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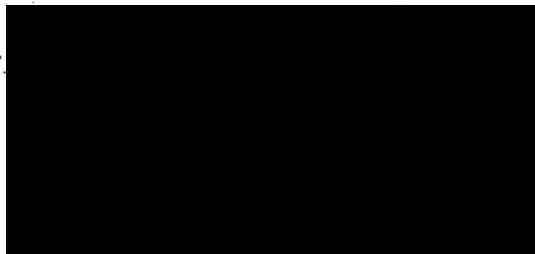
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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE FEMALE NONPERSISTERS  
ENROLLED IN THE OFFICE CAREERS PROGRAMS AT DOUGLAS COLLEGE  
BETWEEN 1976 - 1979

by

Marian Justus

B.A., University of British Columbia, 1968

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS (EDUCATION)

in the Faculty

of

Education

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APPROVAL

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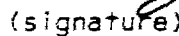
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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE FEMALE NONPERSISTERS ENROLLED IN THE OFFICE

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## ABSTRACT

Although women are purported to be entering nontraditional areas of the work force at an ever increasing rate, it is questionable as to whether true democratization of education has coincided with the expanding female work force. The community colleges are providing access to those groups who would not normally be able to enter a post-secondary institution. Short job training programs, flexible hours and low tuition (or government sponsorship) make it possible in theory for lower-income females with families to retrain quickly and obtain employment. Yet attrition in the most popular of these "short, job entry" programs, e.g., Office Careers, is high enough to warrant further investigation about the characteristics, motivations and problems of women who dropped out. It is hoped that the data from such an investigation could be used by educators for curriculum planning, as a base for budgetary decision making, and as a guide to the establishment of support networks for women throughout the system.

Most past attrition research has centered on the traditional college-age student seeking academic qualifications. It is unlikely that many of the findings can be generalized to the sample surveyed. Motivations for entering college are dissimilar, and some of the personal attributes which have been associated with dropouts do not parallel findings for mature female dropouts. Although time and financial difficulties are significant barriers to completion for traditional and nontraditional age students, marriage and family commitments are less frequently mentioned as situational barriers in past dropout research. In addition, women are often counselled or encouraged to enter secretarial programs with little prior exploration of abilities, interests and available options.

Because of the amount of conflicting data in the area of attrition research, and the difficulty this poses when attempting to draw a link between female participation and attrition, a questionnaire was developed to survey all the female dropouts from the Office Careers programs at Douglas College between 1976 - 1979. Interviews were conducted with those willing to participate, resulting in a total response rate of 66 percent.

A descriptive analysis was run and chi square tests of independence were conducted with several of the demographic variables.

The results of the study suggest that the surveyed women are relatively low income, mature students with an average educational background. Ignorance of increasing options for women and a lack of career counselling has led them into a traditional career program; the college's inability to adapt its learning environment to individual needs after entry and to develop supportive networks for the mature female student has helped to force them out of the system. The respondents dropped out of the program prior to completion because of family commitments, no opportunity for part-time study, a lack of prior study skills, and a somewhat insensitive attitude on the part of their instructors. While individualized instruction is viewed positively by the majority surveyed, curriculum revision and increased awareness of the life patterns of women on the part of educators are recommended if self-paced, modularized learning is to be totally effective in the area of Office Careers. These conclusions and recommendations represent students in the Office Careers programs at Douglas College, and cannot be generalized to a larger population.

Implications for administrators, instructors, educational planners and counsellors who deal predominantly with the female student are presented, along with recommendations for further study of these and other related populations.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Purpose of the Study

The community colleges, CEGEPS and technical institutes across Canada have developed large and flourishing business education sections. An Office Careers program is often the first of many diversified vocational programs introduced in a community college which may have to date offered solely career programs, university transfer courses and Adult Basic Education. Registration in these programs has risen rapidly - one large multi-campus college increasing its available seats from 40 to 160 between 1976 and 1979 (Admissions, Douglas College, 1979). Enrolment in these programs is almost totally female, despite the fact that more and more women are purported to be entering nontraditional areas of the work force at an ever-increasing rate (Glagowski & Lanning, 1976).

It is questionable as to whether true democratization of education has coincided with the expanding female work force. An open-door policy, a comprehensive curriculum which includes both vocational and academic programs, low tuition fees, and easy access have all contributed to easing the barriers normally faced by women. The colleges have done less, however, to overcome the personal and situational readjustments needed for successful reentry into the education system (Hoek, 1978). Students who have difficulty in attaining success are often those who are reticent

about asking for help (Motto, 1959). In addition, women frequently feel much anxiety about using counselling or other college services, feeling that as mature students, they shouldn't need to ask counsellors for help (Brandenburg, 1974). Those women who are intellectually suited to Office Careers and are self-motivated from years of running a household are also those who have been isolated from adult contact for lengthy periods of time, while caring for young children. They often need the emotional network which appears to be absent to them, but they are not sure how to resolve this need.

Although the college may be able to do little to secure positive communications on the part of families and friends who may resent the mature student's new role, it can begin to look at establishing a more supportive network within the college. Specifically, the college might consider assisting women to evaluate past experiences and develop a greater self-confidence; identify talents and abilities they already have; set employment goals and reach them; and help to assess progress and development throughout the course. One such program, Women Involved in New Goals (WING) began at Queens College in New York in an attempt to meet the needs of women returning to school (Brandenburg 1974). Since then many similar programs have sprung up in Canadian Universities and Colleges. One of the best examples of an institution providing excellent educational services to women is Humber College's Centre for Women in Toronto (Willis, 1977). The ramifications of such programs could be significant for business educators as no longer would women be encouraged to be realistic and make choices appropriate to the feminine role. Students would be gaining secretarial skills because they have chosen the profession despite being aware of opportunities in other more nontraditional fields. It should be noted

that Humber's program was phased out in 1977 because, according to the president of Humber, the special needs of women are not as pressing now as they were six years ago when the Centre was founded (Willis, 1977).

On the one hand, it appears that women have achieved equal status with men in accessing education and in moving into fields of employment previously considered to be male oriented. However, a recent Statistics Canada survey shows that women, despite gains made in recent years, are still not being paid as much as men in similar positions (Statistics Canada, 1978). According to the survey, female bachelor degree graduates are paid a salary \$1,000 to \$4,000 less per year than their male counterparts in every field except the humanities and fine and applied arts. If our institutions continue to offer such programs for reasons of institutional image, to look relevant in today's society, or to be meeting the needs of all segments of society, rather than a sincere commitment to equal opportunity regardless of gender, then programs will continue to go the way of Humber's fine Centre. The blame rests only in part with the employer. He or she is only taking advantage of the image created by the institution which has steered the female student in certain "traditional" directions because she is a female.

Although Douglas College, like many other similar community colleges, offers programs which are designed to meet the needs of the mature student, attrition in some of these programs appears to contradict this intention. If women were genuinely seeking short term, skill oriented jobs, as opposed to careers, justifying the number of students who leave the program prior to completion becomes difficult. The Office Careers program at Douglas College is similar to many business education courses offered in community colleges across Canada. It is packaged into modules which take the student

anywhere from six months to one year to complete. It operates under an individualized, self-directed learning approach and uses a Mastery level to indicate completion. Because the program is guided by provisions established by Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) for funded trainees, it uses a continuous intake approach - students both graduate and enter monthly depending on seats available. Thirty training hours per week are required. The programs when studied had no CEIC funded trainees - all students were fee-payers. In 1978, a basic academic threshold requirement was introduced for all office careers programs at the college. A pretest administered by Admissions prior to entry ensured that students have a reading level sufficient to master the materials covered in the course. Students who do not reach a specific percentile are referred to a general academic upgrading program - usually Adult Basic Education (ABE) or Basic Training and Skills Development (BTSD). Upon completion, students may enter the specialized vocational skill training course of their choice. Entry-level (threshold) testing was abandoned in the academic year 1979 - 1980 because the departments concerned were unable to cope with the number of students requiring testing throughout the system.

The term "dropouts" in this study includes both students who leave college voluntarily and those who are forced to leave because of lack of progress or failing grades. The program is structured so that students may make repeated attempts to master the objectives of each specific unit.

Formal studies of persisters or nonpersisters from vocational or career/technical programs have been minimal in B.C. (Dennison, Forrester, Jones and Tunner, 1975). Much of the literature available tends to examine university transfer students. These students tend to be the traditional college age student, unlike the great disparity in age found in the program being studied.



Furthermore, the statistics are weighted by "male" responses, as more male than female students register with plans to eventually enter university, and reasons for early withdrawal are significantly different for females than for males. Those studies done on occupational programs with predominantly female student populations tend to focus on urban ethnic groups not found in most British Columbia colleges (Gray, 1975).

Expanding employment opportunities in British Columbia are increasingly in the nonprofessional, nonacademic occupations (Carney, 1977). The forecast is that the 25 - 44 age group will show significant increases in all regions during the period 1971 - 1991 (Carney, 1977). This growth indicates an upgrading due to technological change or the desire for multicareers rather than the one career for a lifetime concept which has generally been accepted by society to date (Table 1). However, change of traditional attitudes toward women is slowed down by the cyclic nature of our economy (Shack, 1977). During periods of stringent financing, such as we are presently experiencing, community college educators may be tempted to accept almost any conditions in return for federal aid. Pressure is often placed on the system to shorten programs and course content, and to allow students to enter with no prior counselling or pretesting to determine suitability of program choice. In order to assist in making the necessary adjustments to teaching methods, course scheduling, counselling and admissions, curriculum, and methods of finance positive, data needs to be collected on what happens to people to make them drop out of a short term occupational program leading to rapid job entry. This study looked for a profile of such a student. The study surveyed all of the students who have dropped out of the Office Careers programs at a large, urban, multicampus college on the Lower Mainland. It included programs which presently comprise 160 training seats leading to

certificates of Clerk Typist, Stenographer, and Bookkeeper. The survey provided data on:

- I. background characteristics and present employment status;
- II. reasons for re-entry;
- III. barriers experienced which led students to early withdrawal.

The barriers can be further delineated into:

- a) personal
- b) institutional
- c) situational.

The investigation proceeded initially by examining the demographic characteristics of the sample surveyed. Subsequently, reasons for re-entry and barriers experienced were investigated on the basis of a number of variables. Finally, findings were interpreted in light of the research questions posed in the Review of Related Literature.

#### Importance of the Study

Decisions with regard to program content, length, terminal objectives, etc., can only be effective if they are made to reflect the needs and interests of the student population that will be accessing those programs. One way to ensure some degree of congruency between educational planning and student's needs and aspirations is to have access to meaningful information relative to the characteristics of the present (and predicted future) student population. Fifty percent of students attending community colleges can be considered nontraditional, i.e., mature students or students with poor records of past academic performance attending college for practical consideration rather than intellectual pursuits (Bushnell, 1973). These facts should have assisted in shaping the direction in which the occupational components of the community colleges in British Columbia have developed, as

well as shaping the mandate which they reflect - universal accessibility to post secondary education. Nevertheless, where there has been a great proliferation of educational programs geared to women, there has been virtually no change in the provision of the educational services necessary in order for a woman to access learning in the first place (Willis, 1977).

The data collected by this study may be of considerable assistance to educators dealing with the effects of striving to adapt to an increasingly nontraditional student population. Specifically, the study provides relevant data for business education instructors, career counsellors, curriculum developers, and business and industrial concerns which develop their own training programs. The data may also lead to further reflection prior to budgetary decision making for occupational training by government agencies and college administrators. Finally, the data may lead to a review of admissions policies and procedures for Office Careers programs which presently reflect an open door concept (special mature entry low tuition, accessibility) but seldom provide the support necessary after entry to complete the student's goals within the system.

The findings of the survey cannot be generalized to other occupational student populations. The design includes all the early withdrawals from the Office Careers programs from 1976 to 1979 at one college only. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the groundwork established here will be of some assistance to educators and researchers gathering information to help and to support women in selecting career directions and in successfully completing them within the system. Recognizing the unlikelihood of changing the system within a short period of time, it is hoped that the findings will become a basis for formulating new and innovative ways of coping with the present restrictions placed on the nontraditional student.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of Related Literature

This chapter reviews literature relevant to attrition from institutions of higher learning, and secondly, literature dealing specifically with women participating in higher education. Both sections review demographic characteristics and socio-economic factors relevant to the populations being studied. This is followed by an examination of the motivations for entry, and the barriers to successful completion. Finally, specific research questions are posed; these serve as a basis for development of an instrument to analyze factors affecting attrition in the Office Careers programs at Douglas College.

#### Dropouts From Higher Education

A huge body of dropout research in the 1950's and 1960's leads to the conclusion that students drop out because of failure (Angers, 1961; Bertrand, 1955; Carew, 1957). Generalizations drawn from the majority of these studies may apply only to those who do leave as failures. Their relevance in the 1970's and 1980's is to be viewed with caution; the assumption that dropouts have low scholastic aptitude, low educational aspirations, are less mature, are less well socially integrated and come from families of lower socio-economic status is far less appropriate today than it was a decade ago (Cross, 1976). More recent studies examine whether the withdrawal was voluntary or nonvoluntary (Rossman & Kirk, 1970) and whether there is a significant difference between part time and full time student attrition (Gorter, 1978; Waniewicz, 1976). This change in categorization reflects the growth body of nontraditional students attending colleges both full and part time, more readily able to transfer from one institution to another, and less concerned

with dropping out for a few years "to find themselves" or to fulfill personal commitments before re-enrolling to accumulate the required credits for successful completion.

