, though, some studies controlling for age have been performed and offer enough data to reinforce current instructors' practices or to indicate ways to correlate instruction with student needs. But like the adult education field, there is much contradictory material and sometimes a maddening inconsistency in the conclusions. A practitioner, therefore, must be careful not to assume that all findings are accurate for all settings. The research that does exist tends to fall into three broad categories: characteristics of adults as students, characteristics of adults as writers, and methods and strategies useful to instructors of adult writers.

Connors, in a study to determine older composition students' attitudes toward writing and appropriate methods for teaching composition, surveyed 45 adult learners between the ages of 25 and 50 and 137 traditional-aged students between 18 and 24. Her findings indicated that both age

groups valued a college degree, mildly agreed that they wrote well, believed writing skills were useful to them, valued peer criticism, and did <u>not</u> consider their own experiences as adequate to write about (264-5). This last finding directly contradicts Weare's (4) conclusion that adults felt confident about their ability to communicate and express ideas using their background and experience. Connors found that older students revised more and spent more time on class preparation and wanted more direction, guidance, or limitations concerning the assignment from the instructor. Adult writers, she found, were "earnest, dedicated, hardworking...they look for guidance and direction, hesitating...to follow their own insights and intuitions" (1). Connors believes, based on her own teaching experience, that older students are more likely to ask for guidance in writing by asking, "What should I say?" "How long should the paper be?" and "What do you want in the paper?" (265).

Nontraditional students (those between 25 and 50) differed from their younger counterparts by spending more time outside of class revising essays and preparing for class and by needing more direction and limits on writing tasks. The two groups did not differ in their basic attitudes toward writing and toward the teaching of composition (5). Connors suggests that instructors working with adult students should be patient but should push for

autonomy, encourage use of work and life experiences as bases for writing tasks, and use small group criticism (6).

Connors' study of older composition students confirms several fundamental adult education principles, that adult have more experience to draw on and that collaborative learning is valued. The adults in her study, however, did not manifest total self-direction, and, in fact, indicated a strong preference for teacher-centered behavior and control. This is a rather distinct break from what many adult education specialists believe. Likely, while many adults are self-directed in some educational settings, the composition classroom is a different situation altogether. Put a normally motivated, self-directed adult in a class where he is asked to put coherent ideas on paper for another person to read, and self-direction can disappear completely. It is not his "adultness" per se that creates a problem, but the mere fact of being in a writing class. Add to that the other problems returning adults bring to a learning situation--anxiety, fear of evaluation, uneasiness at being older than other students--and it is easy to see why the composition classroom in particular can cause adults to behave atypically.

The nature and cause of anxiety in returning adult students has received some attention by researchers. Two studies especially offer interesting, though not consistent, data. The first, by Thompson, concluded that returning

students over 22 years of age were less anxious at the beginning and end of courses than traditional freshmen and that they reduced anxiety between entry and exit. Anxiety, she discovered, is short-lived for returning students (4).

The second study, by Gillam-Scott, concluded that some adults manifested situational anxiety, a transitory anxiety which depends on particular characteristics of the writing situation. Using the Miller and Daly Writing Apprehension Test, Gillam-Scott found that the situational anxiety faced by many adult learners is typically caused by fearing new writing tasks, feeling different from other students, being ignorant about grading and requirements, recalling problems or rigid prescriptions about good writing, expecting high grades, having more at risk than other students, and experiencing the conflict "between the authority that comes with adult identity and experience and the subservience they perceive as expected in the student role" (5). As adults gain more experience in the writing classroom, however, the anxiety caused by having more at stake can become a strong motivator (6).

Knowles and many other adult education authorities would agree that the adult's feeling of subservience in a graded class can create real problems for adult learning. This is why one of Knowles' basic assumptions is that evaluation of adult work should be shared, not only with an instructor but with other experts in the area. Peer

evaluation techniques, like those suggested by Connors, are in the mainstream of both current adult education and composition theory concepts beliefs.

The idea of subservience on the part of the adult learner is another characteristic researchers cannot seem to agree on. Denton, after reading Knowles' assertion that grading of an adult by an adult is "the ultimate sign of disrespect and dependency" (1980, 49) in a learning situation, decided to survey adult learners in a variety of settings: college, business, and industry. She concluded that "adults overwhelmingly vetoed the Knowles' notion that they feel childlike, dependent, or disrespected when being judged by another adult" (21).

Another examination of the characteristics of adult learning, this time as an attempt to determine barriers to adult learning and adults' preferred learning styles, was conducted by Schmidt. He discovered that "returning adult students do want to set their own learning goals, independent of the instructor. However...students do value the role of the teacher as content expert and climate setter" (3). Again, the assumptions on which much adult education practices are based are true up to a point. Clearly, adults--particularly those in degree-seeking positions--need and want interaction with an instructor, from help with goal setting to evaluation.

Adults have need for "high structure and high reassurance" (Cameron 9). In a study which examined the intellectual development of adults and, by extension, identified a common characteristic of adult learners, Cameron used the Perry Scheme of cognitive development to determine "cognitive positions of adult students in their first year in two-year colleges" (2). The person who is a dualist "assumes knowledge is either known or knowable and views himself as a receptacle ready to receive knowledge/truth from the authority/teacher who is required to give it to him" (3). It is these people, Cameron found, who are not "capable of self-directed learning, even though they can be encouraged to be more and more self-directed" (9). These are the people populating the two- and four-year classrooms and being asked to become competent writers in the process. Moore (qtd. in Boyd and Apps) discusses adults as learners and identifies one type as autonomous; that is, one who learns because he has a problem to be solved, wants to learn a skill, or desires information of some type. But, Moore argues, "adults are typically not prepared for self-directed learning: they need to develop an independent stance in educational transactions" (24). This type of adult learner in a composition class, for example, becomes the one Connors found to be dependent in many ways.

Specifically as writers, adults have some characteristics that set them apart from traditional-aged

students. Like many other characteristics of adult learners, these features are both positive and negative. Kalister, in an examination of adult learners in writing centers, found that "non-traditional students are frequently too ambitious and will attempt more than they can reasonably handle" (6). This particular trait strongly confirms the adult education notion that adults are highly motivated, but it also suggests that motivation can work against the adult learner.

Similarly, the noted adult characteristics of persistence and motivation to do well in academics have been shown in several studies to have resulted from negative feelings. An adult writer, for example, is more likely to revise a piece of writing than a younger student is, but the reason for the revision often comes from the writer's unhappiness with the task or fear that the reader will not understand the message rather than "a function of high motivation for achievement or for grades in particular" (Crabbe 6). Furthermore, adult writers, Crabbe says, "experience some degree of blocking when they are asked to write without a prewriting period; the blocking may range from a slight feeling of anxiety over not having 'time to think about this,' to an absolute inability to engage even a simple problem like a description of the immediate environment" (5).

Even specific activities of adult writers can differ greatly from their traditional-aged counterparts. Sommers (1980) examined the revision strategies of student and experienced writers and discovered that "because students do not see revision as as activity in which they modify and develop perspectives and ideas, they feel that if they know what they want to say, then there is little reason for making revisions" (382). Ede (1979) found that "students' conception of the writing process clearly influenced their revising habits--largely in negative ways" (3).

The adult writers in Crabbe's study also engaged in little formal planning, a trait that has been identified with experienced and adult writers in at least one other study. Because the writer fears and avoids writing, when he does write, he deliberately creates a "clumsy style" which allows him to hide behind his words (Aldrich 298). Aldrich's study involved 254 top and mid-level managers in the military, civil service, and high tech consulting. Based on her survey she concluded that "the majority of them [respondents], and presumably, other adult writers, do not know that they need to make preparatory decisions about the purpose, point or points, and audience of their papers" (299). For these adult writers, anxiety, she discovered, was a definite problem and resulted in strongly negative feelings about writing. Aldrich's final conclusion is revealing:

> From this survey, then, it appears that the root of the problem of well educated adults who must write to perform their jobs is centered in a gap in their knowledge. Without a method of preparation by which to organize their material, they flounder through their writing tasks, anxious, defensive, and reluctant. As a result, they produce disorganized and ineffective documents which, in the long run, can adversely affect their careers. (300)

This study, though admittedly on a small sampling and on a population in a non-academic setting, nevertheless tends to reinforce the previously discussed findings about adult writers. Apparently, the need for structure, control, and order is a deeply felt need in adults, and intervention by someone who can provide help with organizing skills is welcomed. Self-direction, the most common trait of adult learners, is of very little value when the learner is involved in an unknown area, like writing.

This organizational problem characteristic of adult writers is confirmed by Harwood, whose population was alumni of a small college, all of whom wrote as a regular part of their job. He found that respondents felt college teachers should stress organizational skills above all others. Next in importance came content and development of ideas, areas which cannot be separated from organization (283). Further, supporting collaborative learning as a strategy preferred by adults and supporting Connors' urging that peer editing groups be used, Harwood tentatively concludes that "adult writers voluntarily establish collegial editorial groups when they are writing something important" (282). Learning

how to develop and use those groups effectively is a skill that could easily be taught in the composition classroom.

Yet another study identified organizational and developmental skills of working adults as being weaker than their mechanics (Meyers 3). Meyers' intent was to judge the overall effectiveness of writers' punctuation and grammar, diction, sentence structure, and organization and development. She concluded that "surface editing skills" could usefully be taught in a self-instructional format, leaving class time for more difficult tasks, presumably arranging and controlling the content.

Of the studies which have found that adults' organizational skills are weak, none has attempted to determine the cause of the weakness. Perhaps it is a lack of practice of those skills in the classroom, lack of familiarity with "real world" requirements in a writing situation, lack of understanding of important rhetorical concepts which would affect both content and organization (audience, purpose), and/or a real dread of having to write. The age of the writer would not seem to be as crucial a trait as general writing anxiety.

Day researched appropriate teaching strategies to use with non-traditional students (who are generally adult learners, though the classification can include other sub-populations like basic writers). She discovered a number of problems affecting these students in the classroom

and potentially affecting adult writers on the job. These problems included the mix of age groups in the classroom, use of textbooks written for traditional students, and adults' apprehension about their new role as student (1). "Adults," she says, "particularly those a long time out of school, come to class with apprehensiveness from childhood memories of the school experience. These negative experiences are recalled in a period of stress that is similar, and sitting in a composition class after a dozen years can be that kind of stress" (4). A typical symptom is writer's block.

Etheridge identified several general characteristics of adult learners which, in the writing classroom in particular, can cause difficulty for instructor and learner alike: having a rigidity to change, with habits already formed; taking more time to master a task; wanting to reach goals quickly; not wanting isolated facts; being aware of past success and failure; and needing to see relevance in learning (qtd. in Rand 13). Supporting these findings, Silver's research examined non-traditional students in the writing classroom and found them to be practical learners (a common characteristic of all adult learners) but also found that their communication skills were weak and they were not especially interested in improving them. Their interest in English was in functional writing (the practical nature of the adult learner) and regular composition courses often frustrated them (34).

In one of the few doctoral dissertations specifically set up to test for developmental stages in writers of different ages, Pianko also tested for differences in the writing processes of college-aged writers. Thus only part of the findings of the study can be applied to adult writers. Pianko did use a community college population, however, so her conclusions may be generalizable to many adult learners.