### Background Characteristics

Age. Early research in this area found a considerably higher rate of attrition for students older than the average (Sexton, 1965; Summerskill & Darling, 1955). This research was centered around two and four year institutions leading to degrees. Astin (1975) also identified older students, particularly women, as being more likely to drop out than students of traditional entry age, i.e., 17 to 19 years of age. Although this finding is consistent with Trent and Medsker (1968), Astin's sample of mature students is relatively small; three percent are 20 or 21, and five percent are over 21. Other studies have shown the highest concentration of nonpersisters in the 20 to 25 age category, followed by 18 and 19 years olds (Baratta, 1978; Van Dyck, 1977). Baratta's sample included both transfer nonpersisting students and occupational nonpersisters.

A number of contradictions to the positive correlation between "normal" age and persistence have been documented. In a 1976 survey of post-secondary institutions in Australia, fourteen institutions stated that mature age students performed better than normal aged students, and twelve stated they performed just as well. Trow (1972) contends that late entrants demonstrate strong motivation and a clearer sense of what they want and need from education thereby reducing academic wastage.

A longitudinal study of students enrolled in Basic Training and Skills Development (BTSD) throughout British Columbia (Blunt & Middleton, 1978) indicates that enrollees with lower ages and less previous academic experience are more likely to withdraw or fail than are enrollees who are older

and have more academic experience. The purpose of BTSD is to provide occupationally oriented skills and knowledge through a general academic upgrading program to enable trainees to enter directly into employment or into specialized vocational skill training courses.

The contradictory evidence presented here suggests that age cannot be used as a predictor of attrition.

Socio-economic Status (SES). Socio-economic factors have been cited as having a large role in determining who goes to college and how long they stay. Trent and Medsker's (1968) longitudinal study of 10,000 high school graduates showed that children of upper socio-economic families entered college regardless of their ability, whereas the bright child of a father working at a low level job had about a 40 percent chance of going to college. Project Talent (Cooley & Becker, 1966) used seven different indices of socio-economic status and found that junior college students fell between the non-college and the four-year college students on every index. This supports Eckland's argument (1964) that student population at each institution is relatively uniform with respect to SES. Since most research is based on data from a single institution, it is difficult to correlate SES variables with persistence or nonpersistence. In contradiction to Eckland's findings, community colleges in British Columbia attract a much more heterogeneous group of students than the universities in socio-economic terms (Dennison et al, 1975). In virtually all variables examined (father's education and occupation, mother's education and occupation, family financial status) college students in British Columbia reflected a population comparable to the general population. A higher level than the population was reflected on the same variables when they were applied to university students. Dennison's "noncontinuing" group is lower than the general student population in terms of socio-economic criteria.

Inability to finance one's education is one of the most often quoted reasons given for early withdrawal. In a study of 1,474 students who withdrew from Los Angeles City College from 1973-1975, the most often stated reason for withdrawal was for financial problems and a need to go to work (Stine, 1976). Summerskill's (1962) review of the literature found that in 16 out of 21 studies, financial reasons were ranked among the top three most important factors in attrition. A follow-up study of dropouts from the Indiana Vocational Technical College in Indianapolis (Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education, 1978) gathered substantial data to support Summerskill's findings. Financing one's education is a barrier to successful completion which will be covered in detail in a later section of this review. However, family finances can be a major constraint to post-secondary education, when considered as being one of major parameters of socio-economic classification; namely, family income and education.

Family income. Novak (1978) discovered that the median income of the families of students who withdrew was significantly lower than that of students who did not drop out. However, his conclusion did not necessarily link family income with dropping out, as his studies included samples from both public and private colleges.

Income levels of the families of college students in British Columbia are generally lower than that of university students with career/technical and vocational students very much below their peers (Dennison et al, 1975). Another study by the same authors done in 1974 (Dennison et al, 1974) broke these indicators into even smaller components by linking secondary graduates from the west side of Vancouver with having earned more academic credits than their east side counterparts. Canada Census data indicates the west side population has somewhat higher socio-economic status than the east side

population. This split was also evident in Hoek's study (1978) which included samples of college students from the Fraser Valley and the North Shore.

Studies done on female participation in tertiary education have presented considerable conflicting evidence which leads one to look with suspicion on the precept that family income is a direct factor in attrition (O'Donnell & Anderson, 1978; Glagowski & Lanning, 1976). These findings will be discussed at length in the second part of this review. Socio-economic status and occupation of fathers was found to have little to do with career choice (O'Donnell & Anderson, 1978). However, financial need was seen as a significant barrier to participation (Van Dyck, 1977; Frederickson, 1975).

Parental education. Studies by Chase (1970), Pitcher & Blanchild (1970), Spady (1970), and Astin (1973), found that the level of education of both parents correlated significantly with persistence. Astin's study found that chances that a student will persist through four years of college will increase by 10 percent if the mother has earned a degree beyond a B.A. Dennison et al (1975) found that 40 percent of the failing grades received by his sample of British Columbia college students were assigned to students whose fathers had less than Grade 8 education.

Although parental education may not be considered a major factor in determining persistence in some studies, there is certainly evidence to indicate that even as adults returning to school, we reflect the educational and intellectual achievement levels which have been valued in the home while growing up (Alper, 1974).

Academic Considerations. High school GPA and class rank are the most commonly used predictors of persistence (Summerskill, 1962; Chase, 1970; Astin, 1973; Demitroff, 1974). The relationship between academic excellence



and attrition has been widely documented (Panos & Astin, 1968; Spady, 1970; University of Hawaii, 1978). There is a huge variance in the rate of participation in learning alone for those who have a grade school education when compared to those with some college background. Johnstone and Rivera (1965) found that 38 percent of their college educated population were still studying, whereas only 6 percent of those with grade school participated in any subject matter by any method of adult education. Ninety-four percent of the "learners" (those who are participating in post-secondary education) in Waniewicz's OEGA study (1976) had at least some secondary education. Conversely, in the "nonlearners" (those who are not participating in post-secondary education) category, 83 percent had only a grade school education. It appears that the more education one gets, the more they view education as a continuing, life long process rather than a terminal experience which ends with formal schooling.

While most studies concur that high school GPA and rank can accurately predict academic success at college, there are numerous studies which have detected no relationship between these factors and persistence. This finding is generally attributable to the relatively common occurrence of students who voluntarily withdraw to enhance their opportunities at a better school (Eckland, 1964; Hedley, 1970; Rossman & Kirk, 1970).

If one distinguishes between voluntary and nonvoluntary dropouts versus persisters, there appears general agreement that scholastic aptitude and ability can predict success (Astin, 1973; Baratta, 1978; Guisiti, 1964; Peng & Fetters, 1977; Summerskill, 1962). As stated previously, findings prior to 1970 must be viewed with caution when one concedes that the student "mix" in the last 10 years has changed dramatically to include more mature students with additional responsibilities that go beyond their studies.

In one of the Ontario CAATS, success in the two year programs offered was found to be significantly related to the student's secondary school program, recommendation of his secondary school, grade 13 papers passed and to his grade 12 academic average (Picot, 1978). However, in a study done at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) which included a sample of 2,150 male students, no relationship was found between staying in college and scores on the verbal or numerical ability tests, the abstract reasoning test, the IQ test scores, Grade 12 English mark, Grade 12 Science mark, or having repeated a grade in school (Puffer, 1971). The tests used were not cited by the author; therefore, one must view these findings with caution. However, they do coincide with Bushnell's statement (1973) that standardized achievement test scores have been found to be poor predictors of student's performance in occupational programs. Another study using the General Aptitude Test Battery and the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale to test success in clerical office work training center showed no clear patterns (Stanley, 1968). These predictors were found to be not useful for engineering students as well (Grande & Simmons, 1967).

Vocational students have been streamed in the past at a relatively early age away from academic subjects. Decisions about life-time careers are made by the student with little awareness of options. Once in the occupational stream, transfer credit is difficult to obtain and the student wishing to enter university programs is often required to make up a great deal of time. Although GPA may have been on par with her academic peers, the vocational student begins to see herself as less capable. This is compounded by teachers and counsellors who set fewer expectations on these students than on those in the academic stream (Shack, 1977).

Therefore it has yet to be established that high school GPA and rank,

and scholastic aptitude, can predict early withdrawal, particularly in programs with a vocational, as opposed to a liberal arts, base.

Sex. There appears to be strong evidence that there is no relationship between sex of the student and early withdrawal. Research abounds with contradictory conclusions. One of the most prevalent findings indicates that a greater proportion of men successfully complete college programs than women (Astin, 1973; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975; Van Dyck, 1977). On the other hand, numerous studies find no differences in rate of withdrawal between the sexes (Johansson & Rossman, 1973; Summerskill, 1962) while two studies were identified that found that men dropout at significantly higher rates than women (Demos, 1968; and Nelson, 1966). Tinto (1975) found that a greater proportion of women tend to be voluntary withdrawals rather than academic dismissals; while Spady (1970) asserts that women who do persist are more likely to finish "on time" than are their male counterparts. Peng and Fetters (1977) included length of program as a variable and discovered that women were more likely to withdraw only from 2 year programs. This concurs with Blunt and Middleton's findings (1978) which showed that in programs which generally take less than 2 years to complete, female trainees over the four years studied have consistently achieved higher completion rates than males.

Therefore, it appears that such variables as length of program, and voluntary versus nonvoluntary dropouts must be considered when attempting to establish a relationship between sex of the student and early withdrawal.

Marital status. Bushnell (1973) identified 80 percent of the students attending community colleges fulltime in the United States as being single. Waniewicz's study of part-time learning in Ontario (1976) found that single

persons constituted 49 percent or married persons constituted 51 percent of his "Learners", while 56 percent of his "Nonlearners" were married with children at home. Johnstone and Rivera (1965) state that "matrimony is kind to the academic fortunes of men, but cruel to those of women (p. 397)." A recent study done at a Vocational Technical Institute in the United States concluded that despite huge gains in female participation since the Johnstone and Rivera study, the percentage of those married among dropouts is greater than those married among persisters (Van Dyck, 1977). Females in this study had proportionally higher attrition rates than males.

Few of the major studies done in the past on student dropouts consider marital status as a variable, probably due to the fact that those which have been conducted were done on populations of the more traditional college age student. The literature on female participation in higher education commonly includes marital status as a variable, and will be discussed later.

#### Reasons For Re-Entry

"Over and above the desire to become better informed, vocational goals most frequently direct adults into continuing education." (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965, p. 144). The above quoted study found that 36 percent of their total population enrolled to prepare for a new job, while 32 percent wanted to learn more about the job they already had.

The major findings of the OECA study done in Ontario (1976) indicates the following as reasons for learning: personal growth and development, or fulfillment - 35 percent; employment requirements, job advancement, financial benefits, status enhancement, etc., - 33 percent; receiving a credit, degree, diploma, certificate or other similar educational credentials or honours - 10 percent; desire to know more with no functional orientation - 9 percent; to escape boredom, annoyance, emptiness, etc., or to socialize - 6 percent; to

fulfill a need related to family life - 3 percent; to achieve a religious goal - 1 percent. Again personal fulfillment along with vocational goals by far outweighs all other reasons for returning to learning. Waniewicz noted that men more often than women mentioned practical goals, and this finding concurs with Iffert (1957) who found women ranked academic reasons first, followed by occupational reasons. However, he found no significant differences in the reasons for attending college between dropouts and nondropouts.

Vocational education students consider learning to be significantly less important than do nonvocational students, with the exception of females and minority groups (Egginton, 1978). Vocational diploma programs have been shown to include a higher percentage of dropouts than academic programs (Van Dyck, 1977). The negative values and attitudes of the vocational education students indicate that, despite massive investment of funds in vocational programs, students in these programs hold a poor attitude toward themselves and toward learning in general.

It is necessary to distinguish between vocational education with a heavy emphasis on technical training and skills development, and occupational or vocational goals identified by students in programs which place heavier or equal emphasis on a more liberal education. When the latter is considered, investigators have found that giving an occupational goal is conducive to persistence and can increase the students GPA (Frank & Kirk, 1975; Hansen & Taylor, 1970). The evidence in this area is so contradictory that one must consider if better measures of educational commitment might better assess reasons for re-entry.

Other factors which have been shown to affect attrition are the influence of parental or family aspirations and the influence of the students peer group. It was shown earlier that parental educational may not be considered

a major factor in determining persistence, parents with higher levels generally are very interested in the student completing college and this can reduce early withdrawal by a significant margin (Pantages & Creedon, 1978). In the case of married students, the fact that married males persist to a greater extent than married females in some programs seems to indicate that future financial obligation to support the family is seen as the male's function, and therefore support by the wife can help in achieving success. Conversely, familial support for married females cannot be assumed for similar reasons, which can negatively affect persistence. Pressure exerted on students to return to home-making is extensive (Ruslink, 1969; Brandenburg, 1974).

Peer group influence has been positively linked to dropping out in several studies (Grande & Simmon, 1967; Rootman, 1972). Participation in extracurricular activities can help to develop a commitment to the college. In a study done at Southwest Wisconsin Vocational-Technical Institute (Van Dyck, 1977) almost none of the dropouts were involved in any extracurricular activities and persistence can be of considerable significance when investigating populations composed of mature students with family obligations, and vocational students, whose in class time is generally double that of his academic counterpart (30 hours in class per week in the vocational versus 16 hours in the academic at Douglas College). Typically, these students would have little time left over after classes to devote to social activities on or off campus.

### Barriers To Successful Completion

Personal. Some of the personal attributes which have been associated with dropouts over the past decade are qualities such as being less mature, i.e., being less rational, self-controlled, self-confident, independent,

involved, and tolerant; less cosmopolitan; less well socially integrated; having ideas and personal attributes which don't fit the college culture; less conforming; having a negative self-concept; and a negative attitude toward learning (Egginton, 1978; Simpson, 1977; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975).