The most interesting discovery was that "adults have, developmentally, reached a higher level in the structure of their sentences (syntactic maturity) but have not necessarily grasped the basic rules of grammar, usage, mechanics, and perhaps some other quality factors as well" (361). But, as all composition instructors are aware, syntactic maturity alone is not a safe indicator of good writing style; longer sentences which imbed several dependent structures, for example, may be hard to comprehend and may cause problems for the reader. "For adults, a written product could receive a lower over-all quality rating yet be written at a high level of syntactic maturity" (360). As for the actual process of composing, Pianko found "there were no observable differences... between traditional college entrance age students and adult college students" (254), a conclusion which seems to imply that writing is writing, regardless of age. Any writer can manifest weaknesses in grammar and mechanics, and syntactic maturity

gained developmentally is not a particular advantage to a writer.

Methods of Teaching Writing to Adults

As important as the characteristics adults bring to a writing situation in a classroom are the methods an instructor uses to enhance the learning of the adult students. Adult educators strongly believe in a variety of teaching methods, but their view is biased because they generally deal with all adult learners, not necessarily college students. The collaborative model of learning has been a mainstay in adult education circles, and the lecture method has been considered inappropriate. As shown earlier, however, no method of instruction is appropriate to all occasions and to all courses, and having adult learners rather than traditional ones does not seem to make any difference in the need for variety in strategies.

Researchers who have looked at the adult learner in the composition classroom nevertheless have not been reluctant to suggest methods and techniques to use. Lueers et al. argue that "only by encouraging the adult to participate emotionally in his/her learning will the teacher be able to maintain some control over the information the adult learner chooses to learn" (2). Using the life and work experience of the adult as a basis for writing tasks, therefore, is a good way to draw on the emotional elements that Lueers suggests. Another technique calls for more

writing-across-the-curriculum approaches to make writing "an integral part of...courses" (Meyers 6). Teaching writing, Meyers says, will not produce better writers; practicing will. If Meyers is correct (and her views are consistent with the "process approach" school of thought), composition methodology has changed and will change, not because of the age of the learner but because many believe the best method for teaching writing is to let the student write as much as possible and with as little interference from the instructor as possible.

Related to the concept of methodology is a suggestion by Day, who encourages instructors of adults to develop a syllabus or course outline and provide information on tasks, dates, grading, and evaluation so that adults can organize their study and preparation time (3). These suggestions support the idea that even the most self-directed adult learner still needs and wants guidance from an instructor. Day further recommends that writing instructors grade on end competence, not beginning; avoid just error marking; avoid red ink; return papers quickly; have conferences; note strengths; use verbal and visual explanations; provide samples of essays; and try to sequence tasks (4).

Gillam-Scott (7) suggests a number of strategies to use in the composition classroom because she believes that "a long-standing view of oneself as a poor writer is slow to change":

1. Use "no fault writing practice" like freewrite, journals, exercises, drafts.
2. Explain difference in school/nonschool writing.
3. Design work and requirements to draw on adult experience.
4. Present models of successful student writing.
5. Encourage participation and interaction.
6. Debunk myths about good writing and proper process.
7. Delay grades until revision.
8. Involve students in evaluation (peers and own).
9. Help develop "realistic expectations."
10. Relinquish some control.

All ten of Gillam-Scott's suggestions are in keeping with the best of adult education theory and practice.

And, finally, Pianko suggests a methodology whereby "teachers must change their focus from providing writing experiences which are solely class oriented to writing experiences which evolve from within the student, within his environment, and from his needs outward to communicating through writing to himself and to others" (259).

In the composition classroom in particular, where anxiety, fear, and writer's block are real dimensions of the adult experience, many of the basic adult education principles, especially Knowles' assumptions, have special relevance. Climate setting, collaborative approaches _in conjunction with_ lecture, shared evaluations, and

establishing goals and objectives which are reasonable are all practical and, more important, they are all consistent with current composition theory and practice which focuses on the "process approach."

Process Approach to Composition

The process approach to teaching composition represents a break from the traditional pedagogy which stressed the product of a writing effort, the end rather that the means. Less important to a traditional composition instructor is how a paper or essay came into being than what it looks like and says. Rhetorical concepts like audience and purpose fall prey to grammatical correctness. Establishing a good style is given less consideration that creating five "perfect" paragraphs with an introduction and conclusion. The experiences of the writer are rarely brought to bear in the traditionalist methodology, and class time most often consists of grammar review and explanation of the essay mode under study (exposition, description, narration, argumentation). The modes, in fact, are taught as exclusive of each other rather than as methods of getting at the truth of each writing assignment. The traditional composition instructor assigns topics for the class to write on, equates drafting with recopying a text, and evaluates according to number of errors. Red ink is a must.

Process-oriented composition instructors, on the other hand, focus on a writer's own experiences as a starting

point for assignments. Techniques like journal keeping, freewriting, clustering, and problem-solving heuristic devices are now the norm in many classrooms. One researcher, Hairston, believes that "the move to a process-centered theory of teaching writing indicates that our profession is probably in the first stages of a paradigm shift," (77) Thomas Kuhn's term for "breakdowns that occur when old methods won't solve new problems" (76).

The traditional method of teaching writing, Hairston implies, was a breakdown because it did not work; students were not learning to improve their writing skills. The period of this so-called paradigm shift, it must be noted, includes the middle 60's and all of the 70's, times when the population of college classrooms was beginning to change drastically, from traditional-aged freshmen to older, more mature adult learners. In addition, colleges were overwhelmed with students from both groups who were underprepared writers, those with minimal writing skills to those with virtually no skills at all. It is primarily this new cast of students for whom old methods of teaching composition did not work. Telling these writers to create a five-paragraph descriptive essay and to proofread carefully was as useful as telling some of their instructors that good grammar does not equal good writing.

Hairston describes the traditional paradigm as one in which "its adherents believe that competent writers know

what they are going to say before they begin to write;...that the composing process is linear;...[and] that teaching editing is teaching writing" (78). This paradigm did not, she says, derive from classroom research and experiment; it was not tested "against the composing processes of actual writers" (78). Her criticism is based on her belief that it was primarily literature teachers "whose professional focus is on the written product" (78) that gave strength to the traditional paradigm and that "the overwhelming majority of college writing teachers in the United States are not professional writing teachers" (79).

Not until Mina Shaughnessy's seminal work, Errors and Expectations, did the typical classroom instructor begin to understand that the traditional approach to teaching composition was not going to be successful, with the new students of the open-door schools at least. Shaughnessy determined to find out why non-traditional writers write as they do and how they create their papers. Her work with four thousand placement essays provided credible evidence that these types of writers would not profit from a traditional approach to teaching writing. Since Shaughnessy's original study, the field has been inundated by studies of the composing processes of writers. The new paradigm, suggests Hairston (86), contains the following features:

1. It focuses on the writing process; instructors intervene in students' writing during the process.
2. It teaches strategies for invention and discovery; instructors help students to generate content and discover purpose.
3. It is rhetorically based; audience, purpose, and occasion figure prominently in the assignment of writing tasks.
4. Instructors evaluate the written product by how well it fulfills the writer's intention and meets the audience's needs.
5. It views writing as a recursive rather than a linear process; pre-writing, writing, and revision are activities that overlap and intertwine.
6. It is holistic, viewing writing as an activity that involves the intuitive and non-rational as well as the rational faculties.
7. It emphasizes that writing is a way of learning and developing as well as a communication skill.
8. It includes a variety of writing modes, expressive as well as expository.
9. It is informed by other disciplines, especially cognitive psychology and linguistics.
10. It views writing as a disciplined creative activity that can be analyzed and described; its practitioners believe that writing can be taught.

11. It is based on linguistic research and research into the composing process.
12. It stresses the principle that writing teachers should be people who write.

When Hairston's paradigm is viewed in conjunction with Knowles' basic assumptions about adult learners, a new model for teaching writing to adults emerges. Intervention by the instructor, at the appropriate time, fulfills the adult's need for independence as well as his need for guidance, concern, and encouragement from the instructor. Discovery of material for writing comes directly from the storehouse of experience which all adults bring to the classroom. Writing as an act of learning enables the adult to tie in his experiences to all the courses he is taking and in doing so fulfills his need for his learning to be practical. Encouraging a process and focusing on that process enables the adult writer to organize his time and to know that he can practice his writing skills before evaluation takes place, and, further, that when his writing is evaluated, it is done through collaboration with peers and instructor. Focusing on audience and purpose demonstrates to an adult learner that writing has meaning apart from an academic exercise, that it must say something to someone, that it is powerful, and that it can effect change. For many returning adult students, power is not something they have had in their lives, so in this way writing does prepare the learner

for the real world. Having an instructor work with the writer reduces stress, fear of failure, and anxiety, all traits of many adult learners.

Summary

Adults are filling college classrooms at phenomenal rates, as recently divorced or separated baby boomers, displaced homemakers, career-changing men and women, and out-of-work people seek skills, training, diplomas, and degrees. The field of adult education research has likewise grown in an attempt to provide practitioners with the theory necessary to support classroom methods, techniques, and strategies. Malcolm Knowles, the leading proponent of "andragogy," the art of helping adults learn, believes that classroom teachers should practice different methods with adult learners than with traditional learners. Other adult education researchers do not agree with all of Knowles' tenets, but the field in general has yet to match empirical data with appropriate classroom practices. What is known about adults as students is usually presumed to be accurate generically--in all classes, in all content areas. What is known about adults as students of writing is less well documented and often provides a reader with evidence about adult learners that contradicts the evidence about adult writers.

What methods are most appropriate for the composition classroom containing a majority of adult learners derive

primarily from the research on teaching writing, rather than the research on teaching adults. While Knowles' concept of andragogy supplies crucial information for dealing with adults as adults, it offers little concrete or data-based advice for methods to use in teaching writing to adults.

Adults, as writers, though equipped with many more life experiences to draw from, are not necessarily better writers, according to the research. They are frequently anxious and fearful and their high degree of motivation and intensity of effort are often neutralized by their dislike for writing. The current approach to teaching writing, by process, seems to strike a natural balance between the best of Knowles and other adult education researchers and the best of the composition theory and practice researchers. In truth, however, the research suggests that teaching writing is teaching writing, regardless of the age of the learners; and adult education literature has very little to say about methods within a specific content area. Practitioners, therefore, are frequently left to their own designs and methods.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

Adult students as writers represent a relatively new area of research which has not, thus far, combined knowledge and information from the two logical areas of help, adult education and theory and practice of composition. While a great deal is believed to be true about adult learners, much of the literature is anecdotal and rarely reflects empirical data. The composition field, on the other hand, has amassed volumes of data, but little of it has been designed to study the adult learner specifically. Therefore, the fields have not worked together to give instructors very much information on how to teach adults who are in composition classes.

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methods used to obtain data for the study on adults as writers and to analyze that data. These data were gathered for three primary reasons: to determine NCCCS instructors' general beliefs about adult students, to determine if instructors changed their teaching methods to accommodate adult learners, and to determine how up to date instructors were in the field of composition. (Copies of all correspondence

and samples of the questionnaire materials are in the Appendix.)

Population Selection

The population for this study was 193 full-time English instructors in the NCCCS who had taught at least one composition course between July 1, 1984 and July 1, 1986. To determine who qualified for the population, on June 20, 1986, a cover letter was sent to the English Department Chairpersons in each of the 58 schools which make up the NCCCS, asking that they list qualified instructors at that school. Certain criteria limited the listing. The full-time instructors could be on 9 or 12-month contracts; normal teaching load did not matter. They had to have taught at least one composition course since July 1, 1984; this course had to be designated as a writing course and had to include instruction in grammar, mechanics, and punctuation. An instructor who taught only upper-level courses such as business report writing, technical report writing, or literature (even if the literature course included a writing component) was not qualified for the population. In addition, adult basic education, continuing education, and vocational instructors were excluded.

A pre-addressed and stamped return postcard was included with the cover letter. The card asked the chairperson to list all qualified instructors, to indicate which of those qualified instructors were not available

during the summer quarter because of leave or vacation, and to list any instructor about whom the chairperson was not sure. Cards were due in by June 30, 1986. By that date 45 of the 58 chairpersons or their representatives had responded. The remaining 13 people were called and asked to give names of qualified instructors. This follow-up meant that 100 percent of the NCCCS schools responded to the original request for names. However, two schools in the system had no qualified instructors available during the summer quarter and one school did not offer any English courses during the summer of 1986. Thus, in terms of possible school responses, 55 of the 58 schools had at least one instructor who qualified for the population. The largest number from an individual school was twelve.

Responses from the cards and phone calls were tabulated, and a total of 193 instructors from the 55 schools qualified for the final population.

<u>Preparation of the Questionnaire</u>

A field-study questionnaire titled "Survey on Adult Students as Writers" was developed as a means of gathering data from the 193 instructors who made up the population. The questionnaire, a common device for descriptive studies, was chosen as the best method to gather data related to a current status of a situation, in this case, how instructors perceived adults as students and as writers, if instructors changed their teaching methods to accommodate adult

learners, and how current their knowledge in the field of composition theory was. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part One consisted of 50 statements about adults as students and writers (how they behave and how they may or may not be different from traditional-aged students), about teaching methods used in writing classes, and about composition theory and practice. Respondents were asked to indicate their "typical feeling or belief" about each statement, using a Likert response system (Strongly Agree, Agree, Don't Know, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Part Two was a fill-in section which asked for degrees earned, place and amount of teaching experience, and respondents' preparation in methods of teaching writing, teaching adults, and teaching writing to adults. Part Three was a short answer section asking for statements on how respondents had changed their teaching methods and their behavior toward adult learners and for a listing of three major differences in adults and traditional-aged students as writers. An Optional Section of demographic data (age, sex, race) concluded the questionnaire.

The design of the questionnaire grew from readings in the literature of adult education and composition theory and practice. Thirty-two questions (64 percent) dealt with the perceived differences between adults and traditional-aged students (as learners and as writers); 11 questions (22 percent) dealt with teaching methods in writing classes; and

7 questions (14 percent) covered theory and practice of composition. There were more questions about adults and traditional-aged students because the information and research for the entire study was primarily determined by those two areas.

Discussions with experts in composition and in research methods helped to determine the nature and the arrangement of the statements and questions. After a draft of the questionnarie was completed, a pilot study using five members of the Forsyth Technical College faculty and staff who were familiar with the teaching of writing or the teaching of adults was set up. Changes in phrasing to improve clarity and conciseness of the fifty statements or of the short answer questions were made and the final draft prepared for mailing.

A cover memorandum, explaining the nature of the research and requesting a quick return, was sent to the 193 full-time instructors on July 15, 1986. Confidentiality was assured, though each questionnaire was coded for follow-up purposes only. (Each of the 58 schools was given a two-digit number, 01-58, and each respondent was given a three-digit number, 001-193.)

On July 25, 1986, a reminder card was sent to the respondents who had not yet returned their original questionnaire. A final deadline for data collection was set for August 15, 1986. Any responses received after that date were not tabulated.

Rate of Return

From the original 193 questionnaires sent, there were 120 responses, a return rate of 62 percent. While 70 percent return is a benchmark in many descriptive studies, 62 percent should be considered a good rate since the summer quarter at community colleges and technical institutes is traditionally one of lower enrollment (hence, fewer full-time instructors) and of variations in scheduling of vacation and leave time (thus qualified respondents were not always available to respond to the questionnaire). Other than recognizing this limitation, there was no attempt to determine reasons for non-response.

Of the 58 schools in the NCCCS, 48 responded, a return rate of 82 percent. Of the qualified schools in the system (55), the same 48 responded, a return of 87 percent.

Demographics of Respondents

Demographic data, including age, sex, and race, were gathered from the Optional Section of the questionnaire. Of the 120 respondents to the questionnaire, 95 identified their age range, 9 chose not to respond to any demographic questions, 2 did not respond to the age section, and 1 was missing page 4 of the questionnaire and thus could not answer. Age data were listed in ranges of 21-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, and over 55.

Tabulations follow:

Age Range	Responses	Percent of Responses
21-25	none	0%
26-35	18	19%
36-45	48	51%
46-55	26	27%
55+	3	3%

Thus 70 percent of the respondents ranged in age from 26-45, while 97 percent of the total ranged from 26-55. The majority were middle aged. Respondents did not include part-time instructors who make up a significant portion of the faculty at most NCCCS schools, so it is not possible to speak in terms of the age of all faculty who teach composition. But if the 51 percent of the respondents in the 36-45 age range began their teaching careers at the typical age of 21, they are within 6-15 years of retirement and the 27 percent who are in the 46-55 range are within several years of retirement (the generalization will not hold true for all of the respondents, of course.) In 15 years, therefore, the system could see a severe shortage of composition instructors.

Ninety-six of the 120 respondents identified their sex. There were 71 females (74 percent) and 25 males (26 percent). Although the difference in males and females is significant, it is not surprising since teaching in general and teaching "English" in particular have stereotypically

been thought of as "female" areas, at least at the lower levels of the teaching scale (ie., high school and two-year colleges).

The data on racial breakdown are even more significant. Of the 120 original respondents, 96 gave usable responses. Of those, 94 (98 percent) marked "white" and 2 (2 percent) marked "black." Even if the 24 nonrespondents were also black, that would still mean that only 21 percent of the surveyed group of full-time composition instructors in the NCCCS were black. It is not likely, however, that all nonrespondents were black. It would seem that blacks as a group are underrepresented in the system.

Academic Degrees of Respondents

Part Two of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the academic degrees they had earned and when and where they had earned them. In addition, they were asked to list their teaching experience and their academic preparation in methods of teaching writing, teaching adults, and teaching writing to adults.

There were 106 usable responses from the 120 total population to the listing under B.A./B.S. degree area. Of those 106, 77 (73 percent) graduated from North Carolina schools. Ninety of the 106 were English majors, 15 majored in something other than English (usually English education or journalism), and 1 professed not to know the major.

Dates of graduation were listed on 103 of the 106 returns and broke down as follows:

1940's: 2 (2 percent)
1950's: 11 (11 percent)
1960's: 52 (50 percent)
1970's: 36 (35 percent)
1980's: 2 (2 percent)

For the listing at the M.A./M.S./M.Ed. level, there were 112 usable responses. Seventy-nine (71 percent) of these degrees were earned in North Carolina schools. Seventy-one (63 percent) were English majors, while 41 (37 percent) combined English with another area or majored in another area altogether (frequently education). Interestingly, only <u>one</u> of the respondents earned a master's degree in composition. Dates of graduation were listed on 109 of the 112 returns and broke down as follows:

1940's: 1 (1 percent)
1950's: 3 (3 percent)
1960's: 34 (31 percent)
1970's: 51 (47 percent)
1980's: 20 (18 percent)

At the doctoral level on the listing, there were 16 responses. Six of the degrees (38 percent) were earned in North Carolina schools. Ten of the 16 were English majors (62 1/2 percent), while 6 were combined degrees (37 1/2 percent). Nine of the 16 degrees were earned in the 1970's, 5 in the 1980's, and 2 did not list a date.

The listing of degrees earned under "Other" generated ten responses, only four of which listed a degree name (Associate's, Master of Arts in Teaching, Educational Specialist, and Bachelor's). The other six respondents listed grant study and certificates rather than true degrees earned. None of the ten majored in English, and only two were in English Education.

The data on degrees earned indicate that many of the NCCCS instructors have a graduate degree, primarily at the M.A. level and that at all levels, English majors dominate. This finding corresponds to the widely held belief that composition instructors have been trained in literature but not in rhetoric or composition and that their academic background may not have prepared them to teach composition, regardless of the population. This finding also confirms one hypothesis of this study, that the respondents would have little academic training in teaching composition. Similarly, the finding implies that preparation and expertise in the teaching of writing have come from sources other than undergraduate and graduate study.

Teaching Experience of Respondents

On-the-job training is apparently one of those other sources of information for writing instructors in the NCCCS. In the questionnaire section covering teaching experience, there were 119 usable responses (experience was broken into four areas: high school, two-year schools, four-year

schools, and other). Thirty-three respondents (28 percent) had teaching experience only in two-year schools. Another 61 respondents (51 percent) had teaching experience in two-year schools which exceeded their other teaching experience. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents, in other words, have spent the majority of their teaching time in the two-year college or technical institute. The majority of those with other experience earned it in high school or junior high school. Only 35 respondents (29 percent) had taught at four-year schools, and of those 35, the majority had fewer than three years experience. Several others had gained the experience as graduate assistants or teaching assistants during their graduate work. Therefore, only a few of the 35 had actual, regular teaching experience in a four-year school.

<u>Sources of Information on Methods</u>

The nature of the teaching experience and the type of degree earned by the respondents of the questionnaire suggests that their expertise in the classroom must have come from sources other than their own degree programs.

Section III of Part Two of the questionnaire confirms this and, further, confirms the hypothesis that the respondents would not be trained in adult education methods. Section III asked respondents where, besides course work, they had obtained information on methods of teaching writing, methods of teaching adults, and methods of teaching

writing to adults. In addition, they were asked to indicate if they had ever had a course in the same three areas. There were 119 responses to the question "Have you had a course in methods of teaching writing?" Seventy-five (63%) said "yes" and 44 (37%) said "no." To question 2, "Have you had a course in teaching adults?", there were 108 responses; 38 (35%) said "yes" and 70 (65%) said "no." There were 109 responses to question 3, "Have you had a course in teaching writing to adults?" Nine respondents (8%) said "yes" and 100 (92%) said "no."

Their information on methods of teaching writing came, in order of occurrence, from professional conferences (listed by 60 respondents), peers and colleagues (49), journals (46), personal reading (44), workshops (43), personal experience or trial and error (24), and textbooks (22). Information on teaching adults, again in order of occurrence, came from journals (41), conferences (38), workshops (35), colleagues (32), personal experience (32), and reading (29). Information on methods of teaching writing to adults came from conferences (38), journals (37), colleagues (30), workshops (28), experience (27), and reading (23). These responses validate the common complaint by many adult educators that much classroom practice derives from the trial and error approach rather than from theory and explains why much of the literature in the area is anecdotal. Since only 8 percent of the respondents have had

a course in teaching writing to adults, but 63 percent have had a course in methods of teaching writing, the implication is that these instructors teach writing the same way to all age groups and do not differentiate in methods because adults are in the classroom with traditional-aged students. Teaching writing is teaching writing. The 65 percent who have not had a course in teaching adults, are, of course, teaching adults every day. What methods they use may in fact be good ones, but they have derived from personal experience and professional growth and development, a situation not at all unlike the adult education field itself.