It is essential to differentiate between the "voluntary" and "non-voluntary" withdrawal if attempts are made to categorize personality traits. Tinto (1975) found that academically successful dropouts had higher ability and grade performance, and displayed greater intellectual interest than those who remained enrolled. Marcia (1966) identified students who were engaged in an "active search for their identity" as potential dropouts, many of them voluntarily, and suggested that this conflict within oneself generates a high anxiety level which in the past has been linked to early withdrawal. However, Rose (1965) found there were no differences in the anxiety level or persisting students and dropouts.

Johnstone and Rivera (1965) identified two main types of barriers to participation: influences external to the individual or at least beyond the individual's control, and those based on personal attitude or disposition toward participation. They found older persons more likely to be held back by personal or dispositional considerations than younger persons. These included "Not the studying type", "Too old to learn", or "Don't need classes to learn." Younger persons and women regardless of age identified more situational hurdles to overcome, such as financial considerations, being too busy, or too hard to get out of the house. Persons of lower socio-economic circumstances faced both kinds of obstacles more frequently than middle or upper class individuals.

Although several researchers have assigned such personal attributes as "more dependent" and "less able to manage things on their own" to dropouts

(Grace, 1957; Robinson, 1967), others identify "defaulter" as being more independent and less conforming (Brown, 1960; Rose & Elton, 1966). Rose and Elton also found dropouts more anxious and maladjusted than persisters on probation, and that among females, they were generally more depressed.

The claim that dropouts tend to be more rebellious and nonconforming, more assertive and having less impulse control is supported by numerous studies (Astin, 1964; Gurin, Newcomb & Cope, 1968; Summerskill, 1962). Strongly related to the more impulsive, uncommitted individual is a lack of self-esteem and self-confidence, which has been documented as being related to the nonpersister, and in particular, enrollees in vocational education programs (Egginton, 1978) who are older, male and lower-income students.

Pantages and Creedon's (1978) examination of the literature studying personality factors and their relation to attrition fails to find any instruments which can be considered useful to predict attrition. They conclude that personality variables cannot yet be regarded as predictive factors, but further investigation in this area is necessary.

Situational. The constraints which weigh most heavily on many groups of individuals studies fall under this category. In Waniewicz's study (1976), nearly two million adults in the province of Ontario considered being busy an obstacle to learning; 15 percent of the total adult population cite financial problems as their major obstacle; and a half million find it too hard to get out of the house. The economic factor was mentioned more often by females than males, and tended to decrease with age for both men and women, while being too busy was cited most often by the older learners, particularly those with children at home regardless of sex. These findings are similar to those of Johnstone and Rivera (1965), although financial considerations were rated highest in this study followed by busy schedules and lack of physical energy at the end of the day.



A follow-up study of dropouts from the Indiana Vocational Technical College in Indianapolis (Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education, 1978) gathered substantial data to indicate that not having enough money was cited as one of the three most common reasons for early withdrawal. This study also cited conflict between job and studies as a major reason given by non-persisters for dropping, indicating that employment status can be considered a situational constraint which may relate to early withdrawal. Fulltime students account for only 50 percent of enrolment of the students at Indiana Vocational Technical College, 54 percent of the fulltime males and 40 percent of the fulltime females work 15 hours a week or more (Bushnell, 1973). Student attrition appears to be higher among part-time as compared with full-time students (Harter, 1969; Mott & Shaw, 1978).

In British Columbia, fulltime enrolments rose from about 42,000 in 1968 to 54,000 in 1974, an increase of nearly 30 percent. Part-time enrolments almost tripled from 10,000 to 28,000 (Dennison et al, 1975). Of those enrolled part-time, 63 percent were 25 years of age and over; 68 percent had been out of school for 10 years or more. Males were somewhat more inclined to be enrolled fulltime than females. Mature students have responsibilities other than their college studies (whether in the home or labor force) which weigh heavily in determining their program and career choices. Only 10 percent of vocational students were enrolled part-time (most colleges allow only fulltime entry in vocational programs being federally funded); yet the traditionally female vocational programs such as Office Careers are drawing from a population composed of a large proportion of mature students.

Numerous other recent studies cite conflict between job and studies and financial difficulties as being the most often mentioned reasons for dropping out (Novak, 1978; Parker, 1978; Van Dyck, 1977). And within the body of

literature devoted to determining attrition from the open-ended portion of questionnaires where students cite their own reasons for withdrawal, financial difficulties are cited second only to academic concerns such as poor grades (Astin, 1964; Bayer, 1968). Less frequently mentioned but an important situational factor in female attrition are considerations such as marriage and family (Brandenburg, 1974). Health reasons account for a small proportion of the attrition rate, but will often lead students to drop out for financial reasons if illness of a family member places financial burdens upon the family (Durcholz & O'Connor, 1973).

#### Female Participation in Higher Education

The re-entry of the mature woman student into tertiary education has suddenly become the answer to sagging enrolments across Canada and the United States. In British Columbia, women constituted 52 percent of the vocational students in British Columbia colleges and institutes in 1977-1978; 54.4 percent of the nonvocational students. Traditionally, the younger student has accessed post-secondary education. However, as noted by Picot (1978) "Without the increasing number of women choosing to attend colleges and universities in the 1970's, Canada's overall post-secondary participation rate would have fallen (p. 13)".

The educational needs of women and the opportunities for women to participate in the labor force are inextricably bound. A married woman with children can expect to work an average of 34 years outside the home; if she is married without children, this increases to 38 years; and single women can expect to be active in the labour force for 48 years. (Labor Canada, 1976). During the decade, 1965-1975, the female labour force increased by 78.1 percent. However, examination of job distribution in Canada reveals that women are clustered in the "service" occupations: 76.2 percent of all workers in

social sciences were women; 75.6 percent in health related professions; and 74.9 percent in clerical occupations. Women are represented as a very small percentage in all professional categories; for example, 3.0 percent of all dentists; 2.3 percent of all lawyers. Women are well represented in the lower income professions. They are concentrated in jobs which are logical extensions of traditional housewife chores, such as waitress, clerks and cleaners. These jobs, like child care, nutrition and nursing, are close to the unpaid work women normally do in their homes (Zuker & Callwood, 1975). In 1901, when the leading occupation for women was that of servant, 78 percent of all clerical workers were men. Today the situation has shifted upward, and males now dominate the higher income, management positions in business, while women fulfill the clerical functions (Status of Women, 1978). In the United States, women make up one-third of the work force but represent less than 5 percent of middle management and less than 2 percent of business executives (Lawless, 1979). In Canada 23 percent of women with a university bachelor's or professional degree in business and commerce were working as clerks, but only 12 percent of men were. The median salary difference for men and women in this category was more than \$1,000 a year (Statistics Canada, 1980).

Changes have occurred in society which make it imperative that women work. It is the post-secondary institutions that women look to as a means to accomplish new occupational goals or to upgrade present skills. The women's movement has altered perceptions of roles for both men and women, and it has raised women's expectations for self-actualization and greater independence. This section will review literature pertaining specifically to the educational needs of women who return to school.

Age. Hoek (1978) found that the typical re-entering woman is a white middle class housewife in her mid to late thirties, has 2 children, and is married to a husband whose education and income are well above average. She has had some previous college experience before dropping out to marry or raise a family. She has probably chosen a relatively conventional career, e.g., nursing, education, business training, as her goal (Frederickson, 1975; Lantz, 1970; Lyon, 1976). Waniewicz identified women aged 18 to 34 and 45 to 49 as a major group seeking opportunities for learning. However, by eliminating previously imposed barriers, more younger, poorer women with relatively poor educational backgrounds are becoming visible on campus (Rossi & Calderwood, 1973). Single-parent women in their 20's and 30's are also returning for upgrading, often the result of economic difficulties accompanying women after divorce (Richards, 1977). Many middle-aged women accustomed to comfortable standard of living also find themselves seeking financial aid in the forms of loans, social assistance, etc. Frequently, they are without work experience and according to the data presented by some authors, employers feel their age makes them bad investments for training (Mott & Shaw, 1978). Studies also indicate that the proportion of separation and divorce among women who return to campus is disproportionately higher (Newsletter, 1974).

Most of the re-entry women, while beginning a "nontraditional" life style in becoming a student, still choose the more traditional, female oriented programs. Until recently, a number of institutions, especially technical schools, refused to admit women to programs in "inappropriate" fields, i.e., fields where, traditionally, few women have been employed and where, as a consequence, job placement may be difficult (Ekstrom, 1972). Although such restrictions are now considered discriminatory, other institutional barriers

serve to reduce the number of women able to complete their program successfully. These are reviewed later in this chapter.

Age and the achievement motive are associated, but different patterns were documented for women of different educational levels (Lawless, 1979). Women with as little as one year of college were most likely to have the highest achievement motivation between the ages 35 to 39; whereas for women with high school or equivalent education, those in the youngest group (21 to 24) scored the highest with a decline from 30 to 39 and a subsequent rise. This data indicates that the better educated a woman becomes, the more likely it appears that dissatisfaction with one's present role and the desire to achieve occurs in the mid to late thirties. For those who have less formal schooling, this desire for accomplishment arrives much earlier, declines then again will rise in the forties. The interaction among work status, education and age is significant, for there is often a subsequent return to paid employment following the emergence of the achievement motive, i.e., the identity search in which the woman seeks a career as helping her to identify and/or satisfy her own needs (Baruck, 1967; Durcholz & O'Connor, 1973; O'Donnell & Anderson, 1978). Eyde (1962) found older women more purposeful, desirous of skill development and wanting constant advancement and self-improvement. These findings were reinforced by Glagowski and Lanning (1976).

Socio-economic status. Women are seeking educational opportunities which will lead them relatively quickly to job entry out of economic necessity. A sharply rising cost of living in both Canada and the United States make it increasingly necessary to supplement one income families. The average working female in Canada is 60 percent more likely to be single, widowed, or divorced or separated than her male counterpart (Heath, 1978). Ten percent of Canadian families have only one parent, and eight out of ten single-parent families

are headed by women. Many earn incomes below the poverty line. In British Columbia, 82.7 percent of those families headed by single parents are headed by women (Statistics Canada, 1978). British Columbia has the highest divorce rate in Canada as of 1976.

Educational institutions are inheriting a clientele in transition, as is evident by the above statistics. The predicted slow-growth economy of the 1980's may limit job opportunities while at the same time making paid work a necessity for most women. Such work-force patterns show a discernible trend away from conventional fulltime enrolment toward part-time participation by an aging work-force in continuing need of retraining and upgrading (Carney, 1977). When one considers socio-economic factors related to female participation in post-secondary education, it appears necessary to distinguish between two separate groups - the young, traditional-age female, and the mature woman returning to school after having raised her family to a level of independence. Part 1 of this review should encompass the former category. Nevertheless, there is a social pressure being exerted on young women against being associated with independence and equality. This tends to skew career options, and the level of commitment displayed, for young women do not want to be identified as feminists. Conversely, the population of mature women at school shows a seriousness of purpose and strong motivation towards increased independence (Cless, 1969; Hechinger, 1975; Markus, 1973; Glagowski & Lanning, 1976).

O'Donnell and Anderson (1978) examined factors which influenced the choice of career goals of female university students. They found that socio-economic status and education of fathers had little effect on career choice, but that the mother's educational level was significant. This supports Astin's findings (1975) that women in nontraditional fields are likely to have educated mothers with some work experience. Another significant finding in the study done by

O'Donnell and Anderson was that none of the mothers of either the "Traditional" or "Pioneers" group had mothers who worked during the women's preschool years.

Findings with regard to participation according to marital status are remarkably identical. Single persons tend to participate in higher education to a greater degree than married persons, with the exception of the widowed, separated and divorced (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Waniewicz, 1976). Parenthood, however, has exactly the opposite effects on the educational behavior of men and women. Mothers tend to study less than nonmothers, but rates of study for fathers are higher than for nonfathers. A huge pool of "would-be-learners" are female with children at home (Waniewicz, 1976). It is socially isolated persons who are or will be the major source of clients for institutions such as Athabasca University, Alberta's University without a campus, and British Columbia's Open Learning Institute (Carney, 1977). A survey carried out for Athabasca University in 1976 showed that 61 percent of 200 persons contacted were women, and that almost 50 percent lived within commuting range of a campus based institution, but were unable to attend because of the inflexible educational services offered by such traditional institutions.

Therefore, the socio-economic status of this potentially growing market of female students suggests that stress needs to be placed in designing new learning systems which emphasize convenience, speed and flexibility. In addition, increased exposure to options for upgrading in the professional areas may encourage some women to aspire to enter career/technical or degree programs leading to long-term careers with greater promotional possibilities.

#### Reasons For Returning To College

Returning women who, after an interruption in their formal education, enter college, do so for significantly different reasons than do those youths who enter immediately after high school. Many of these women quote reasons

such as "I wanted to grow up and find my own identity"; "I need constructive interests outside the home"; "I desire self-fulfillment"; "I'm feeling stagnant and want a meaningful career"; "Independence." (Brandenburg, 1974).

Feeling less needed and anticipating the eventual permanent departure of her children generates serious concerns and questioning that often result in her going back to school (Roach, 1976). Mature women place significantly more importance on filling life with different events in order to leave the monotony of the home and seek new, stimulating activities (Glagowski & Lanning, 1976; Helson, 1972; Sharma, 1974).

Durcholtz and O'Connor (1973) listed these reasons for mature women returning to school: 35.4 percent to prepare for employment; 30.3 percent to fulfill a need or desire for education or achievement; 25.3 percent to facilitate personal growth; 4.5 percent for stimulation. Twenty-three percent of the women in this study said that a crisis precipitated their return to college, i.e., divorce, death in the family.