A number of the respondents who have had a course in methods of teaching writing had that course work apart from their original degree work, not surprising since 90 respondents had previously indicated their degree area was English, meaning for most of them, literature. And unless the literature major had a minor or cognate in education, it would not be unusual for the degree program not to have included methods at all. Eighty-five percent of the respondents to the questionnaire earned their bachelor degrees in the 60's or the 70's, the very times when the research on how to teach writing was undergoing the shift from product to process orientation. Considering the time it takes for theory to change, evolve, be reported and accepted, and, finally, to begin to effect changes in

individual classrooms, it is understandable that instructors at two-year colleges would not have been academically trained in the methodology of composition or of adult education in general.

The "trickle-down" idea that two-year colleges are often behind four-year schools in current theory and practice is not totally unfair. Normal work loads for instructors in the NCCCS range from 12-24 hours per quarter, with evening work the norm for many. Keeping up with daily responsibilities is a major task; keeping up with research in teaching writing another major task that many simply have little time for. To add another area of expertise (ie., the adult education field) to an already overloaded schedule is to expect more than most two-year instructors can manage. Thus familiarity with theory in both the composition and adult education fields is a practical matter for most instructors: what can I learn from my own classroom experience and what can I pick up from collegial relationships at conferences, workshops, and seminars.

Changes in Methods or Behavior

Part Three of the "Survey on Adult Students as Writers" was a short answer section. Respondents were asked to describe: a) how they had changed their methods of teaching writing because of adult students in their classrooms (if, in fact, they had changed methods); b) how their behavior toward adult students differed from their behavior toward

traditional-aged students (if it was different); and c) to list three major differences in adult students and traditional students as writers.

Of the 120 respondents to the questionnaire, 59 (49 percent) indicated they did not change their methods with adult students; seven other respondents did not fill in that page or gave a response that did not fit the question. The 54 who did respond interpreted the word "method" rather loosely. Despite the inclusion of the definition of method as "how you teach the content material," many respondents talked about behavioral differences or differences in student activities rather than about instructor differences in pedagogies. Listed below are the two major categories of responses:

1. Shift from product to process orientation (46 responses or 85 percent). This category identified changes in how content was presented or dealt with in the classroom (conference-centered instruction, less lecture, fewer quizzes, shorter assignments, freedom of topic selection, more writing chances, workshop approach, less emphasis on grades, publication of student work, more discussion, peer editing groups, individual assistance, and opportunities for rewriting).

2. Changes in how the instructor controlled the environment or atmosphere of the classroom (9 responses or 17 percent). This category identified ways the instructor

made the classroom or academic experience more suitable for adult learners (slower pace, more directions, more time for prewriting, less threatening atmosphere, make assignments practical, more latitude on scheduling, more class time to work).

More than anything else, these responses strongly suggest that the respondents are well aware of current theory in composition; their practice and their methods correlate with the process approach and indicate a shift away from traditional methods in composition. These findings do not confirm the hypothesis that most of the surveyed population were not familiar with current theory and practice in composition. Though respondents were identifying changes brought about because of adult students in their classrooms, it does seem strangely coincidental that the methods changes are those which are presented in current theory of composition, not theory of adult education. It is possible, therefore, that the respondents would have said the same things even if the question had not used adult students as a basis for the changes.

The second category of response, however, more closely identifies methods that are consistent with traditional beliefs about adult students. Malcolm Knowles, for example, would heartily endorse all the actions from the second category.

Part B of the section asked respondents to identify how their behavior as an instructor was different toward adult students (if it was). Sixty-four of the 120 indicated their was no difference in their behavior toward adult students. Of the remaining 56 respondents, 47 indicated they tried to reduce anxiety, tension, and stress in older students; 23 other responses dealt with the issue of "adultness," being more lenient about deadlines, understanding the adult's situation regarding work, family life, and school, being more patient, talking rather than lecturing, exhibiting less control, focusing on progress rather than grades, providing more positive reinforcement, being available for conferencing, advising, and listening. (Multi-responses were possible in this section). Several of these behavorial differences were noted by other respondents under "methods," so it seems clear that adults are treated differently in the classroom (in this case, the writing classroom) but that it is not typically a pedagogy that is different so much as the way the instructor perceives the student as a person. It is apparent that some of the respondents perceive adult needs to be substantially different from traditional students' needs.

It is not only the adult learners' needs that are different from those of 18-22 year olds. Part C asked respondents to list three differences between adult students and traditional students as writers. The top two responses

were that adults are more motivated (32) and that because of their age they have more experiences to draw on as writers and therefore more to say when writing (31). Both of these responses are consistent with adult education beliefs and concepts. This does not necessarily mean that an adult is automatically a better writer, just that he has experienced more of his world and has more at his disposal as a writer. How he handles the writing experience is a totally different matter. Since many of the respondents spent time trying to reduce anxiety in adults in the classroom, age and experience may not always account for better quality of effort.

The remainder of the responses in Part C generally fell into two rather contradictory categories. On the one hand, adult students (as writers) were believed by the respondents to be more responsible, more mature, more serious about their education, more dependable, more hard working, more interested in improving their writing skills, more clear about their goals, better behaved, better listeners, and better overall writers. On the other hand, however, adult students were thought to be more anxious, worried, and fearful of failure, less confident, in need of encouragement, more self-critical, lower in self-esteen, sensitive about weaknesses, and more grade motivated. In examining the two lists side by side, it hardly seems that the respondents were talking about the same group of people,

and yet the findings are totally consistent with the research in the fields of both adult education and theory and practice of composition. It is that dual nature of the characteristics of the adult learner that are evident from these findings; for every advantage in being an adult with more experience, there is a concomitant disadvantage from having been away from the educational setting for a number of years. And in the writing classroom, already rife with anxiety and stress, the adult learner may find it difficult to use his age and experience to any great advantage, at least in the short run.

Responses to Likert Statements

Part One of the "Survey on Adult Students as Writers" consisted of 50 statements about adults as students and how they differ from traditional-aged students, methods of teaching writing, and theory and practice of composition. Each respondent was asked to indicate his "typical feeling or belief" about the statements by using a Likert response: Strongly Agree, Agree, Don't Know, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree. The 50 statements were not arranged according to the major categories, however. In addition, some statements were controlled by the phrase "Adult students...," while others were controlled by "Traditional students...." Appendix D contains the original survey. The total breakdown of responses in the five categories of answers is available upon request.

The remainder of this section of the dissertation presents each statement, lists the highest percentage of response, and indicates any other percentages of interest. It then discusses how the responses correlate with adult education theory, theory and practice of composition, or responses to other statements in the questionnaire. There were 120 respondents to each statement.

1. "Adult students follow directions better than traditional students do."

(77% Strongly Agree or Agree)

This response confirms the short answer responses regarding major differences in adults and traditional-aged students as writers, ie., that adults listen better and, as a consequence, follow directions better. It also supports the well-documented belief that adults are highly motivated and would therefore want to be "correct" in whatever work they were doing, so following directions would be one way to assure that correctness. The finding suggests that traditional-aged students are not especially good at following directions.

2. "Most of my class time is spent helping students write or edit papers."

(54% Strongly Agree or Agree)

(39% Disagree or Strongly Disagree)

Over half the respondents agreed with the statement, suggesting that many instructors are using class time for

drafting and editing, activities which are in keeping with the process approach to composition. This behavior would also support the adult education belief in the instructor as facilitator, rather than lecturer. That 39% disagreed with the statement is not necessarily a negative sign since instructors could be using the time for other useful activities. It does not mean that the time is being used for lecture, though, if the research is correct, adult students would not be ill at ease with the lecture method anyway. Statement 2 should be examined against statement 25 (Most of my class time is spent explaining what to do for the assignment), where 72% of the respondents disagreed. It is not clear exactly how class time is being spent for some of the respondents if they are not having students write or edit and if they are not helping them with the assignment.

3. "In general, I feel I am up to date on current theory and practice in teaching writing."

(84% Strongly Agree or Agree)

This extremely high percentage of positive response corresponds with the short answer section where respondents remarked about changes in methods and behavior toward adult students. From those remarks and from the high positive responses to Statement 10, "I use the process approach in teaching composition" (85% strongly agreed or agreed), it was clear that many instructors are familiar with the process approach to teaching composition and that they have

kept up to date with current research, primarily through professional conferences, workshops, and reading on their own. Obviously, being familiar with a process is not the same as using it, but the majority of respondents at least feel strongly about their current knowledge. There may have been some response effect as well with this statement; since the entire questionnaire dealt with teaching writing to adults, respondents would not want to appear less than competent in their teaching area. This finding did not support one hypothesis of this study, that most instructors would use traditional methods in teaching composition.

4. "My English department has redesigned one or more courses to fit the needs of adult students."

(52% Disagree or Strongly Disagree)

(38% Strongly Agree or Agree)

To have over half the respondents react negatively to this statement is not unexpected since the fields of adult education and composition have themselves not yet merged successfully. The response may also mean that individual instructors have made changes to accommodate adult learners, but entire courses have not been revamped. An encouraging sign is the 38% who do agree with the statement, though exactly what the redesign consisted of is not known from the questionnaire.

5. "Adult students are more motivated to learn than traditional students."

(93% Strongly Agree or Agree)

This strong positive response confirms the research in adult education and in composition. In addition, it verifies the short-answer responses in the questionnaire where "more motivated" was listed most as a major difference between adult and traditional-aged students. Higher motivation is clearly the major characteristic of the adult learner.

6. "The instructor should provide topics for students to write about."

(36% Agree)

(36% Disagree)

The even split between respondents on this statement suggests two perceptions about writers in general. One is that providing topics will relieve the writer's anxiety, the "I don't have anything to write about" syndrome. The other is that providing topics for writers makes the whole effort artificial and academic, that real writing occurs in response to an audience and a purpose. Having students "discover" their own topics is consistent with the process approach to teaching composition and also supports the adult education belief that adults have more experiences to draw on in their learning processes. The 36% who disagreed with the statement undoubtedly included some of the respondents who listed "more experience and more to say" as a major difference in adult and traditional-aged learners as writers in the short-answer section.

7. "I alter my teaching methods when I have adult students in class."

(47% Strongly Agree or Agree)

(48% Disagree or Strongly Disagree)

The respondents who agree with this statement may actually mean they change their behavior with adult students rather than actual methodology. The short-answer section on changes and behaviors with adults indicated that respondents did not all interpret "method" in the same way; thus it is not possible to discern what the alteration in methods might have been. In addition, 59 respondents on the short answer indicated they did not change methods, but it is not possible to determine if this group includes the same 57 who disagreed with this statement. Despite these qualifications about the positive responses, adult education experts would be happy. Those who disagreed with the statement may not alter their methods because they believe teaching is teaching, regardless of age of the students, or that teaching writing is teaching writing, again regardless of age.

8. "Most of my knowledge about adult students comes from teaching experience."

(84% Strongly Agree or Agree)

The high number of positive responses to this statement confirms the criticism of some adult educators that there is no workable theory in the field and that much of what is

known about adults as students comes from practice in the classroom. It also supports the responses in the short-answer section on where respondents have obtained knowledge of methods in teaching adults and in teaching writing to adults. In both areas, "personal experience" was named as a source by at least 24 respondents. The finding further correlates with the extremely low number of respondents who indicated they had never had academic course work in methods of teaching adults (out of 108 responses, only 38 had).

9. "Adult students make higher grades on papers than traditional students do."

49% Agree

That almost half the respondents agreed with this statement supports the earlier finding that instructors often perceive adults to be better writers, organizers, and grammarians than traditional-students are. There may be some element of a self-fulfilling prophecy in effect too: because instructors believe adults to be better students, they treat them in a way that encourages better production. The finding also supports current research in teaching writing to adults which indicates that adults do make higher grades than traditional-aged students.