The pressure to return to school can come from the environment or from the Self. Environmental pressures include family changes, job changes, and the more elusive societal changes, which encourage today's employee to obtain satisfaction on the job, to "make something of oneself." (Heddesheimer, 1978). Implicit in the latter is that unless a woman is working outside the home, she is not accomplishing much with her life. This distorted point of view places pressure on women to move into the world of work often before a clear goal can be developed. The pressures from the Self can be equally potent motivators. Middle motherhood, which generally occurs between the ages of 35 to 40, is often a time of renewed identity crises and a second important period for career exploration (Brandenburg, 1974). Women often find they now have the time to pursue new interests; they may be looking for a job



(if employed) which is more personally rewarding or intellectually challenging; they may hope to upgrade their social status and income (Heddsheimer, 1978).

Studies about achievement motivation used, until recently, male subjects almost exclusively. In 1967, Baruck hypothesized that levels of achievement differed according to the three phases which comprise a woman's adult life: one before the advent of children, one when home and children are her major concern, followed by one when the family has been established. A resurgence of the achievement motive was expected after a period in which creating and caring for the next generation dominate. Such temporary patterns differed, however, for women of different educational backgrounds. For the poorly educated woman, decline of the achievement motive is continuous.

Horner found that, in spite of the removal of legal and educational barriers to their achievement, some women are motivated to avoid success (1973). By defying conventional sex roles, women experience negative social consequences such as losing friendships, loss of "femininity", isolation or loneliness. Success in a work career is desirable and hoped for in the male but in the female it raises suspicion that she may be a failure as a woman and in the home (Broverman, 1972). Alper (1974) concludes that females from a very traditionalist family background are likely to develop a fear of success. Growing up female means that in order to be loved and to have worth and value as a person, a woman must subvert her needs and interests to those of others. To reverse this belief system at mid-life is a fearful step which many women, in the final analysis, reject in favor of a more middle-of-the-road lifestyle. Thus while choosing the nontraditional role of becoming a student, the career horizons of most women are very narrow, due to lifelong socialization towards five or six "acceptable careers"; for example, nursing, clerical, dental assisting, etc. Lack of information, encouragement, confidence and money prevent a more major career commitment.

Reasons for career choices. In a study of work values, Eyde (1962) mentioned the concept of "emergency vocations", loosely conceived job options that women resort to in case the traditional patterns and promises fail. Women plan their lives differently to men. Men tend to have long range plans about how they will participate in the life of the community. Women are less clear about designing their lives beyond the family. Thus middle aged women have few ideas about career options, nor are they aware of their own abilities and interests. Emergency career choices fall into the traditional female occupations such as clerical/secretary, teacher, or social work/health profession (Wennevold, 1976). Because life crises such as death and divorce often precipitate re-entry, there is an urgency based on financial pressure to choose a short career program leading to quick job entry.

The most common reason given by youthful women students entering the business programs at Seneca College in Ontario was that young women did not want to work right away, or couldn't find work with only high school training (Shack, 1977). The writer has also noted that despite the business program's curriculum being almost identical to that offered in upper grades in high school, girls generally felt they would be more "specialized" and earn higher salaries after completing a college certificate program. The high schools, which in the past have been generously funded, are often more able to offer the business specialties than the community college.

Often students were directed into secretarial programs because there seemed no other place to go (Shack, 1977; Zimmerman, 1978). In spite of the fact that nine out of ten Canadian women will spend 34 years or more in the labor force, women of all age groups are being counselled into courses leading to stereotyped, low-paying careers (Willis, 1977). A study by Piëtrofesa and Schlossberg (1970) suggests that counsellors do indeed hold biases against women entering

a so-called masculine occupation. Female counsellors, interestingly enough, displayed as much bias as their male counterparts.

O'Donnell and Anderson (1978) did not support the hypothesis that counsellors and faculty operate as pivotal factors in the decision of a career path. They found little evidence to support the view that women who choose traditional careers were actively discouraged from pursuing nontraditional paths. A climate of indifference on a college campus appears to operate as distinctly as active discouragement to decrease the number of females in non-traditional programs. This view is supported by Willis (1977) who states that "it is not enough to simply print that 'these courses are open to men and women'. Women must be actively encouraged to pursue these options (p. 5)."

It has already been suggested that academic programs often cater to students from higher socio-economic and upwardly mobile groups than do vocational education programs. Lyon (1976) studying the elite Sarah Lawrence Continuing Education for Women program, found the vast majority of those students to be motivated by the desire for intellectual stimulation, by a search for direction and identity, and the wish to escape the "empty-nest" syndrome. Only a small group was motivated by the need for financial self-support, unlike studies which have focussed on vocational education. Forty-eight of the population in Hoek's study (1978) were motivated by the prospect of quick job entry; and 62 percent, by the economic need to work. These findings imply that women enrolled in short, vocational programs leading to rapid job entry view education more as a means to an end, rather than as having value of its own sake. Vocational education is seen by Egginton (1978) and Story (1974), as requiring such restructuring as to shift the emphasis on technical training toward a more liberal education. Accordingly, students should not have to choose between the so-called liberal arts and occupational curricula; all should be exposed to both.

## Barriers To Participation

Democratization of all areas of education in the past 100 years theoretically has opened all professions to women. Realization of equal opportunity when applied to women in education and work, however, is still a major area in need of change. Women have increased their participation in the work force and their educational qualifications over the last decade, but women are shown statistically to have increased their participation in low-skill, low-paying jobs. Although the Canadian government has set a high value on the principle of equal opportunity and freedom of choice and flexibility, the principle is not always applied to women (Status of Women, 1978).

Ekstrom (1972) established a three-part classification to categorize the barriers discussed in her extensive review of the literature:

1. Dispositional barriers which include role appropriateness, self-concept and personality traits;
2. Situational barriers which include sociological, family, financial and residential factors;
3. Institutional barriers which include admissions restrictions, financial aid, curriculum planning and faculty attitudes.

Dispositional barriers. Many women who seek re-entry are still seeking their identity and are at what is called an "arrested stage" of career development (Schlossberg, 1972; Brooks, 1976). These returning women are often interested, dedicated students, showing seriousness of purpose and strong motivation (Ballmer & Cosby, 1976; Markus, 1973). The time, energy and ego now being devoted to school activities was previously spent on nurturing a family. While some studies have focussed on the positive results of this new role, most focus heavily on the negative changes and serious disruptions felt by husband and family (Brandenburg, 1974; Roach, 1976). Few returning women

get continuous support from spouses who often see their wives as being less dependent upon them, financially and emotionally; not spending enough time with them; and not caring for the family in the traditional wife-mother image. Bohannon (1972) suggests that this may be the result if the spouse has remained relatively static in his own personal growth.

The wife may also have ambivalent feelings about her growing autonomy and heightened feelings of self-worth, the resultant absence of time and energy to give to her family (Markus, 1973). Re-entry women, as well as girls, who have been socialized into dependent, submissive roles may not have developed an internalized self-concept that is independent of the views of others. The socialization process of women into the traditional role does little to develop feelings of self-esteem and self-worth (Maccoby, 1963; Williams, 1977).

Maccoby's review of sex differences is the most extensive source in the field of achievement-motivation in women. She concluded that because an internalized standard of excellence by which to measure themselves against others does not fully develop, women are seldom aware of their abilities, strengths and weaknesses. The message obtained from society and from parents is that intellectual achievement precludes femininity and attractiveness to the male. Thus the "motive to avoid success" is triggered by the anticipated negative consequences of high achievement (Horner, 1970; Schlossberg, 1972).

Some studies show that the typical emotional state for women is depression and that mental health is a major problem for the educated housewife (Williams, 1977). Upon re-entry, these women often experience vague feelings of discontent and unrest. They seldom take time to assess their own goals and the options available, or to relearn study skills. If not provided with an understanding counsellor, instructor or friend who can elucidate the period of transition she is passing through, she is liable to make snap decisions to

reduce anxiety. The fierce competition, the excessive commitments, and the unrealistic expectations she may place upon herself to alleviate guilt can easily discourage the mature student and lead to early withdrawal (Maccoby, 1963).

Situational barriers. Perhaps because women can identify situational barriers more readily than any others, such barriers are more often and more widely reported. Women have gained greater societal permission to fill multiple rolls (Brookes, 1976) but appropriate support systems have not kept pace with the number of women returning to school and/or entering the labor force. Low socio-economic status is one factor which has hindered many academically well-qualified women from attending college. Cross (1971) has pointed out that the major difference between college attendance rates of men and women occur because community colleges draw their students primarily from the lower socio-economic levels. Ekstrom (1972) concluded, as did Cross, that women from upper socio-economic levels are more likely than women from lower socio-economic levels to continue their education.

Financial need has been widely documented as the most significant barrier to attendance (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Frederickson, 1975; Ladan & Crooks, 1976; Van Dyck, 1977). Durcholtz and O'Connor (1973) suggest that if a husband refuses to pay for his wife's tuition fees, she will often be ineligible for financial aid because of her husband's earnings. "Unless the woman has an independent income, she may be forced to spend her life in an economic childhood (p. 62)."

Family circumstances have been found to be the greatest deterrent to women's return to college (Ruslink, 1969). Brandenburg (1974) states that women students frequently faced resistance from husbands, families, and friends. Few of the re-entering women at Queens College studied by Brandenburg

got continuous support; some experienced continuous open hostility from spouses and children. In addition, friends and neighbors often resent the re-entering woman's making it in the outside world, and she becomes a social isolate until she acquires a new peer group at school (Watkins, 1974). Head of household responsibilities appear increasingly to have a negative effect on female participation in post-secondary education. These single parents face insurmountable odds when coupled with financial difficulties, lack of education, and the chronic guilt felt by women trying to both mother and father to their children. "Only during the most severe economic national depressions do men experience such drastic changes in life style...as the middle-aged divorced women (Carter, 1978, p. 77)".

In Waniewicz's study (1976) he found that the major obstacles experienced by the "learners" group of women were being too busy, lack of money, difficulty getting out of the house, and distance/transportation. Johnstone and Rivera (1965) noted that women were 22 percent more likely than men to report "hard to get out of the house at night" as a reason for not pursuing further education. This nationwide study also found that having young children was often a determining factor in whether or not a married woman continued her education. Many women choose to postpone their return to school until their children are older. This may serve to eliminate one barrier, but may in fact erect another by increasing the length of time it will take for her to develop as an independent, free-thinking individual.

Institutional barriers. The community colleges in British Columbia have made a vital contribution to the people of the province in their attempt to meet the needs of a diverse population, regardless of financial or educational background. Theoretically, the "open door" provides a means of access to academic, occupational and technological training, adult basic education and personal and cultural enrichment.

The OECD report on educational policy in Canada (1976) saw the community colleges as representing "an oasis to which old and young who have a particular need may turn at any time (OECD, 1976, p. 8)". Nevertheless, in her cross-Canada survey of learning opportunities for women, Willis (1977) found that "while there has been a great proliferation of educational programs geared to women, there has been virtually no change in the provision of the educational services necessary in order for a woman to access learning in the first place (p. 2)". For example, little is done in the area of pretesting to determine aptitudes and interests of the applicant, and provision of child-care to reduce worry and stress during in-class hours has not been widely implemented. There has been widespread insensitivity to the needs of women returning to school (Brandenburg, 1974) despite the fact that re-entry women constitute a valuable resource that no school can afford to neglect. Government funding agencies and college administrators have remained particularly insensitive to the need for re-entry counselling support services; child-care facilities; unbiased career counselling; part-time programming, particularly in vocational programs; and financial assistance for part-time learning (Krahauer, 1976; Shack, 1977; Statistics Canada, 1980; Vander Voet, 1978).

In a nationwide survey of women students in two year colleges in 1976, it was found, among numerous conclusions, that enrollments in nontraditional programs were largest where a well-defined plan for outreach provided support systems throughout the student's training. At present, despite positive activity in the initial counselling phase, once the re-entry woman is in a chosen program, little more is done to encourage discussion and provide emotional support. Shack (1977) reported that most students in business training see few students outside of class because vocational training is like a fulltime job. Despite the OECD recommendation (1976) that all community



colleges should arrange for part-time as well as fulltime opportunities in vocational education; we are entering the next decade with few such opportunities. Only recently have Saturday and evening programs been considered in the Office Careers programs at Douglas College, which spans a massive region on the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

Such institutional limitations met by nonaffluent mature students in college programs are often the result of a lack of deep and sincere commitment that these services are really needed by women (Willis, 1977). The community colleges in British Columbia have come a long way in offering equal opportunity to higher education. Fees are low and are cited by many students as a major reason for choosing a community college over a university (Dennison, 1975). No formal qualifications or documents are required. Students who don't meet the entrance requirements for programs are encouraged to increase their qualifications through Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language courses, or Writing and Study Skills courses. Travel time has been reduced by locating college campuses close to their students.

In addition to the efforts by the community colleges to increase accessibility to higher education and to make it more egalitarian, The Open Learning Institute (OLI) has recently opened its "doors" in British Columbia. According to the Carney report, "the most likely candidate for distance education is the adult requiring upgrading (1977, p. 7)". The survey also indicated that there is a greater demand in British Columbia among adults for vocational and public school upgrading courses than for third and fourth year university programs. It is planned that these courses will utilize methods of instruction and delivery which include a province-wide library system; courier services; the telephone system and newspapers, in addition to printed materials and textbooks (Carney, 1977).