10. "I use the process approach in teaching writing."

85% Strongly Agree or Agree

The high positive response to this statement may be due in part to a response effect. Since 84% of the respondents believed they were up to date in theory and practice of teaching writing, they would also be aware that the process approach is a current, and in many places, valued methodology. Thus they would not want to seem to be too far outside the mainstream of current practice. Because "process" was not defined in the statement, it is impossible to know what the word might have meant to the individual respondent, but if even half the number are truly using a process approach, this means that a significant number of the NCCCS instructors have moved away from traditional approaches to teaching composition (87% disagreed with the statement that "Writing classes should contain drill on grammar and mechanics every day").

The process approach is more closely allied with basic principles of adult education, particularly Knowles' andragogical assumptions, than is traditional pedagogy. But in response to the statement that "A student's writing process is more important than the final product he turns in," 67% <u>disagreed</u>, a figure that seems high when compared to the positive responses about using the process approach. Perhaps respondents interpreted the two "processes" to be different from each other and that the diversity of response is not as contradictory as it would seem to be.

11. "Peer group editing has been an effective technique for me."

49% Strongly Agree or Agree

36% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

Peer group editing is a technique consistent with the process approach to composition and with the current theory that small groups of like-minded readers can help a writer. Forty-nine percent response is an indication that many instructors are using modern rather than traditional methods in teaching writing. Group work has long been a method suggested by adult educators, Knowles as well as others. The 36% who disagreed with the statement may have done so because they have used the technique without positive results. It is also possible that some respondents were not familiar with the term or that they do not use the technique at all.

12. "Adult students usually understand their weaknesses in writing when they enter the class."

60% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

The negative reactions to this statement may derive from a general feeling among writing instructors that students often fail to understand what it is about their writing that needs improvement. It is possible that the same number would have disagreed with the statement even without the adjective "adults" attached. The responses may indicate that it is at the beginning of class that the lack

of understanding occurs and that diagnosis of both strengths and weaknesses improves with time.

13. "Adult students use prewriting strategies more effectively than traditional students do."

46% Strongly Agree or Agree

22% Don't Know

Instructors up to date on current theory and practice in composition would be familiar with the term "prewriting" and the 46% response suggests that many are. (Prewriting may include freewriting, listing, questioning, clustering, and other strategies to find a topic to write on.) The adult's higher motivation and increased reserve of experiences to draw from as a writer may be the reasons why respondents felt adults were better at prewriting than were traditional students. The 22% who don't know may not be familiar with the technique, may not use the technique, or may not know if adults use the technique more effectively than traditional students.

14. "There are enough differences in adult and traditional students to warrant different methods in teaching writing to each group."

61% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

Responses to this statement, to Statement 7 above, and to the short-answer question "If you have changed your methods of teaching writing because you have had adult students in your classes, describe specifically what you

have done," present a fairly even split on this central dilemma. Seventy-three respondents made up the 61% who disagreed with Statement 14, and 57 respondents made up the 48% who indicated in Statement 7 that they did alter their methods. On the short answer, fifty-nine people said they had not changed their methods to accommodate adult learners. Almost half of the respondents, in other words, do not teach differently to adults than they do to traditional-aged students. One might not expect a change to occur in a mixed class; it would be more typical in a class where the majority were adults. The key to the responses probably lies with the phrase "in teaching writing." A significant number of NCCCS instructors teach writing the same way, regardless of the age of the students.

15. "Grammar and mechanics should be learned before writing tasks are assigned."

65% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

The process approach to composition means incorporating the study of grammar and mechanics at the point that the students needs the material. Traditional grammar drill, particularly in isolation from writing itself, is viewed as a flawed method by the process proponents. Seventy-eight respondents made up the 65%, a significant number of responses. This finding supports the earlier finding that many NCCCS writing instructors have moved away from traditional composition pedagogy.

16. "Adult students need more time to complete assignments than traditional students do."

71% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

The extremely high negative response to this statement suggests that adults are perceived as more organized, better time managers, and more dependable about due dates than traditional students are. It also supports the earlier findings from the short-answer section that asked for major differences in adult students and traditional students as writers. Despite having more anxiety (which can be a motivator itself) and less confidence, adults were far more often perceived in positive terms: hard working, dependable, mature, organized, and efficient, traits which would enable the to complete assignments on time.

17. "Adult students prefer the lecture method in writing class."

44% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

34% Don't Know

Research on adult students as writers (admittedly a new area) thus far tends to support lecture as a method favored by adults, contradicting the long-standing adult education belief that lecture was not a good method to use with adult learners and that adults themselves did not prefer it. More significant than the 44% who disagreed with the statement are the 34% who claim not to know. That response could mean the respondent used or did not use lecture in writing class,

but simply was not aware of the adults' preference in methods. Though most instructors want to use methods that are best for their students, it is also true that most instructors use methods they are comfortable with (or have been taught by).

18. "Traditional students tolerate critical comments on papers better than adult students do."

60% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

The high response to this statement suggests that adults are more interested in learning than in grades, a belief generally supported by respondents on the short-answer statemtent about differences in adults and traditional-aged students as writers.

19. "Adult students turn in late papers more often than traditional students do."

89% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

Overwhelmingly, respondents perceived adults to be more organized, more dependable, and mature. Meeting deadlines is a situation the adult is well acquainted with in his life outside the classroom, and apparently that ability carries over into the classroom as well.

20. "Writing students should write an outline, then write the paper."

47% Strongly Agree or Agree

43% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

The almost-even split among the respondents to this statement suggests more about the instructors than it does about the students. Those favoring the outline approach probably see the outline as a means of bringing control to the writing effort before drafting has begun. Those not favoring outlining before writing the paper likely perceived outlining in its most rigid and prescriptive light. Process approach proponents generally favor the discovery of ideas through prewriting activities and would not be comfortable with the formal outline. They would, however, support listing or questioning techniques as ways to determine content areas in the paper. This split among respondents may have been due to the respondent's interpretation of "outline." A number of respondents did write margin notes on the questionnaire, attempting to qualify their response.

21. "Adult students are more likely to ask what a paper should contain than traditional students are."

62% Strongly Agree or Agree

What little research done on adults as writers is confirmed by the response to this statement. This is partly due to the adult's need for "correctness," a need which can cause problems in the writing classroom. The response tends to undermine the adult education view that adults are independent learners, a trait not always true when the adult is asked to become a writer. Adult learners do want guidance from the instructor.

22. "Adult students are more self-directing in writing class than traditional students are."

62% Strongly Agree or Agree

Adult educators would not be surprised at the high positive response to this statement, and the rate should not be seen as contradictory to the findings in the preceding statement. Though an adult writer may need confirmation from the instructor that he is on the right track in the writing assignment, his ability to "take care of himself" is perceived to be better than the traditional student's ability. The responses might have decreased had the statement read "Adult students are self-directing in writing class."

23. "Traditional students have higher grade expectations than adult students have."

63% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

Researchers in both adult education and in composition theory have noted that adult students tend to expect good grades. Thus, evaluations on their papers do not always result in happy students. Instructors understand that growth and improvement in writing come from making mistakes and learning from them. Students, especially adults, frequently want perfection from the start. The process approach to composition, with its emphasis on stages of development, revision, and working with peer editors or the instructor, can be useful with adults who have expectations that exceed their abilities.

24. "A student's writing process is more important than the final product he turns in."

67% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

Considering that 85% of the original 120 respondents indicated that they use the process approach to composition, this high negative response is curious. Part of the explanation may be that respondents view the process as important but never <u>more</u> important than the final paper. What is said, in other words, is eventually more important than how it was developed. In addition, there was undoubtedly variation in the respondents' interpretation of "process."

25. "Most of my class time is spent explaining what to do for the assignment."

72% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

In an earlier statement (2), 48 respondents indicated they did not use class time to help students write or edit papers. Eighty-seven respondents comprise the 72% who disagree with this statement. It is not clear from these or other responses on the questionnaire just how class time is being spent. The high negative responses here may indicate that some instructors are using class time for writing, but that still leaves about one-third of the respondents' time unaccounted for. (Respondents who disagreed with Statements 2 and 25 may or may not be the same respondents, of course.)

26. "Traditional students are more willing to contribute to class discussions than adult students are."

89% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

The adult student's experiences and maturity work in his favor, according to the very high responses to this statement. The response also confirms Knowles' belief that an adult's experiences are the major factor separating him from the traditional-aged learner.

27. "Adult students revise drafts more than traditional students do."

73% Strongly Agree or Agree

The responses to this statement confirm the responses to the short-answer question on differences between adult and traditional-aged students as writers. Adults are perceived to be more motivated and better organized. The adult's willingness to rework drafts also suggests his interest in getting a good grade.

28. "In general, adult students are better writers than traditional students are."

57% Strongly Agree or Agree

This response confirms the short-answer responses that respondents do believe adults are in general better writers than traditional-aged students are. This may be due to their having more experiences to draw from or being more motivated and willing to do the work. Because they are also believed to be better organized, adults have better work habits than traditional students do.

29. "Adult students exhibit more writing anxiety than traditional students do."

65% Strongly Agree or Agree

Research in teaching writing to adults has noted the high anxiety levels that can interfere with the writing process. Adult education literature also deals frequently with the problem of anxiety in returning adult students, particularly women. The 65% response here supports both views.

30. "Adult students enjoy journal keeping more than traditional students do."

50% Don't Know

35% Agree

The high response of don't knows is somewhat surprising considering the high number of respondents who said they are up to date in current theory and practice of teaching composition. Current practice, as opposed to traditional approaches, advocates journals, diaries, logs, and the like as a method. Respondents, therefore, may use journals but not know if adults enjoy them more than traditional students do or, less likely, they may not have known what was meant by journal keeping.

31. "Adult students ask more questions about required length of papers than traditional students do."

48% Disagree

32% Agree

Research in teaching writing to adults indicates that adults often need to know what the teacher wants a paper to be, how long it should be, what it should cover. This response does not confirm that research. Respondents who disagreed with the statement may believe adults to be more independent and better overall writers, traits which would not lead a student to ask "How long should this paper be?"

32. "Traditional students enjoy off-the-subject discussions more than adult students do."

33% Agree

33% Don't Know

32% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

The even split among the three areas of response is in keeping with most research on adult learners. Those who agreed did so because of the adult's life experiences, which give him more to say. Those who disagreed did so because of the adult's tendency to want to "get on with things" in the classroom, to get what he paid for. Those who did not know either had no strong response positively or negatively or did not know because they do not have off-the-subject discussions in class.

33. "Adult students require more individualized instruction than traditional students do."

58% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

This response generally supports the adult education belief that adults are more independent learners than

traditional-aged students, but it also tends not to confirm the respondents in the short-answer section who believe adults often need more encouragement and positive comments on their work. There may have been a range of interpretations of "require." Adults may <u>want</u> more attention but not require (in the sense of insist on having) it.

34. "Adult students prefer grammar drill to writing practice."

54% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

38% Don't Know

Research in composition theory has consistently argued against grammar drill in isolation as a workable method for learning to write. The 54% who disagreed with the statement believed that adults would rather practice writing than work drill exercises. Those who did not know may not use drill as a regular part of their teaching.

35. "Adult students seek more one-to-one help from me than traditional students do."

76% Strongly Agree or Agree

Though adults are noted by adult educators as being independent learners, this finding more strongly supports respondents' earlier beliefs that adults want to do well on their work, are motivated and willing to do the required work, and will find the means necessary to do well. Thus they may "seek" one-to-one help from the instructor. This

asking for help is apparently perceived as being different from the "requiring" of individualized instruction noted in Statement 33.

36. "I am familiar with the basic principles of adult education theory and practice."

59% Strongly Agree or Agree

Respondents indicated on the short-answer section that they obtained information on methods of teaching adults from areas other than the academic classroom: conferences, workshops, journals, colleagues. Most of their knowledge about adult students (Statement 8) came from teaching experience, the trial-and-error approach. Thus, 59% response to this statement seems a reasonable rate. It suggests there are a number of instructors (49 of 120) who realize their limited knowledge in the field, and it indicates that the others (71 of 120) felt their in-class and professional development work provided them with basic information in the area.

37. "Adult students, if given a choice, would prefer nongraded writing classes."

48% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

Knowles' principles of andragogy are, in part, based on the belief that adults view grading negatively, that many of them want to learn for reasons other than a grade. Other adult educators, notably Tough, agree. The little research done on adult writer, however, contradicts these beliefs,

possibly because much of adult education research deals with <u>all</u> kinds of adult learning, from sewing circles, to business seminars, to adult basic education classes. Obviously, grading in those areas would be perceived differently from academic work done in pursuit of a degree or diploma. The finding on this statement confirms that, in the two-year college at least, adults do want to be graded (and, as determined earlier, often want high grades).

38. "I am satisfied with the methods I use in teaching writing."

72% Strongly Agree or Agree

The high positive response to this statement may have been affected by a response effect. Since the questionnaire dealt primarily with methods of teaching writing, respondents would not want to appear too unhappy with their current methodology. The 23 respondents who disagreed with the statement may simply have felt some general dissatisfaction, a condition that strikes all instructors at some time or another.

39. "I permit students to rewrite papers for a new grade after revisions have been made."

59% Strongly Agree or Agree

32% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

Those who agreed with this statement would probably support the process method of teaching composition, where revision means more than rearranging words or correcting

already-marked surface errors. That 32% disagreed does not mean those respondents use a traditional approach, however, for they may well work with students during the drafting stage or during some other conference period.

40. "Adult students attend class more regularly than traditional students do."

79% Strongly Agree or Agree

Adults are perceived to be more responsible and dependable, to be harder workers, to care more about their work and their grades. The high positive response here supports that perception and confirms research in the fields of adult education and theory and practice of composition.

41. "Traditional students enjoy studying grammar and mechanics more than adult students do."

73% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

The high negative response to this statement implies that instructors perceive that adults enjoy grammar and mechanics; how much they may enjoy them is not known, just that it is more than traditional students do. This perception may be related to the age of the learner. Older students, particularly those over 30, are likely to have studied grammar and mechanics in high school, often as drill isolated from the writing experience. Younger students may not have studied grammar and mechanics at all and may not enjoy it because they are unclear about terminology.

42. "Traditional students are more likely to volunteer to read their papers in class than adult students are."

33% Don't Know

54% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

The 54% response confirms both adult education principles and composition research on adult writers. The life experiences of adults not only give them a larger reserve of ideas to write about, but also make them more eager to share those reflections in the classroom, assuming the anxiety level has tapered off. Those who responded don't know may not have students read papers in class.

43. "Adult students are more likely to expect writing class to consist of grammar and mechanics drill than traditional students are."

48% Strongly Agree or Agree

31% Don't Know

Forty-eight percent is a fairly significant response rate to this statement. If older students were taught composition by the traditional approach, they would expect that strategy to be used again. The 31% who don't know may not have been able to compare the adult's expectation with the traditional student's.

44. "I prefer teaching adult students."

61% Strongly Agree or Agree

Though 61% is a high positive response to this statement, it seems lower than what might have been

expected, given that adult students have been perceived in such positive ways throughout other parts of the questionnaire and given that traditional students, by implication, seem less-than-desirable students. Likely, many instructors did not want to seem to "prefer" some students over others. Several respondents wrote as much in marginal notes on the questionnaire.

45. "Adult students' organizational skills are better than traditional students' are."

51% Strongly Agree or Agree

This response confirms much of the research in teaching composition to adults (one study concluded that the main problem of adults in writing was in organization), and it also confirms the short-answer section on major differences in adults and traditional-aged students as writers.

46. "Adult students work better than traditional students do in peer editing groups."

44% Strongly Agree or Agree

39% Don't Know

To have close to 50 percent of the respondents react positively to this statement is a sign that many instructors are using peer editing as part of their methodology in teaching composition, an action consistent with the process approach. It is also consistent with the adult education belief that the instructor should be a facilitator of learning and _a_ resource person, but not the only one. Those

who do not know may not use peer editing or they may not know if adults are better at it than are traditional students.

47. "Adult students are more independent in writing class than traditional students are."

60% Strongly Agree or Agree

This finding is not a surprise considering that many respondents on the short-answer section identified independence as a major difference between adults and traditional students as writers. It is surprising, however, considering research from both adult education and composition theory and practice which suggests that some adults are passive learners and want to be told what to do and when to do it. The characteristics of the adult learner are truly two dimensional, offering both an advantage and a disadvantage in the classroom.

48. "Traditional students are more likely to put off a writing task to the last minute than adult students are."

88% Strongly Agree or Agree

As suggested by findings on previous statements, adult students are believed to be more efficient, dependable, and organized. Frequently in quest of the perfect grade, they would be less likely than a traditional student to turn in late work which might cost them points. Adults, because of their more diverse life experiences, better understand the importance of managing their time and being on time.

49. "Writing classes should contain drill on grammar and mechanics every day."

87% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

This finding is totally consistent with the process approach to composition and in line with the previous finding that 85% of the respondents use the process approach to teach composition.

50. "Adult students have writer's block more often than traditional students do."

50% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

39% Don't Know

"Getting started" is often the most difficult step of the writing process, for any aged writer. Respondents, however, believe adults to be better at it than traditional students. This may be due to the adult's more organized nature, his desire to "get on with it," or his ability to put life experience to work for him in the writing classroom. Those respondents who do not know may not believe that one age group is more disposed to block than another, or they may not know which group it is that has block more often.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was three-fold: (1) to synthesize the literature on teaching writing to adults, (2) to survey English instructors in the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) to determine how they perceive adult students and if they change their teaching methods to accommodate adult learners, and to discover their background and training in teaching writing to adults, and (3) to conclude what classroom practices are or should be used by NCCCS English instructors with adult populations. This chapter will present the major conclusions drawn from the findings of the questionnaire, "Survey on Adult Students as Writers," which was given to 193 full-time English instructors in the NCCCS. It will also make recommendations for future research and give implications for classroom practice.

Questionnaire

The survey used to gather data from the NCCCS instructors was divided into three parts: (1) Likert responses to fifty statements about adults as students and as writers, and statements about the process, theory and

practice of teaching writing; (2) respondents' academic training, teaching experience, and preparation in methods; and (3) respondents' changes in methods and behavior brought about by having adult students in their writing classes. An optional section on demographic data concluded the survey.

Hypotheses

Five hypotheses were made regarding the respondents to the survey: (1) they were not trained in adult education methods, (2) they knew little about adult education theory, (3) they taught composition the same way to all students, regardless of age, (4) they tended toward the traditional method of teaching composition and had little training in composition methods, and (5) they did perceive adult students as being different from traditional students in many ways.

Conclusions

The major conclusion of this study is that the survey respondents found adult learners to be significantly different from traditional-aged students as students in general and as writers in particular. Attitudes, motivation, self-direction, and behavior of adult students were viewed as better than those of traditional students. Adults were perceived to be better organized, more interested in learning, better in time management and class attendance, and more open to discussion and criticism of their work. They were judged to be harder workers, more

dependable as students, and more willing to revise their papers. Adults were believed to be anxious, driven toward perfection, and concerned (sometimes overly so) about grades. They had less difficulty in finding and responding to a topic and were judged better than traditional students in grammar and mechanics, organization, and editing. Because of these perceived differences, a majority of survey respondents said they preferred teaching adult students. Hypothesis 5 was confirmed.

Respondents' training and knowledge about adults as learners were not obtained from their academic work at the Bachelor's or Master's level. Rather, the knowledge respondents did have came from professional meetings, collegial relationships, and on-the-job, trial-and-error work. Since the majority of respondents' degrees were in English literature and were earned in the 60's and 70's, it can be concluded that the instructors in the NCCCS were not learning about how to teach adult students. Though the 1970's saw an increase in the literature on adult learners and methodology, the NCCCS instructors were either working on higher degrees in literature or had already begun their teaching careers. Adult students in their classes, therefore, were taught by methods most comfortable to those instructors, some of whom had had no training in any methods. A majority of respondents, however, did believe

education theory and practice, familiarity which must have come from non-classroom settings. Hypothesis 1 was confirmed and hypothesis 2 was partially confirmed: respondents knew something of adult education theory but not from the most conventional means, the academic classroom.

Hypothesis 3, that NCCCS instructors taught composition the same way to all students, regardless of age, was also confirmed. A majority of respondents said their schools had not changed or redesigned courses to meet the needs of adult learners, but a large majority indicated they were satisfied with the methods they currently used in teaching writing. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents said they did not change their methods because adults were in their classes. NCCCS instructors, therefore, teach writing, not students. The age of the students seems not to have any particular influence on methodology, though it does affect the behavior of the instructors toward their students. Behavioral changes, however, are not methodological changes.

The assumption that the NCCCS instructors would tend toward the traditional method of teaching writing, hypothesis 4, was not confirmed. Responses to Likert statements dealing with current strategies in teaching composition (journal keeping, peer group editing, and prewriting exercises) indicated that a majority of NCCCS instructors are using the process approach. And although their training in current methods of teaching writing has

not come from academic settings, they are familiar with the concepts and use the techniques. NCCCS instructors are up to date on methods of teaching composition.

The research on teaching writing to adults is very much in its formative stages. The few available studies which have controlled for the variable of age have not presented any definitive conclusions about a preferred methodology for adult learners, despite adult education's urging that adults be taught differently from traditional-aged learners. Thus, the fields of composition theory and practice and adult education theory have not combined to provide any immediately useful data on what, if anything, should be changed in the methodology of composition for adult learners. At this time, therefore, it is not possible to conclude from the literature that one practice is better than another for adults.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations for future research suggested by this study. First, studies which specifically control for the age variable should be done. Until this occurs, instructors can never be sure that the methods they use are sound for adult learners. Because the two-year college has been instrumental in recruiting and retaining adult learners, these studies should take place in that setting. In addition, studies which compare adult writers in two-year and four-year settings would enable educators to

identify any differences in writing abilities in those two populations.

Second, as a direct follow-up to the "Survey on Adult Students as Writers," a variation should be designed which will examine in more detail the "process approach" being used by NCCCS instructors. Because "process" was defined in rather broad terms for this study, it would be important to the question of methodology to know more about current classroom practices of respondents, the majority of whom say they use the process approach. A survey which includes part-time instructors (who were excluded from this study) would also provide significant data on who is doing what in the composition classrooms in the NCCCS.

Third, a more specific differentiation between "method" and "behavior" should guide all future studies dealing with adult learners. Instructors must be clear about what it is that needs to be changed because adults are in the classroom.

A final recommendation for future study deals with the perennial problem of what to do about grammar and mechanics and when to do it. Studies to determine how current NCCCS instructors are handling this problem would be useful in other educational settings where adults are in the majority: learning laboratories, GED preparation centers, individualized learning centers, adult basic education programs, and training programs in business and industry.