The Winegard report of 1976 had recommended that established institutions utilize tutorial services and student-faculty contact outside the traditional classroom as the alternative modes of delivery. While there have been genuine efforts in this direction by the universities and community colleges (Ellis, 1973) these institutions have not made significant efforts in the area of manual trades, technical occupations, and skills training and upgrading. The commitment to vocational training at some of our community colleges is similar to the commitment to providing programs for women - it is based on reasons of institutional image, to look relevant in today's society, or to appear to be meeting the needs of all segments of the society (Willis, 1977). Britain's Open University drew the largest quota of its clientele from housewives and office/clerical staff - 25 percent (Pratt, 1971). If in fact the OLI draws a similar quota of female students, it is indicative of the fact that despite a policy of open-access, institutional barriers have served to restrict the entry of mature women as surely as restrictive selection criteria has in the past.

Summary. This review has focussed on the many characteristics, motivations and barriers which all react together and contribute in some way or other to the students ability to persist. It has been shown that females who return to school in mid-life, experience the frustrations of attempting to adapt to institutions with policies which cater to youth, to males, and to students who have an academic, as opposed to vocational, orientation.

1. Are there characteristic demographic and socio-economic factors which can be used to predict early withdrawal in the Office Careers Programs at Douglas College?
2. Do students who enter with intellectual or personal fulfillment

aspirations withdraw in the face of barriers met as quickly as those who entered with a high vocational commitment to obtain job-entry skills, with little regard to the self-fulfillment needs often sought by post-secondary students?

3. Is the college adapting positively to the needs and expectations of its nontraditional student population through preparatory programs and support networks running the length of the student's stay?
4. Is the Office Careers program chosen by students with careful deliberation and the availability of other options known by the student? Can commitment to working in an office as a career goal predict success or failure?
5. Is it possible to pinpoint the causes of attrition within the program by course and by method of instruction? If so, can practical changes be made to reduce the rate of attrition?

Because of the amount of conflicting data in the area of attrition research, and the difficulty this poses when attempting to draw a link between female participation and attrition, this investigation has proceeded initially through the formulation of a number of research questions on which the instrument for data collection has been designed.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology and Procedure

#### Site of the Study

The study was carried out at Douglas College which is the second largest community college in the province of British Columbia. Douglas College spans a large region on the Lower Mainland of the province; these regions include the municipalities of New Westminster, Surrey, Delta, Newton, Richmond, Langley, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody and Maple Ridge. Douglas is a multi-campus institution with campuses located in seven of the above districts. The Office Careers discipline offers programs on four of these locations.

Douglas's statement of college philosophy reflects the goals and objectives of a comprehensive community college. Specifically, the college has pledged to:

1. provide a readily accessible, comprehensive set of organized learning opportunities;
2. direct its services so that the complete spectrum of its communities has access to learning;
3. organize its affairs so that the limitations of geographic position, economic circumstances and social demand and expectation bearing on the individual can be wholly or partially overcome.

(Institutional Self-Study Steering Committee,  
Douglas College, 1978).

Douglas's commitment to equality of opportunity provides for educational activities taking into account widely differing levels and kinds of knowledge, skill, and sensitivity possessed by people in widely disparate situations.

The campuses which house Office Careers programs (Coquitlam, Richmond, Langley and Newton) are located in districts with a very heterogeneous student population. Many of the students come from middle to lower socio-economic groups and are working part-time in order to attend college. There is also a fairly large percentage of mature students with dependents.

### Procedure

Originally it was planned to collect data from a random sample of all the students who had dropped out of the Office Careers programs prior to completion. However, because of the sometimes reticent nature of students who withdraw from programs, there was concern over the rate of return of the questionnaire. Therefore, it was decided to survey all students who had withdrawn from the Office Careers programs on all campuses. It is also important to note that Coquitlam began admitting students in September, 1976, the Richmond Bookkeeping program, in January, 1977, and the Langley program, in September, 1978. Therefore the greatest number of early withdrawals surveyed may be drawn from Coquitlam and Richmond as they have been in operation the longest. No attempt has been made, however, to categorize the dropouts according to campus.

### Site of The Study

The Office Careers programs utilize a continuous intake admissions policy, with small groups of students entering each month when others graduate and vacate seats. Thus, all the programs operate largely on an individualized study approach, with some small groupings for presentation of seminar topics, problem areas, etc. Cassette tapes and slides supplement written, packaged material to carry the student through each course without lectures. All programs run thirty hours a week; all have open blocks during the week to provide for some flexibility. Attendance is taken in one twenty-seat program at the

Richmond campus; the other programs, which constitute 100 seats, encourage students to monitor their own attendance against performance which is assessed regularly by the instructors. Assertiveness training workshops, personal development seminars and other topics related to job opportunities and planning are made available to some of the students, depending on the campus being attended.

All campuses offer a variety of specialties which last from five to ten months: clerk typist, stenographer, legal or medical stenographer and book-keeper. The student is generally placed on a waiting list and it may take several months before openings become available. During the academic year 1977-78 pretesting was used to reduce the attrition rate. However, the process became unwieldy, creating entrance delays and vacant seats. The discipline chose to defer pretesting and investigate the rate of attrition after the academic year 1978-79.

The subjects who took part in the survey display certain demographic characteristics - their age is typically over 25, they are more likely to be, or have been married; and the majority have children. Average family income is generally under \$20,000. Most of the women surveyed had graduated from high school, or had at least some high school education (see Table 3).

### Instrument

A search of the literature for survey instruments on dropouts from post-secondary education and on female participation in higher education turned up three questionnaires which were pertinent to the study. The questionnaire used to survey Business Education students in a study by Hoek (1978) offered the possibility of duplication but with modifications to make it applicable to dropouts, and to have an administrative, rather than a counselling, focus. An ERIC search turned up a study of dropouts (Novak, 1978) which included the

questionnaire used to collect data. The categories under the headings "Possible Reasons for Leaving School" and "Degree of Satisfaction with School" were adopted. Finally, Waniewicz's OECA study (1976) offered the opportunity to adjust some of the categories as a result of his conclusions about the "Non-Learners: and "Would-be-Learners" categories. Some specific items which reflect the nature of the programs being studied were added.

Workability of the questionnaire was tested by giving it to a small group of eight mature and two youthful women students in the Office Careers program at Coquitlam. The students were asked to complete it as well as write comments if any questions appeared ambiguous. In order to assess the clearness of the questions specifically aimed at dropouts, the students were asked for comments on what they understood those specific questions to mean. The questionnaire was modified and instructions were included to have it printed on both sides of the page, as the students found it lengthy but felt uneasy about eliminating any of the questions. The questionnaire was then assessed by an instructor in the Business Department for ease of compilation and input for the computer. A cover letter was attached to the questionnaire to explain its purpose and to solicit cooperation. A deadline for the return of the questionnaire was emphasized, and anonymity was promised. A business-reply postcard was included with each questionnaire. The former student was asked to fill in her name on the reverse side and forward it separately from the questionnaire if she would agree to participate in a follow-up interview. This ensured the anonymity of the questionnaire responses. Everyone who returned the postcard was interviewed. Follow-up phone calls to nonrespondents resulted in a 66 per cent rate of return.

The final version of the survey instrument had 26 questions and 189 individual items (see Appendix 2). It was arranged in four sections: Section I

dealt with experiences while a student at Douglas and motivations for entry; Section II, with reactions to training in the Office Careers program; Section III, with a variety of questions about personal background; and Section IV, with prior education, work experience, and family income. The final question was open-ended and invited responses in any area. A Likert scale approach was used for Section I and Section II. It was felt that this format could be completed with greater ease by the former student, and could be tabulated more readily for entry on the computer (Appendix 2).

### Procedure

One hundred forty-two questionnaires were mailed the third week of January, as it was felt that the response rate would be greater after the Christmas break for the group being surveyed. The cover letter requested return of the questionnaire by February 15. In the third and fourth week of February, attempts were made to contact by phone everyone being surveyed. Interviews were completed by the end of March.

Thirty-seven questionnaires were returned by the post office as unmailable. This was expected because when surveying dropouts, the nature of such a sample tends to be more transient. Of the resulting 105 possible returns, 55 were returned. Fourteen people returned the post-card indicating their willingness to participate in an interview.



## CHAPTER IV

### Results and Discussion

The data presented in the first part of this chapter is drawn from descriptive statistics tabulated for the entire questionnaire. After a summary of demographic data for all respondents, the discussion falls into three parts: Socio-Economic Status; Reasons for Re-entry; Barriers which Prevent Completion. Throughout the discussion, the reader is referred to Table 2 which represents total responses for each item in the questionnaire, with the modal response circled for each variable. The reader should not infer statistical reliability in the author's use of the word "more" throughout this chapter. For example, more people answered "To prepare for a job" as strongly agree to reasons for returning to school than "To become more educated" means that a larger number of subjects responded in the instance. This does not mean significantly more people strongly agreed to the above item.

#### Background Characteristics of Questionnaire Respondents

The greatest number of respondents (30%) were between 40 - 50 years of age while the second largest age group (19%) was between 21 - 25 years of age (Question 12, Table 5). The reader's attention is drawn to a typographical error in the above question where two age categories may have merged, affecting the numbers for the 36 - 40 years of age group, and the 41 - 50 years of age group. Forty years appeared in item 05 and 06 of Question 12. This implies that there may be a degree of ambiguity when reference is made to the age groups between 36 and 50. Only four more respondents indicated that they were married (54%), than those who responded as being single, separated or divorced (Question 13, Table 3). Eighteen of the respondents (37%) had no children,

whereas 26 respondents (52%) indicated they had one or two children (Question 14). Most respondents are from two parent homes (Question 15). Whereas only four of the respondents (7%) had children under six years of age, 22, (40%) indicated having school age children from 6 through 17 years of age. The largest single category had children over 18 years of age (Question 17).

Most women felt that returning to school or work was not a viable consideration until the children were at least six years of age and ready to enter school. Only three of those surveyed (10%) believed they could leave their children prior to this age (Question 17). Twice the number of respondents reported having mothers who were not employed outside the home while they were in school themselves, than those who had working mothers.

#### Socio-Economic Status

A greater number of respondents have achieved high school graduation or additional training than had dropped out of school prior to completion (Question 19, Table 3). However, when reporting level of education of spouse, the greater number was reported in the "less than high school category" than in the other categories in Question 20.

Although all respondents had dropped from the Office Careers program prior to completion, high school Grade Point Average's for the group were average and above - 50 (92%) obtained a C or better average during their last years of school (Question 21). This finding supports Stanley (1968) who, using the General Aptitude Test Battery and the Wechler Adult Intelligence Scale to test success in clerical office work, found no clear patterns to indicate a relationship between scholastic aptitude and success on the job.

When asked to list the main jobs held in the past, only 58 percent responded (Table 3). Of that amount, the most commonly cited position was clerical, followed by Sales and Health (Question 22). Most respondents stayed with their

employer for at least two years. The majority had worked fulltime. Of the 23 respondents who indicated they were now employed, by far the largest number were doing clerical work. Only two listed their present occupation as housewife (Question 23).

Seventeen of the dropouts (45%) were still living at home with their parents. The majority came from blue collar homes and cited "mechanic" and "laborer" as their father's occupation. "Sales" and "housewife" were most often cited for the mother's occupation. Of those who are married, more reported their spouse's occupation in the "Laborer" and "Sales" category than any others.

An examination of approximate family income suggests a middle or working class bias (Table 3). Fourteen respondents (32%) reported incomes between \$15,000 - \$20,000 per annum, while 11 respondents (25%) reported incomes of less than \$15,000 per annum. However, 18 respondents (51%) indicate their family income was more than \$20,000 a years (Question 26). This coincides with studies done on female participation in tertiary education which have presented conflicting evidence regarding family income as a direct factor to attrition.

### Motivations for Re-Entry

It is interesting to note that 47 of the respondents (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that their primary reason for returning to school was to prepare for a job than any other reason (Question 1, Table 6). This contradicts earlier findings (Iffert, 1957; Waniewicz, 1976) that men more often than women mentioned the practical goals of education. Practical goals appeared of major concern to the female subjects surveyed. Becoming more educated was also an important reason for returning, and this contradicts Egginton (1978) who suggests that vocational education students consider learning to be significantly less important than do nonvocational students.

Personal growth as a reason for returning also ranked high (35 respondents agreed or strongly agreed - 80%), while 31 (71%) agreed that they wanted to achieve independence, and 29 (68%) saw college as a way of meeting others. These findings closely parallel those of the OECA study (1976) which listed in descending order of significance the following reasons for returning to school: personal growth and development; employment requirements; job advancement; financial benefits; college credit; and socializing.

When asked why they returned at this particular time in their life, the women's responses were equally enlightening (Question 2). While 25 respondents (55%) agreed or strongly agreed that there was definitely an economic need for them to go to work, 34 (77%) reported that the intrinsic appeal of the courses offered at that time was what encouraged them to return. Twenty-three students (51%) disagreed that not being able to obtain employment was a deciding factor in their return to college. This suggests that initial commitment to either an educational or occupational goal cannot be used to predict completion, as a large proportion of the dropouts surveyed were committed to both.

### Barriers

Thirty-six respondents (80%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were dissatisfied with themselves or with their inability to finish the program (Question 3). Forty-two respondents (90%) disagreed that their place is in the home. Although the review of related literature suggests a decrease in self-concept as a result of dropping out, this appears to contradict that notion. However, no statistical analyses were done in order to interpret these findings. The data suggests an improved self-concept and increased ability to relate with others. Twenty-eight (61%) agreed or strongly agreed that they had developed employable skills, despite leaving prior to graduation.

The community college system was established in part to provide access to tertiary education to those students who would otherwise not qualify to enter university. Location, fee structure and entrance requirements are the most significant points in favor of the community colleges for many. This study reinforces the acceptance of this concept, particularly with regard to fee structure. When asked what changes the former students would like to see at the college (Question 4), 30 respondents (67%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that lower tuition was necessary (Table 7). The respondents were more concerned with changes being made in the supportive network of the college: 35 respondents (78%) agreed or strongly agreed that more help with career planning should be provided; 33 respondents (68%) wanted job placement provided; 23 respondents (60%) would have liked the opportunity to study part-time. The colleges have been slow to provide part-time study in the occupational area, whereas it has been provided in some of the career programs and in the academic programs for a considerable amount of time. Being able to obtain a certificate or university transfer credit while retaining a full-time job was one of the goals the colleges strived to meet. At Douglas, provision was finally made in the academic year 1979-80 for students to study part-time in the Office Careers program. Inadequate career counselling for women students and little job placement has been cited in numerous studies as a cause for concern and further investigation (Willis, 1977; Schlossberg, 1972; Hoek, 1978).

While a common belief is that business training is chosen by students who can't meet the grade in the academic area (Shack, 1977), 27 students (59%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the course work was not challenging (Question 5A). Few of them left because of low grades - 39 students (87%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. The data collected suggests that rather

than limited ability, a more significant reason for early withdrawal may be an inadequate level of study skills prior to entry as well as a lack of opportunity for prior sound education at the high school level. Forty respondents (89%) agreed or strongly agreed that lack of prior education was a handicap (5A-03), while 37 respondents (86%) reported inadequate study skills as a personal barrier to completion (5C-05). Having taught in the program for five years, the author concurs with these findings. Students are not tested to determine whether they can successfully complete with the level of education they have upon entry. Math skills are often so poor that routine centering and tabulation tasks on the typewriter can't be mastered. Poor reading and comprehension skills make it difficult for the student to understand the written content of the course, which is the major part of an individualized program.

The Office Careers dropouts judged the certificate to be important and they entered with some awareness of other options available besides secretarial work (5C and D). Although individualized instruction has been criticized for being somewhat impersonal and "cold", 37 of the women (71%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement (5D-04). Few of the respondents plan to re-enroll at Douglas or at any other institution in the same program, although a large number were undecided (Question 6).

The Office Careers women chose the program because the job opportunities in secretarial work are excellent - 40 students (89%) agreed or strongly agreed to that statement (Question 7, Table 8). That training time is relatively short was also a significant factor. Curiously enough, 42 students (91%) reported that they chose office work because they like it. This finding is often one generated from an academic area (Astin, 1975); past studies in the occupational area have found that just over half the respondents are

interested in the work (Hoek, 1978). A large number of the respondents saw office work as a stepping-stone to a better career, which is frightening when one considers that only a nominal percentage of women office workers are promoted into careers where typing is not the major requirement of their position (Willis, 1977). While most respondents felt office work suited their abilities, an alarming number didn't even consider any other occupation. This finding concurs with a problem Shack (1977) found in her interviews with female business education students across Canada - low expectations on the part of student, their families, and the employer. Many of them enter with a single-mindedness because they lack confidence in life skills, and working in an office, to them, is on par with their naivety. The colleges, like most high schools, separate vocational education students from the general stream, promoting elitist thinking.

When questioned about their reactions to Office Careers programs specifically, there were a number of interesting and unexpected findings. When the Office Career program began in 1976, individualized instruction was new and it was introduced with hesitance and considerable resistance by the instructors, and, so it was believed, by the students. However, more students disagreed with the statement that they disliked individualized instruction, that they found the constant assessment required by self-paced instruction threatening, that grades rather than mastery of unit objectives would be preferable, and that lectures would be a preferred mode of instruction (Question 8 and 9A, Table 9). Since these elements reflect the nature of an individualized program, the data suggests students prefer this mode of instruction for Office Careers training. Although most agreed that the instructors were fair in their assessment, they found some instructors' attitudes toward their own subject matter created a somewhat tense and uncomfortable climate. This may be a result of

instructors viewing their subjects as the key to the training, while seeing others' subjects as not contributing equally to the final product.

While the Office Careers dropouts found conflicting demands on their time a significant factor in their withdrawal (8-08), most found husbands were reasonably supportive in the home, and a lesser number felt their children were supportive of their returning to school (Question 10). While 11 respondents (44%) agreed or strongly agreed that their instructors encouraged them to remain, almost as many said that their instructors were not supportive. This may suggest that some of the instructors, although well-versed in their subject area, are not equally as able to cope with the problems of mature women students when they are not specifically subject oriented. Faculty attitudes have been cited in prior studies as often being a major barrier (Zimmerman, 1978).

In an attempt to ensure that the program still reflects the needs of the market, the students were asked to rate the courses according to their perceptions of how worthwhile each was to their immediate or future goals (Table 11). Typing and Bookkeeping were seen as the key areas for training, followed by Business Math, Business English and Office Procedures (Question 11). All of the above subjects are now in the core program which all students must take prior to entering a specialty option.

The dropouts who participated in this survey display many common characteristics (Table 3). Most were between 26 and 50 years of age, with the greatest proportion centering in the 40 - 50 years of age category. Most were, or had been, married and had one or two children of school age or beyond. Few had returned to school or work prior to their children entering school. Over half of the respondents had worked previously - most commonly in the service sector. Family income suggests a strong middle or working class bias.



While the respondents felt that preparing for a job was their primary reason for returning to school, two other important considerations included becoming more educated and enhancing personal growth. They chose secretarial work, often with little prior exploration of job options, because job opportunities in this area are good and they could foresee promise of advancement.

The barriers which forced them out of the system prior to completion were economic need, conflicting demands on their time, and an inability to set goals and work independently. However, many also felt that they had stayed long enough to develop employable skills, suggesting that they had used the system, i.e., the fulltime certificate program, as a means of upgrading only when part-time status and/or shorter citation (4 month programs) were not available.

The above profile may indeed reflect trainees who graduate as well as those who withdraw early. Further studies using graduates as the sample surveyed would provide some worthwhile comparisons to the results of this study.

Selected Findings

Following the descriptive analysis, chi square tests of independence were conducted with several of the demographic variables. The demographic variables formed one factor in the analysis with the item responses in the first ten questions forming the other factor. The demographic variables used were: age (12); marital status (13); income (26); level of education (19); attitude toward the age children should be when mother returns to school/work (17); mother's employment outside the home while respondent was growing up (18).

Space constraints would make the presentation of the data for all of these analyses cumbersome; however, since an identical procedure was used for all tests, a sample is produced below.

/ EXPECTANCY TABLE FOR

ITEM NUMBER 1-01

Factor A

|                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Strongly Agree    | 8 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 34 |
| Agree             | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 12 |
| Disagree          | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3  |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  |
| No Opinion        | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  |

Factor B

20 & under yrs.    21-25    26-30    31-35    36-40    40-50    51-60    Total =49

FIGURE 1

Note . Item 1-01 To what extent do the following reflect your reasons for returning to school - To prepare for a job.

Similar expectancy tables were derived for "To become more educated" (Item 1-02); "To enter the job market quickly" (Item 1-03); and so on through all items contained within the first ten questions. Then the analysis was repeated for the second demographic variable "marital status." The level of significance was set at  $p < .01$  and a summary of results depicting those items reaching significance is given in Table 4.

### Age

Age was a factor influencing the way women responded to each reason listed for returning to school, other than "to become more educated." The largest category of women who strongly agreed or agreed that preparing for a job was the key reason for entry were under 20 years of age. Developing skills to become more effective with family or community, as well as making contact with other people, was commonly expressed as a reason by women in the 40 - 50 years of age group. Women in this age group often return to school for retraining because of family or marital changes, whereas being unable to get a job is a more immediate reason for retraining for the 20 years of age and under group.

When asked to consider the changes they would like to see at the college, students between 26 - 30 years of age recommended provision of child care, while providing additional financial aid was important to this group and the over 40 group. Economic factors do not rate high in the 30 - 40 years of age group, suggesting that these are the years when a spouse is providing a reasonable income.

Upon examining the statistics on obstacles which necessitated early withdrawal, only those students in the 20 - 30 years of age group reported academic considerations as a reason for dropping out. This may reflect the major changes which took place in the public school system prior to the "back to basic"

movement in the latter part of the seventies. This group also reports financial problems as being an important reason for withdrawing, child care being too expensive, and inability to get financial aid.

When asked about the elements of the program that made them withdraw, the largest category of women mentioning a dislike of individualized instruction and the informality of the program, were 25 years or under. Presumably these people came through the structured high school system within the last six years and found adapting to the teachers' enforced goals much easier than setting their own. The mature group however, seeking alternatives to homemaking, seemed to adapt quickly to the self-discipline required by a self-paced, individualized program. Only those respondents in the 40 - 50 years of age group agreed that five courses (which full time attendance requires) were too heavy.

In the nonacademic area, the 20 - 30 years of age group surfaced as having the most concerns - guilt over neglect of children, lack of energy, no time for social life, and a strong preference for evening classes.

The data also indicates that the 40 - 50 years of age group had expectations about college which were left unfulfilled. Only the 21 - 25 years of age group report interest in re-enrolling at the same college in the same program.

### Marital Status

Selected findings when using marital status as the independent variable were also interesting. Becoming more educated and qualifying for a promotion were mentioned most often by the single/separated/divorced group as reasons for returning to school than the married group, suggesting that they are more interested in the job opportunities the program can offer. Although single students are the largest category choosing a career for immediate job entry

reasons, all groups surveyed felt that preparing for a job was a major reason for returning to school.

Married students generally agreed that a lessening of home responsibilities led to their return to school at this time; they are more likely to report feeling in a rut at home and being unhappy with themselves than are single or separated/divorced respondents.

When considering the barriers which prevented completion of the program, more single respondents than married respondents felt a lack of prior education contributed to their dropping out. Child care appeared to be a greater concern to married students. Single persons felt the effects of an impersonal atmosphere, which can sometimes occur in self-paced programs, more so than married persons felt such effects.

More married students and all separated/divorced respondents felt office work suited their abilities and personality than did the single group. However, no significant relationship was noted in the value these groups placed on business education as a stepping stone requiring a minimum investment of time.

One final observation can be made when considering marital status as the independent variable. While few of the married group found their children were supportive of their returning to school, all of the separated/divorced group agreed that their children encouraged them to remain in the program. This group relies on the support of children and friends to a far greater extent than the married group does. It is disturbing to report that none of this group felt encouraged by their instructors, while a full quarter of the married students strongly disagreed that their Office Career instructors were a source of support prior to withdrawal. Although no statistical analysis of the findings was done, some consideration might be given in

future to allow instructors to become familiar with the patterns of women's lives in the hope that they can overcome their own biases and attitudes. Since the instructor is in contact with the student more than anyone else in the system, this must be considered a primary objective.

### Income

Although all income levels reported concerns about job opportunities, those whose income was under \$20,000 a year cited "preparing for a job"; "entering the job market"; "achieving independence"; and "qualifying for a promotion" most often as being a prime consideration for returning to college. Family income as the independent variable reached the level of significance with numerous reasons for returning to college at this time - a lessening of home responsibilities; economic need to work, not happy with self and inability to get a job. As would be expected, upper income respondents felt a lessening of home responsibilities, while 50 percent of respondents in all income levels agreed there was an economic need to work. The lower income group formed the largest category to agree that their college experience gave them self-respect and confidence; they found it easier to relate to other people; and they were happier women as a result of their experience. Only those with family incomes exceeding \$30,000 a year felt that nothing had changed for them despite attendance at college. The lower income group strongly agreed that changes need to be made in the program before students like themselves could successfully complete, lower tuition and provision of financial aid and child care being their uppermost concerns. Most of this group dropped because they did not have enough money to continue and they found child care too expensive. These findings support those of Stine (1976) and those of Summerskill (1962) whose review of literature found financial reasons were among the top three most important factors in attrition. This

is significant when studying the community college system since the income levels of students attending these institutions generally are lower, particularly for vocational students (Dennison et al, 1975).

Higher income women most often mentioned dropping because of institutional, rather than personal, academic, or financial barriers. Although all respondents felt they didn't have enough knowledge of what options were available, higher income women were more likely to report that the course work wasn't challenging, the certificate not important. Their expectations of "being at college" were very different from reality. They strongly disagreed with the possibility of re-enrolling at Douglas or elsewhere. Lower and middle income groups felt strongly that better counselling may have changed their mind about withdrawing. This supports the findings of Krakauer (1976), Shack (1977) and Vander Voet (1978) that government agencies and college administrators have remained insensitive to the need for re-entry counselling support services for women, regardless of age, marital status or income.

#### Age of Children Prior To Entry

Research suggests that most women prefer to remain in the home until their children are of school age, at which point they often seek retraining or a job (Hoek, 1978). The descriptive data in this survey agrees with those findings. When used as the independent variable and cross tabulations are done, some interesting findings result. The review of related literature suggests that most women return to school/work when their children are in the elementary system (ages 6 - 12 years) because they are in a rut or are not happy with themselves. This concurs with Brandenburg's findings (1974) that middle motherhood is often a time of renewed identity crises and a second important period for career exploration. The largest category of respondents had

children over school age; however, a large number in this group cited "guilt over neglect of children" as a major nonacademic reason for withdrawing. They found the time of the classes convenient; in fact more respondents with children over the age of 13 stated a preference for evening classes.

Of those respondents whose children were under 6 years of age, 100 percent indicated their husbands did not encourage them to remain in the program, suggesting that caring for infants in the early years is still viewed as the major role of the female. Support by children was at its lowest when children were in the teenage years. This support varies when one holds marital status as the constant variable - child and parental support networks for single parents were strengthened considerably.