Implications for Teaching

Based on the findings of this study, composition instructors in the NCCCS should keep doing what they are currently doing. Despite teaching loads that limit their ability to become heavily involved in their own research studies, these instructors do perceive themselves to be up to date in both adult education principles and composition theory and practice. Their learning, while practical and experienced-based, is itself a confirmation of the major principles of adult learning. They are, in other words, a manifestation of the concepts which are the foundation of their practice.

Adults do need to be treated differently from traditional-aged students, if for no other reason than their abnormally high anxiety levels and their frequent need for perfection, a condition that rarely occurs in a writing classroom. The characteristics of the adult learner need to be viewed as two-dimensional: for every advantage that age may bring, it also brings a disadvantage. The instructor, especially the composition instructor, must be aware of this dual nature within the adult learner. In every writing class ego is on the line, age in this case being inconsequential. Adults often take criticism better than their younger counterparts, but they may need the criticism to be tempered by encouragement and understanding.

Adult learners will be the rule and not the exception in college classrooms well into the twenty-first century; the average age of those learners will increase. Instructors have a need and a right to know that the methods they use in the classroom are proper for the population. Future research which considers not only the methods common to the content area but also methods appropriate to adult learners in that content area will enable instructors to determine what changes they need to make in their own classrooms. Until then, instructors will be left to determine for themselves what does or does not work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adam, Felix, and George F. Aker, eds. Factors in Adult Learning and Instruction. ERIC, 1982. ED 228 461.

Aldrich, Pearl G. "Adult Writers: Some Factors That Interfere with Effective Writing." RTE 16 (1982): 298-300.

Apps, Jerold W. The Adult Learner on Campus: A Guide for Instructors and Administrators. Chicago: Follett, 1981.

Aslanian, Carol B., and Henry M. Brickell. Americans in Transition: Life Changes as Reasons for Adult Learning. New York: College Entrance Exam Board, 1980.

Beder, Harold W., and Gordon G. Darkenwald. "Differences Between Teaching Adults and Pre-Adults: Some Propositions and Findings." Adult Education 32 (1982): 142-55.

Blake, Bessie W. "The Composing Process of Adult Basic Writing Students." Diss. Columbia U, 1980.

Boyd, Robert, and Jerold Apps. Redefining the Discipline of Adult Education. San Francisco: Jossey, 1980.

Brookfield, Stephen. "The Contribution of Eduard Lindeman to the Development of Theory and Philosophy in Adult Education." Adult Education Quarterly 34 (1984): 185-96.

Brundage, Donald H., and Dorothy MacKeracher. Adult Learning Principles and Their Application to Program Planning. ERIC, 1980. ED 181 292.

Cameron, Susan W. The Perry Scheme: A New Perspective on Adult Learners. ERIC, 1984. ED 244 698.

Check, John F. Teaching-Learning Preferences of the Adult Learner. ERIC, 1984. ED 251 677.

Community, Technical, and Junior College Journal 56.5 (1986): 3A.

Connors, Patricia. Research on the Returning or Older Composition Student. ERIC, 1980. ED 192 346.

Connors, Patricia. "Some Attitudes of Returning or Older Students of Composition." College Composition and Communication 33 (1982): 263-66.

Conti, Gary J. "Assessing Teaching Style in Adult Education: How and Why." Lifelong Learning 8.8 (1985): 7-11.

Conti, Gary J. Principles of Adult Learning Scale. ERIC, 1979. ED 179 713.

Conti, Gary J. "The Relationship Between Teaching Style and Adult Student Learning." Adult Education Quarterly 35 (1985): 220-28.

Crabbe, Katharyn. The Composing Processes of Mature Adults. ERIC, 1976. ED 123 374.

Cross, K. Patricia. Adults as Learners. San Francisco: Jossey, 1981.

Darkenwald, Gordon G. "Factorial Structure of Differences in Teaching Behavior Related to Adult/Pre-Adult Student Age Status." Adult Education 32 (1982): 197-204.

Darkenwald, Gordon G., and Sharan F. Merriam. Adult Education: Foundations of Practice. New York: Harper, 1982.

Day, Mildred L. Strategies for Teaching the Non-Traditional Student. ERIC, 1980. ED 198 518.

Denton, Virginia L. "Do Grades Sabotage Self-Direction in Adult Learning?" Lifelong Learning 9.7 (1986): 19-22.

Dorsey, Oscar L., and Michael J. Pierson. "A Descriptive Study of Adult Learning Styles in a Nontraditional Education Program." Lifelong Learning 7.8 (1984): 8-11.

Ede, Lisa S. The Composing Process: What We Know/What We Tell Our Students. ERIC 1979. ED 176 296.

Elias, John L. "Andragogy Revisted." Adult Education 29 (1979): 252-56.

Engleberg, Isa N. Andragogy in Community College Communication Courses. ERIC, 1982. ED 221 898.

Epstein, Howard V. The Older College Student--A Changing Tradition. ERIC, 1985. ED 243 361.

Galerstein, Carolyn, and Joan M. Chandler. "Faculty Attitudes toward Adult Students." Improving College and University Teaching 30 (1982): 133-37.

Gay, L. R. Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application. 2nd ed. Columbus: Chas. E. Merrill, 1981.

Gillam-Scott, Alice. Treading Softly: Dealing with the Apprehensions of Older Freshman Writers. ERIC, 1984. ED 244 260.

Gorham, Joan. "Differences Between Teaching Adults and Pre-Adults: A Closer Look." Adult Education Quarterly 35 (1985): 194-209.

Hairston, Maxine. "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing." College Composition and Communication 33 (1982): 76-88.

Harwood, John T. "Freshman English Ten Years After: Writing in the World." College Composition and Communication 33 (1982): 281-83.

Hogan, Thomas P., and Elizabeth Hendrickson. "The Study Habits of Adult College Students." Lifelong Learning 8.1 (1984): 7-10.

Holmes, Mel R. "Interpersonal Behaviors and Their Relationship to the Andragogical and Pedagogical Orientations of Adult Educators." Adult Education 31 (1980): 18-29.

Iovacchini, Eric V., Linda M. Hall, and Dennis D. Hengstler. "Going Back to College: Some Differences Between Adult Students and Traditional Students." College and University 6 (1985): 43-54.

Jensen-Osinski, Barbara H., et al. The Graying of the College Classroom: Impact of Older People as Peers in the Classroom on Attitudes and on Performance of Undergraduates. ERIC, 1981. ED 213 885.

Kalister, Rose Ann. The Adult Learner in the Writing Center: Teaching Techniques. ERIC, 1981. ED 209 674.

Kasworm, Carol E. "The Older Student as Undergraduate." Adult Education 31 (1980): 30-47.

Knowles, Malcolm S. The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy versus Pedagogy. New York: Association Press, 1970.

Knowles, Malcolm S. The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy. Rev. ed. Chicago: Follett, 1980.

Knox, Alan B. Adult Development and Learning. San Francisco: Jossey, 1977.

Kuh, George D., and Frank P. Ardaiolo. "A Comparison of the Personality Characteristics of Adult Learners and Traditional Age Freshmen." Journal of College Student Personnel 20 (1979): 329-35.

Lasker, Harry, James Moore, and Edwin L. Simpson. Adult Development and Approaches to Learning. ERIC, 1980. ED 195 854.

Long, Huey B. Adult Learning: Research and Practice. New York: Cambridge, The Adult Education Co., 1983.

Lueers, Nancy M., K. W. Schaie, and S. L. Willis. How Older Dogs Learn: Adults and Language Learning. ERIC, 1983. ED 230 028.

Magarrell, Jack. "The Enrollment Boom Among Older Americans: 1 in 3 College Students Is Now over 25 Years Old." Chronicle of Higher Education 4 May 1983: 3+.

McClain, Ruth Stellatella. The Rationale and Strategy for Serving Mature Women Returning to Higher Education. ERIC, 1977. ED 179 146.

Meyers, Miriam. Characteristics of Adult Students' Writing. ERIC, 1983. ED 233 392.

Miller, Susan. Rhetorical Maturity: Definition and Development. ERIC, 1979. ED 176 292.

Mishler, Carol, and Margaret Davenport. Faculty and Student Attitudes toward the Mixed-Age College Class. ERIC, 1984. ED 250 988.

Morenberg, Max. The Elusive Nature of the Relationship between Syntactic Maturity and Writing Quality. ERIC, 1979. ED 176 270.

Oddi, Lorys. "The Lecture: An Update on Research." Adult Education Quarterly 33 (1983): 222-29.

Pianko, Sharon H. "The Composing Acts of College Freshman Writers: A Description." Diss. Rutgers U, 1977.

Praeger, Karen J. "Educational Aspirations and Self-Esteem in Returning and Traditional Community College Students." Journal of College Student Personnel 24 (1983): 144-47.

Prahl, Ellen. Confidence and Competence: Basic Skills Programs and Refresher Courses for Re-Entry Women. Field Evaluation Draft. ERIC, 1980. ED 196 337.

Rand, Margaret. Designing an Adult Education Program. ERIC, 1976. ED 192 013.

Roelfs, Pamela J. "Teaching and Counseling Older College Students." Findings 2 (1975): 5-8.

Rogers, George W., Jr. Nontraditional, Female, Commuter Students: Coping with College. ERIC, 1981. ED 207 450.

Scheuermann, Mona. "The Use of 'Free Writing' in Adult Composition Classes." English Quarterly 10 (1977): 71-5.

Schmidt, Steven D. Understanding the Culture of Adults Returning to Higher Education: Barriers to Learning and Preferred Learning Styles. ERIC, 1983. ED 242 248.

Shaughnessy, Mina. Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing. New York: Oxford U. Press, 1977.

Shearon, Ronald W., et al. Putting Learning to Work: A Profile of Students in North Carolina Community Colleges, Technical Institutes, and Technical Colleges. North Carolina State University: Dept. of Adult and Community College Education, 1980.

Silver, Marilyn B. "Teaching Writing to Adult Learners: Using Job-Related Materials." Improving College and University Teaching 30 (1982): 33-7.

Slaninka, Susan. "Writing as a Learning Process -- Implications for the Adult Educator." Lifelong Learning 6.7 (1983): 15-7.

Sommers, Nancy. "Revision Strategies of Students, Writers, and Experienced Adult Writers." College Composition and Communication 31 (1980): 378-88.

Steitz, Jean A. "Issues of Adult Development within the Academic Environment." Lifelong Learning 8.6 (1985): 15-18.

Taylor, Marilyn. The Role of Adult Experience in Learning: Consequences for the Classroom. ERIC, 1981. ED 215 085.

Thompson, Merle O'Rourke. "The Returning Student: Writing Anxiety and General Anxiety." Teaching English in the Two-Year College 10 (1983): 35-9.

Verner, Coolie, and Gary Dickinson. "The Lecture: An Analysis and Review of Research." Adult Education 17 (1967), 85-100.

Weare, Jane. Test Anxiety in Adults. ERIC, 1984. ED 244 116.

Zachary, Steven. Technical Communication: Meeting the Needs of Adult Writers. ERIC, 1981. ED 209 684.