#### Highest Level of Education Reached By Student

Research question 2 in the review of related literature attempts to measure commitment to studies when one is academically versus occupationally goal oriented. It is interesting to examine the level of education the respondent has prior to entry and their reasons for returning to school. More high school graduates reported returning to school to obtain a certificate or college credit than did those with a level of education somewhat less than Grade 12. This group also agreed that the course content appealed to them. All groups were in strong agreement that lower tuition, child care, and the provision of more financial aid are desirable institutional changes. A significant relationship was observed between educational level of the respondent and the desire to improve the quality of instructors. More high school graduates and those with some college expressed a desire for such a change.



Obstacles which prevented completion included "child care too expensive"; "no financial aid"; and "too hard to keep house and go to school." With regard to the reasons for choosing Office Careers over other career programs, more students with a high school diploma felt that family expectations influenced them more than any other group. Inability to set goals, guilt over neglect of children, lack of energy and the inappropriate time of the classes were elements leading to withdrawal which reached a statistically significant level when level of education was held as the independent variable.

### Summary

As can be observed in Table 4 some of the items reached the level of significance for up to four of the independent variables. Age, marital status and income were factors influencing the degree to which "preparing for a job" and "personal reasons for returning to school." Guilt about neglect of children as a nonacademic pressure leading to early withdrawal was influenced by the factors marital status, income, educational level of respondent and attitude toward age children should be prior to returning to school/work. Financial concerns leading to early withdrawal, including child care being too expensive and inability to get financial aid reached a significant level when age, educational level of the student, and attitude towards age of children should be prior to returning to school/work were the independent variables. Inability to keep house and go to school as a personal obstacle reached significance with all of the above, including marital status as a fourth independent variable.

When one considers the demographic data presented in the beginning of this chapter, the background characteristics of the Office Career dropouts are considerably different from the average college or university student as reported by Dennison (1975) and Carney (1977). The age of the respondents

studied is typically over 25; they are likely to be, or have been, married; and the majority have children. Slightly over half of the respondents have held jobs prior to returning to school - all in the service or "caring" professions typical of the female's narrow career horizons. Average family income is generally under \$20,000 a year.

As is evident from the data in Table 1, the forecast is that the above 25 years of age group will show an increase in all regions of British Columbia. Although Douglas College is generally aware that there is a decline in the rate of increase of young college age students, the system has not adapted satisfactorily to meet the needs of the changing population.

In summarizing the descriptive data, it was noted that most of the students entered college to prepare for employment, but, in addition, many were seeking to fulfill personal goals. Financial concerns and lack of child care for the lower income students created a situation where they were forced to exit prior to completion once they felt they had obtained at least one saleable skill. The programs are designed to hold a student until a certificate can be awarded; the data suggests alternatives must be sought to provide several exit points determined by market demand and the constraints placed on the student's lifestyle. Lack of career planning and counselling was felt by all income groups and surfaced as the major reason for higher income students' dropping. Few of the students surveyed plan to return to Douglas or any other college.

On the positive side, individualized instruction was viewed as an excellent mode of instruction for business office training by students. With modifications as suggested for additional exit points, it was seen as preferable to the traditional lecture style of instruction. However, the ability of some faculty members to deal with, or know when to refer, those problems

which deal with lifestyle and transition (and thus affect individual progress) left much to be desired. While the primary reason given by the respondents in this survey for entering the Office Careers program is to prepare for employment, the students' ability to adapt to internal and external pressures was largely ignored. Thus it appears that various reasons became factors in dropping out, including family commitments, lack of opportunity for part-time study, lack of prior study skills, and a somewhat insensitive attitude on the part of the instructors in Office Careers. All of these reasons must be taken into consideration by administrators, instructors and counsellors in the college system.

### Limitations

It is unfortunate that further statistical analysis could not have followed in order to ascertain the probability of differences being chance occurrences. However, it is hoped that the data gathered in this study will provide the necessary incentive to initiate further analysis leading to positive change for those individuals dealing with students in Office Careers.

It should also be noted that respondents were not grouped according to campus; therefore, location of program, instructors involved in training, and certificate sought were not considered. This information was felt by the writer to be irrelevant to the data being gathered in order to interpret the research questions posed in Chapter II. In addition, time constraints meant that no other college could be surveyed; therefore, any conclusions can represent only the dropouts surveyed.

### Interview Findings

The interviews conducted as follow-up to the questionnaires were of particular value in identifying some of the more immediate concerns of the

surveyed group. The questionnaire was used during the interview as a guide in order to structure the information obtained. The open-ended question (Question 27) which welcomes further comments was used to probe the interviewee's concerns more deeply and to obtain more complete data. This section summarizes the responses obtained to this question during the interviews, as well as those comments received on the returned questionnaires.

Poor career counselling and lack of job placement were among the most common concerns mentioned. One student stated her strong preference for Nursing, but she was encouraged to take a "short business course" by a counsellor. Many dropped when they realized they hadn't been given enough information prior to entry to make an appropriate choice. Several students mentioned the "lack of instruction" and "the need for greater pressure" being exerted on the students by the instructors. Short-term goal setting in a self-paced program was exceedingly difficult for those who had recently left the structured high school system. One mentioned that "pace set by the instructors was too slow", failing to grasp the concept of student-controlled time goals. Another disliked being placed on a progress contract when her work failed to meet the maximum limits set by the instructor.

Those students who came in with specific goals in mind view the program in a more positive light. One student wanted "to upgrade Typing and Business Machines" only; once she met her objectives, she left. Another, although withdrawing prior to completion, was able to obtain the necessary skills to run a medical office for five specialists. Several dropouts viewed the program as a "brush-up" only and expressed their discontent at not being able to register as a part-time student in only one or two courses. (As of the academic year 1979 - 1980, students are now able to elect this option at all campuses.)

Comments with specific reference to subject area were illuminating. Many found the English course and the Bookkeeping course too heavy. Several students felt shorter courses should be available, particularly for the mature adult. One of the most frequent comments made by the younger students was that the program was "too basic" and "repetitive of high school business courses." They felt someone should have examined their high school transcript prior to entry (particularly since Admissions require that they produce their transcript) and advised them that much of the program was similar to what they had already completed.

Some other verbatim comments which it is difficult to categorize were as follows:

"It improved my self-confidence."

"The classrooms were too noisy to get anything done."

"The instructor was not up to date in Bookkeeping, which was all I was interested in...."

"Mothers should stay home; kids need you more than a job."

"There was constant dissention in the classroom with the foreign students taking up all the instructor's time."

"Reading and study skills wasn't offered when I needed it most."

"It helped me to see that I need alot more before I can go to work."

"The Essondale campus was depressing. Some of the students who were also patients took up too much of the instructor's time."

After tabulation of the questionnaire results, a discrepancy was noted between the data collected in the interviews and that collected through tabulation of responses on the questionnaire. While the largest category of questionnaire respondents disagreed that better counselling may have made them change their mind (Question 5D-01, 03), poor career counselling was of

uppermost concern to the interviewees. In addition, while the largest category of questionnaire respondents viewed individualized instruction positively (Question 9A-04, 07), many of the interviewees would have preferred more structure and greater pressure placed on the student by the instructors. Inability to set short-term goals was cited by both groups as a major difficulty, suggesting a need for greater clarification of aptitude and commitment prior to entering a self-paced program. Although lack of prior skills, including reading and comprehension, was not cited as a major problem for the questionnaire respondents (Question 8-04), it was cited numerous times by the interviewees, leading the writer to view this area with some concern. In addition, the writer's experience since collection of this data suggests a strong need for service in this area, apart from what the data indicates. Reading and study skills workshops have now become part of the new student's program, generally taking place during the first month after entry. The greater confidence that has been exhibited by these present trainees indicates that the recommendation re: reading and study skills in Chapter V is sound.

Finally, although most questionnaire respondents disagreed that specialized courses were not available to them in order to increase their expertise, several of those students who were interviewed found the present program "too basic", "too similar to high school." Because of population shifts to more rural areas in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, the writer has recommended in Chapter V, more specialized options be developed for the urban campuses, such as New Westminster. By providing such specialities, the student can obtain expertise while in school, rather than relying on the employer to provide such opportunities. The largest category of questionnaire respondents clearly indicated (Question 7-06) that they viewed the Office Careers program as only a beginning; yet research indicates promotion on the job is not yet common when considering clerical positions (Willis, 1977).

### Summary of Interview Findings and Open-Ended Question

A lack of understanding about the method of instruction and about course content is evident from this section, indicating a pressing need to improve the orientation process, as well as evaluation of prior skills. The number of people who mentioned Bookkeeping and English as being unduly heavy warrants examination of curriculum in both cases. (Both courses are presently being revised for the 1980-81 academic year to permit two or three exit points depending on the requirements of the option chosen.)

Instructors and administrators need to look at the physical layout of the business labs to determine if the noise level can be reduced through the addition of sound baffles and/or partitions. Constant activity and noise within the labs was an often-mentioned complaint.

An effort must be made to lessen the likeness of the Office Careers programs at the college level to business training in the high schools. Specialized options must be made available for younger students who have recently completed a high school business program and for those who have worked for several years but wish to broaden their chances for advancement, promotion or transfer. However, the basic core must remain in place for those students who return to school relatively unskilled.

Finally, Office Career instructors must take care that they don't fill a remedial function, but that students who need remedial work in math, English or verbal skills are referred to the appropriate programs. The ratio of students to instructor in the Office Career programs (20 students to 1 instructor) makes remedial work an impossibility and creates resentment among those who are unable to utilize the instructor's knowledge effectively.

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The Review of Related Literature clearly suggests that there is an enormous amount of conflicting data in the area of dropout research. When applied to a nontraditional group such as the one surveyed, it becomes difficult to apply much of what has been learned in the past about students who withdraw from college prior to completing a program or course. To assist in this investigation, six research questions were formulated. This section will attempt to answer those questions as they pertain to the sample under investigation.

1. Are there characteristic demographic and socio-economic factors which can be used to predict early withdrawal in the Office Careers programs?

The majority of the dropouts were over 26 years of age but under 50 (with the greatest number between 40 - 50 years); of those under 25, only 15 percent had children; of those over 25, 82 percent had children; 57.7 percent had mothers who were not employed outside the home; 46 percent had completed high school, while 29 percent had less than high school completion. Most of the surveyed group have an average family income of less than \$20,000. Few are housewives; many of them reported present employment in the three traditionally low paying, female occupational classes - clerical, sales and health.

If a survey of recent graduates as opposed to dropouts were now done, the demographic and socio-economic characteristics may indeed be similar to the surveyed group. Logically, it seems as though the above characteristics could apply to both dropouts and persisters, i.e., to students who enroll in Office



Careers. Since it was beyond the scope of this study to conduct further statistical analysis, the characteristics cannot be ascribed to dropouts alone.

2. Do students who enter with intellectual or personal fulfillment aspirations withdraw in the face of barriers met as quickly as those who entered with a high vocational commitment to obtain job-entry skills, with little regard to the self-fulfillment needs often sought by post-secondary students?

Past research has suggested that strong initial commitment to an occupational goal, as in vocational certificate programs, can lead to dropping out faster than a strong commitment to learning or education (Van Dyck, 1977). The findings here support Egginton's assertion (1978) that females and minority groups in vocational education seldom view learning to be insignificant. Personal growth ranked almost as high as preparing for a job when asked why the student returned to school. A large percentage found college courses intrinsically appealing.

These findings suggest that dropping out cannot be predicted by initial commitment to a goal, be it educational or occupational. The findings in the area of reasons for returning to school bring to the surface the need for prior clarification of program content and student ambitions so that the student can make an informed choice of program. Students may be misdirected into Office Careers through their own inability to make personal choices, because all their life they have been socialized to live according to the choices of others. With career information and counselling lacking, which was reported by the largest category of students, these women were led into the traditional career programs, rather than such options as Business Management, Construction, Data Processing, etc., which may lead to a more enriched career with greater promotional opportunities.

3. Is the college adapting positively to the needs and expectations of its nontraditional student populations through preparatory programs and support networks running the length of the student's stay?

Since this study began, the college has introduced part-time evening programs on two of its campuses, as well as part-time day programs on all campuses having an Office Careers program. Students wishing to upgrade one or two skills no longer need to enroll in an entire certificate program. (This option has long been available in the academic sector.) The fee structure is attractive when compared to any private business college. Location wise, Douglas offers training in Office Careers throughout its region. Individualized instruction has permitted continuous entry so that students need not wait till the beginning of a semester to enroll. The self-paced program have permitted the able student to complete quickly, while allowing the slower student (either slow in ability or because of an abundance of responsibility outside the college) to meet the same objective, but in a greater length of time. Students who are unable to meet the program's objectives are generally referred to remedial programs in the system, instead of simply being "dropped".

The findings of this study indicate that the areas of greatest concern are personal and often nonacademic. Guilt over neglect of children; financial concerns; and inability to maintain the home and attend school fulltime; personal growth desires - all reached a level of significance with three or more independent variables in the chi square analysis. Career planning, financial assistance and planning short courses in reading and study skills for the mature student who is a bit "rusty" - all were mentioned as desirable institutional changes. Result of descriptive data show that 54 percent of the

respondents saw career planning as a major concern, 60 percent of all respondents consider job placement a necessity. As more and more women become eligible for CEIC subsidies, the colleges have succumbed to the concept that Office Careers is the "obvious choice" for a woman wanting retraining. As the seats purchased by CEIC have increased, the college has permitted CEIC to influence both content and duration of the programs. In addition, it is assumed that CEIC trainees will assume priority over a "fee-payers" wait list, and that every student sponsored is "trainable" in what is fast becoming a highly skilled profession. Pretesting to determine aptitude for office work and abilities is seldom part of the entry process. The danger lies in the educational quality of the programs being sacrificed for production-line training by accommodating everyone who applies, regardless of aptitude or interest, in order to fill the ever eager job market.