Zemke, Ron, and Susan Zemke. "30 Things We Know for Sure about Adult Learning." Training 18.6 (1981): 45-52.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Forsyth Technical College
2100 Silas Creek Parkway
Winston-Salem, NC 27103
June 20, 1986

English Department Chairperson
School Name
School Address
City, State Zip

Dear Colleague:

As an English instructor at Forsyth Technical College and as a doctoral student in curriculum and teaching at UNCG, for my dissertation I am researching how to teach writing to adults. In a few weeks I will send questionnaires to all full-time composition instructors in the North Carolina Community College System.

What I need from you is a list of the instructors at your school who qualify for the population I am surveying. Below are the qualifications for you to go by in listing the names.

1. Full-time instructors, either 9 or 12-month contract; number of hours taught as a normal teaching load doesn't matter.

2. Instructor should have taught at least ONE composition course in the last two years (July 1, 1984-July 1, 1986); this course should be designated a writing course, first or second-year, and would normally include instruction in grammar, mechanics, punctuation; do not count upper level courses (report writ, bus comm, lit).

3. Instructor may teach in technical, general education, developmental, or college transfer curriculum, as long as he has taught at least ONE composition course in the last two years.

4. DO NOT INCLUDE ANY INSTRUCTOR WHO TEACHES ONLY LITERATURE (EVEN IF LITERARY ESSAYS ARE WRITTEN). DO NOT INCLUDE ADULT BASIC ED, CONTINUING ED, OR VOCATIONAL INSTRUCTORS.

Enclosed is a pre-addressed postcard for you to fill out and return to me at:

2657 Windy Crossing Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27107

There is a space for you to indicate the name of any instructor you're not sure about and a space for you to sign your name so I can have a contact person at each school. Since I am surveying a complete population, I need a good return to insure the validity of my findings. When I receive the names of qualified instructors from your school, I will send the questionnaires to each individual. Information from the postcard and from the final questionnaire will be confidential. The coding on the postcard is for follow-up purposes only.

Your help on this project will enable me to determine my total population and to put together what I hope is useful information to all of us who teach writing to adult students.

If you have any questions about who should be listed on the card, you can call me collect at (919) 784-6961. PLEASE RETURN THE CARD NO LATER THAN JUNE 30, 1986.

Sincerely,

Sherry Sherrill
English Instructor
Project All Write Graduate

Enclosure: Return postcard

APPENDIX B

RETURN POSTCARD

Names of full-time instructors who have taught at least one composition course since July 1, 1984.
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Please place a check after anyone who qualifies but is not available this summer because of leave, vacation, etc.

List below anyone else you're not sure about and briefly state what the problem is.
1.
2.
3.

Signed:
PLEASE RETURN THIS CARD BY JUNE 30, 1986. THANK YOU.

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE COVER MEMORANDUM

To: Full-Time Writing Instructors in NCCCS
From: Sherry Sherrill, Doctoral Candidate and English Instructor
Date: July 15, 1986
Subject: Questionnaire on Teaching Writing to Adults

Attached is the questionnaire I am sending to full-time writing instructors in the North Carolina Community College System as part of my doctoral dissertation research at UNCG. I need your help in completing the questionnaire and returning it to me as soon as possible. The results of the survey will, I believe, validate many of our classroom practices and suggest ways we can improve our work in the writing classroom, particularly with adult students.

Will you help me by reading the directions to the survey (on page 1) and answering questions as fully as possible. Where requested, please print or type.

I know your summer is busy and that I'm asking for valuable time, but I think all of us will benefit from my findings. Data from the questionnaire will, of course, remain confidential, even if you elect to fill in the Optional Section. Your survey was coded for follow-up purposes only. No individual or school will be identified by name in the dissertation or in any follow-up activities.

For purposes of the questionnaire an "adult" is considered to be over 22 and returning to college after several years' absence. A traditional student is aged 18-22 and has enrolled in college directly from high school. The "writing" classroom is a class where paragraphs and/or essays, mechanics and grammar are normally taught.

Your name was given to me by your department head several weeks ago in response to my request for people to be included in the survey population. My spelling of your name is based, in several instances, on my interpretation of the department head's handwriting and of names covered by postmarks. If I misspelled your name, please accept my apology and print it correctly on the last page so I can forward the results to the "real" you.

As you know, surveyors live or die by their rate of return. I hope you'll choose to help me with a project which should ultimately aid all of us who seek success in teaching writing. A pre-addressed envelope is included for your convenience. Survey results will be sent upon request; just indicate at the end of the questionnaire if you want a copy.

If you have any questions please contact me immediately at (919) 784-6961, collect. Thanks for your help.

APPENDIX D

SURVEY ON ADULT STUDENTS AS WRITERS

SURVEY ON ADULT STUDENTS AS WRITERS

PART ONE
This part of the survey asks you to respond to a series of statements about teaching writing, teaching writing to adults, and your perceptions of adults as writers. To the left of each statement you will see the coding system for the survey. PLEASE CROSS THROUGH THE ONE RESPONSE THAT MOST CLOSELY APPROXIMATES YOUR TYPICAL FEELING OR BELIEF. If you are not familiar with a term in the statement, respond by crossing through DK, Don't Know. Use DK, Don't Know, if you are not sure whether you agree or disagree with a statement. Remember that an ADULT STUDENT is over 22 years of age and has been out of school for several years; a TRADITIONAL STUDENT is 18-22 and has entered college right out of high school. ALL statements refer exclusively to the WRITING classroom. Term abbreviations are as follows:

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
DK = Don't Know
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

Example: (SA) ~~(A)~~ (DK) (D) (SD)

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 1. Adult students follow directions better than traditional students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 2. Most of my class time is spent helping students write or edit papers.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 3. In general, I feel I am up to date on current theory and practice in teaching writing.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 4. My English department has redesigned one or more courses to fit the needs of adult students.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 5. Adult students are more motivated to learn than traditional students.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 6. The instructor should provide topics for students to write about.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 7. I alter my teaching methods when I have adult students in class.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 8. Most of my knowledge about adult students comes from teaching experience.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 9. Adult students make higher grades on papers than traditional students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 10. I use the process approach in teaching writing.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 11. Peer group editing has been an effective technique for me.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 12. Adult students usually understand their weaknesses in writing when they enter the class.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 13. Adult students use prewriting strategies more effectively than traditional students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 14. There are enough differences in adult and traditional students to warrant different methods in teaching writing to each group.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 15. Grammar and mechanics should be learned before writing tasks are assigned.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 16. Adult students need more time to complete assignments than traditional students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 17. Adult students prefer the lecture method in writing class.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 18. Traditional students tolerate critical comments on papers better than adult students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 19. Adult students turn in late papers more often than traditional students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 20. Writing students should write an outline, then write the paper.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 21. Adult students are more likely to ask what a paper should contain than traditional students are.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 22. Adult students are more self-directing in writing class than traditional students are.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 23. Traditional students have higher grade expectations than adult students have.

(SURVEY ON ADULT STUDENTS AS WRITERS)

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 24. A student's writing process is more important than the final product he turns in.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 25. Most of my class time is spent explaining what to do for the assignment.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 26. Traditional students are more willing to contribute to class discussions than adult students are.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 27. Adult students revise rough drafts more than traditional students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 28. In general, adult students are better writers than traditional students are.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 29. Adult students exhibit more writing anxiety than traditional students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 30. Adult students enjoy journal keeping more than traditional students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 31. Adult students ask more questions about required length of papers than traditional students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 32. Traditional students enjoy off-the-subject discussions more than adult students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 33. Adult students require more individualized instruction than traditional students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 34. Adult students prefer grammar drill to writing practice.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 35. Adult students seek more one-to-one help from me than traditional students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 36. I am familiar with the basic principles of adult education theory and practice.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 37. Adult students, if given a choice, would prefer nongraded writing classes.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 38. I am satisfied with the methods I use in teaching writing.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 39. I permit students to rewrite papers for a new grade after revisions have been made.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 40. Adult students attend class more regularly than traditional students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 41. Traditional students enjoy studying grammar and mechanics more than adult students do.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 42. Traditional students are more likely to volunteer to read their papers in class than adult students are.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 43. Adult students are more likely to expect writing class to consist of grammar and mechanics drill than traditional students are.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 44. I prefer teaching adult students.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 45. Adult students' organizational skills are better than traditional students' are.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 46. Adult students work better than traditional students do in peer editing groups.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 47. Adult students are more independent in writing class than traditional students are.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 48. Traditional students are more likely to put off a writing task to the last minute than adult students are.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 49. Writing classes should contain drill on grammar and mechanics every day.

(SA) (A) (DK) (D) (SD) 50. Adult students have writer's block more often than traditional students do.

(SURVEY ON ADULT STUDENTS AS WRITERS)

PART TWO
Please circle degrees earned and fill in the appropriate blanks below. PRINT OR TYPE.

I. DEGREES EARNED:

a. B.A./B.S. (Circle One) ______ School ______ Year ______ Major

b. M.A./M.S./M.Ed. (Circle One) ______ School ______ Year ______ Degree Area

c. Ph.D./Ed.D. (Circle One) ______ School ______ Year ______ Degree Area

d. Other ______ (Specify) ______ School ______ Year ______ Degree Area

II. TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

a. High School ______ (No. of Yrs.) ______ (Subject Area)

b. 2-yr Coll/Tech/ Voc/Jr. Coll ______ (No. of Yrs.) ______ (Subject Area)

c. 4-yr College ______ (No. of Yrs.) ______ (Subject Area)

d. Other ______ (Specify) ______ (No. of Yrs.) ______ (Subject Area)

III. PREPARATION IN METHODS:

a. Have you had

	No	Yes	When Where
...a course in methods of teaching writing?			
...a course in teaching ADULTS?			
...a course in teaching WRITING TO ADULTS?			

b. Besides course work, where have you obtained information on methods of teaching writing? List all that apply.
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

c. Besides course work, where have you obtained information on methods of teaching adults? List all that apply.
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

d. Besides course work, where have you obtained information on methods of teaching writing to adults? List all that apply.
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

(SURVEY ON ADULT STUDENTS AS WRITERS)

PART THREE
Please respond briefly to the following questions. PRINT OR TYPE.

a. If you have changed your methods of teaching writing (how you teach the content material) because you have had adult students in your classes, describe specifically what you have done.

b. If your behavior (how you deal with them as people) as an instructor is different toward adult students, describe specifically how it is different.

c. List three major differences in adult students and traditional students as writers.

1.
2.
3.

OTHER COMMENTS:

OPTIONAL SECTION
(No individuals or schools will be identified in the dissertation.)

Age Range	____ (21-25)	____ (26-35)	____ (36-45)	____ (46-55)	____ (55+)
Sex	____ (M)	____ (F)			
Race	____ (W)	____ (B)	____ (Asian)	____ (Hisp.)	____ (Other, specify)

THANK YOU FOR TAKING YOUR VALUABLE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY. PLEASE
____ CHECK HERE IF YOU WANT A COPY OF THE RESULTS SENT TO YOU.

Return completed survey to:
Ms. Sherry Sherrill
2657 Windy Crossing Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27107

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE FOLLOW-UP POSTCARD

July 25, 1986

Colleagues,

Two weeks ago I sent you a survey on teaching writing to adults. Over 70 of you have graciously responded, and I am busy tabulating data. If you haven't yet mailed your questionnaire to me, it would be most helpful if I could receive it by August 15.

I'm hoping for an unprecedented return, of course, and YOU are a big part of my potential success. If you have misplaced the original, it'll come as no surprise that another is available if you'll let me know! Just call (919) 784-6961 and leave a message for me.

Mail completed surveys to:
Sherry Sherrill
2657 Windy Crossing Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27107

Many thanks.