Thus while the college is providing what its mandate originally set out to provide, i.e., access to those groups who would not normally be able to enter a post-secondary institution, it is not adapting the learning environment after entry to the number of mature females who now make up a major percentage of its entire student enrollment.

4. Is the Office Careers program chosen by students with careful deliberation and awareness of the availability of other options?  
Can commitment to working in an office as a career goal predict success or failure?

The results of responses to Questions 5D-01, 03, 05 suggest that the group surveyed had a positive view of office work, but chose Office Careers mainly because of the excellent job opportunities in clerical work, and the relatively short training time. A large proportion viewed office work as a stepping-stone

to a better career in which they wouldn't have "to type all day"; few considered other kinds of training which might have served this function much better. It is unlikely that once enrolled in Office Careers, their awareness will increase, for vocational programs are seldom integrated into the general stream of college programming.

Thus it appears the surveyed group's perceptions of office work have been obtained from superficial sources such as television, magazines, etc., and awareness of other options is generally lacking.

5. Is it possible to pinpoint the causes of attrition within the program by course and by method of instruction? If so, can practical changes be made to reduce the rate of attrition?

Individualized instruction is viewed positively by the majority of the students surveyed. More respondents between 31 - 40 disagreed with the statement that they disliked individual instruction, than those respondents under 25 years of age. Consideration should be given to utilizing dead-lines and progress contracts for the younger students, who indicated a preference for a more structured environment. In addition, more exit points should be built in at varying skill levels so that students who wish to obtain an entry level job as opposed to one that may be higher paying, may leave with a citation of achievement instead of the label "dropouts".

The physical layout of the business labs should be a major concern as well. Lack of sound-proofing and partitions to limit movement were the two most common complaints of the surveyed group in the open-ended question.

Considerable curriculum revision has been done for the 1980-81 academic year, which should reduce the complaints about the length of the English and Bookkeeping courses, and the "irrelevance" of the Math course.

Finally, instructors in the Office Careers discipline must be exposed, through information sessions with the Department of Women's Studies and other women's groups (along with administrators and counsellors on those campuses which are predominantly female) to the pressures and anxieties felt by low and middle class women who make up the majority of their enrollment. Income was a factor influencing the encouragement given by the Office Careers instructors prior to withdrawal (Question 10-08). If those women are to be convinced that they can function successfully in a paid job, the instructors and administrators must first be convinced. Income as a factor also influenced financial concerns, as well as esteem needs (Question 2-03, 07, 08). These needs, as well as resistance met at home (Question 5B-04) - all are barriers which must be recognized before the kind of learning environment which encourages success can be utilized effectively.

#### Recommendations for Action

The findings of this study bear clearly in the present operations at Douglas College. Following are some suggested actions which can be implemented over a period of time as institutional policy.

1. Increase the level and expertise of career counselling and planning, and job placement.
2. Provide the mechanism, i.e., staff, for pretesting of applicants to occur prior to entry. Reading and study skills courses should be provided almost on a continuous intake basis so these skills can be obtained prior to entry.
3. Provide the support mechanisms of most concern to the female student, i.e., child-minding and after school care, plus access

to financial assistance for part-time students. Provision for child care should be automatic on campuses (such as Coquitlam) which are predominantly females.

4. Liaison must occur between Women's Studies and those programs which are predominantly female. Instructors, Administrators, Counsellors and Ed. Planners must be made aware of the special needs of the returning female student.
5. More exit points should be built in at varying skill levels, in programs such as Office Administration, so that students who wish to obtain an entry level job may leave without the status of "dropout". In addition, specialty options and transferability to Business Management should be provided for achievement oriented students desiring greater opportunities.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

1. Because most dropouts surveyed appear to have inaccurate perceptions of office work, as noted in the response to Research Question 4 immediately prior to this section, an interesting follow-up for further study may be to develop a questionnaire which deals with perceptions of one's chosen career path and distribute it to other women students in programs such as Dental Assisting, Child Care or Nursing. This may help to clarify if women in general consider few options when choosing a career, or if this finding is peculiar to Office Careers.
2. Because the findings of this survey cannot be generalized to a larger population, a follow-up of female graduates may help

to determine the similarities and/or differences in demographic characteristics, motivations and constraints felt by graduates as opposed to dropouts. A long-term follow-up may also be of interest in comparing recognition and achievement on the job of those who graduated and of those who left after achieving the level of skill necessary to obtain an entry level position.

3. As a number of respondents suggested office work was viewed as a stepping-stone in their career path, a comparison study of females entering the Business Management options as opposed to females entering the Office Careers option would elucidate some of the conceptions held by these two groups regarding "careers" and "career paths for the future". A comparison of commitment to learning and/or commitment to an occupational objective for these two groups would also be fruitful.

#### Conclusion of the Study

Unfortunately, it was not possible to conduct further statistical analysis in order to allow the writer to determine the probability of the differences between the categories being a chance occurrence. Initially, it seemed logical to place the "no opinion" category as the fifth category after "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree" and "strongly disagree". It was felt that there was no relationship between this category and the four other categories of the scale. However, were the questionnaire to be redesigned, the "no opinion" category would be placed in the middle of the scale, as is usually done. This would permit the writer to conduct further statistical analysis that would allow comparisons of the different categories and indicate precisely where, on the scale, the largest category of responses lie.

Despite the above shortcoming of the questionnaire, it is hoped that implementation of some of the recommendations made in the answers to the research questions posed in Chapter II will assist every female student who in future enters the Office Careers programs in the community college system. No longer can we continue to base our instruction, curriculum and counselling on the precept that male careers are achievement oriented and female careers are support oriented. Responsibility for ensuring that the student achieves maximum results according to her own abilities, interests, values and ambitions lies with every level of educator, be it administrator, instructor or counselor, in a system which prides itself in giving every individual "a second chance".



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Table 1  
 Projected Population by Age Group  
 For Three Selected College Regions In B.C.  
 By Percentage of Population

| College Region  | Year | 0-14 yrs. | 15-24 yrs. | 25-44 yrs. | 45 yrs. | Total |
|-----------------|------|-----------|------------|------------|---------|-------|
| Douglas         | 1971 | 29.7      | 17.2       | 26.6       | 26.5    | 100.0 |
|                 | 1981 | 24.1      | 17.5       | 31.3       | 27.1    | 100.0 |
|                 | 1991 | 22.2      | 14.2       | 33.7       | 29.9    | 100.0 |
| Northern Lights | 1971 | 37.3      | 18.4       | 26.6       | 17.7    | 100.0 |
|                 | 1981 | 30.3      | 20.6       | 29.8       | 19.3    | 100.0 |
|                 | 1991 | 31.0      | 14.3       | 33.9       | 20.8    | 100.0 |
| Okanagan        | 1971 | 27.7      | 16.7       | 22.0       | 33.6    | 100.0 |
|                 | 1981 | 22.2      | 17.2       | 25.8       | 34.8    | 100.0 |
|                 | 1991 | 22.5      | 13.3       | 30.6       | 33.6    | 100.0 |

Source. B.C. Research Council

Table 2

Frequency of Responses  
for Questionnaire Items

Part 1

This section deals with your experiences while a student at Douglas College. Please respond to each item by circling the appropriate number:

For example, if your main reason for coming to Douglas was to prepare for a job, your response in No. 1(01) will be:

To prepare for a job (1) 2 3 4 5

Be sure to respond to each item in each question.

1. To what extent do the following reflect your reasons for returning to school?

- 01) To prepare for a job
- 02) To become more educated
- 03) To enter the job market quickly
- 04) For personal growth
- 05) To qualify for a promotion
- 06) To receive a certificate or college credit
- 07) To make contact with other people
- 08) To achieve independence
- 09) To develop skills to become more effective with my family or community

2. Consider the factors that led you to attend college at this particular time. To what extent do the following reflect your reasons for returning when you did, rather than earlier, or later.

- 01) Dissatisfaction with my job
- 02) Lessening of home responsibilities
- 03) Economic need to work
- 04) Intrinsic appeal of courses offered
- 05) In a rut at home
- 06) Family or marital changes (death, divorce, separation)
- 07) Not happy with myself
- 08) Couldn't get a job

|                |       |          |                   |            |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | No opinion |
| 1              | 2     | 3        | 4                 | 5          |

|      |      |     |   |    |
|------|------|-----|---|----|
| (34) | 13   | 3   | 0 | 0  |
| 20   | (22) | 2   | 1 | 10 |
| (17) | 15   | 3   | 3 | 7  |
| 13   | (2)  | 5   | 0 | 4  |
| 4    | 8    | (6) | 4 | 11 |
| 10   | (19) | 10  | 2 | 4  |
| 9    | (20) | 9   | 2 | 4  |
| 11   | (20) | 10  | 0 | 3  |
| 9    | (19) | 9   | 1 | 7  |

|      |      |      |     |    |
|------|------|------|-----|----|
| (12) | 5    | 9    | 7   | 12 |
| 6    | 11   | (13) | 6   | 7  |
| 9    | 16   | (11) | 2   | 1  |
| 2    | (22) | 5    | 4   | 0  |
| 3    | 7    | 11   | (6) | 7  |
| 2    | 4    | (4)  | 5   | 9  |
| 4    | (15) | 13   | 10  | 2  |
| 5    | 8    | (23) | 4   | 5  |

Table 2 Continued

- 2 -

3. In what ways did your experiences with the college influence you? To what degree do the following reflect changes within yourself?

- 01) I feel confused, restless and discontent
- 02) It gave me self-respect and confidence
- 03) It made me decide that my place is in the home
- 04) I can relate better with other people and age groups
- 05) It decreased my respect and liking for other women
- 06) I am a happier woman
- 07) I feel worthless because I didn't complete
- 08) Nothing has changed for me
- 09) I developed employable skills

4. Consider the changes you would like to see at the college based on your experiences there. Which ones may have enabled you to complete the program? To what extent would you like to see changes made in the following areas?

- 01) Lower tuition
- 02) Provide child care
- 03) Provide more help with career planning
- 04) Provide fewer social activities
- 05) Improve quality of instructors
- 06) Allow for part-time study
- 07) Screen out poorer students
- 08) Provide more financial aid
- 09) Provide job placement

5. Consider the obstacles which prevented you from completing the training program and obtaining a certificate. To what extent were these your reasons for leaving Douglas College?

A.

Academic

- 01) Course work not challenging
- 02) Grades were too low
- 03) Lack of prior education
- 04) Specialized courses not available

B.

Financial

- 01) Not enough money to continue
- 02) Child care too expensive
- 03) Could not get financial aid
- 04) Spouse would not support education financially

|                |       |          |                   |            |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| 1              | 2     | 3        | 4                 | 5          |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | No Opinion |

|    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 5  | 20 | 13 | 7  |
| 3  | 0  | 14 | 9  | 9  |
| 1  | 0  | 14 | 17 | 4  |
| 1  | 21 | 13 | 6  | 3  |
| 1  | 3  | 20 | 4  | 6  |
| 9  | 10 | 14 | 4  | 9  |
| 0  | 3  | 13 | 13 | 6  |
| 4  | 13 | 13 | 7  | 6  |
| 5  | 23 | 11 | 2  | 5  |
|    |    |    |    |    |
| 4  | 7  | 21 | 4  | 4  |
| 5  | 3  | 16 | 3  | 18 |
| 13 | 23 | 4  | 0  | 1  |
| 0  | 2  | 13 | 4  | 17 |
| 11 | 3  | 16 | 3  | 8  |
| 5  | 19 | 14 | 0  | 1  |
| 3  | 4  | 16 | 8  | 11 |
| 2  | 19 | 14 | 0  | 11 |
| 12 | 21 | 6  | 0  | 9  |
|    |    |    |    |    |
| 7  | 6  | 18 | 9  | 6  |
| 0  | 2  | 26 | 13 | 4  |
| 15 | 23 | 4  | 0  | 1  |
| 2  | 7  | 16 | 11 | 9  |
|    |    |    |    |    |
| 9  | 8  | 18 | 8  | 3  |
| 5  | 2  | 12 | 6  | 20 |
| 5  | 7  | 15 | 8  | 10 |
| 0  | 0  | 15 | 12 | 18 |

Table 2 Continued

|                |       |          |                   |            |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | No Opinion |
| 1              | 2     | 3        | 4                 | 5          |

5.

C.

Personal

- 01) Too hard to keep house and go to school
- 02) I learned all I needed to learn to get a job
- 03) Marriage situation changed plans
- 04) Participation in class made me nervous
- 05) Inadequate study skills
- 06) Illness - personal or family
- 07) I got a job
- 08) Family didn't want me to continue
- 09) I didn't feel the certificate was important

|    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 2  | 2  | 7  | 11 | 11 |
| 3  | 7  | 21 | 9  | 2  |
| 1  | 0  | 15 | 9  | 18 |
| 1  | 3  | 27 | 8  | 2  |
| 10 | 27 | 4  | 0  | 2  |
| 0  | 6  | 22 | 5  | 10 |
| 9  | 1  | 27 | 6  | 4  |
| 2  | 3  | 21 | 13 | 5  |
| 4  | 10 | 12 | 13 | 5  |

D.

Institutional

- 01) Didn't have enough knowledge of options to make a good choice of programs
- 02) Wasn't able to get the schedule/time I needed
- 03) Better counseling may have changed my mind about leaving
- 04) The atmosphere was so impersonal, I felt like a number.
- 05) The counsellor didn't suggest alternatives
- 06) The college was not what I expected

|   |    |    |    |    |
|---|----|----|----|----|
| 3 | 7  | 19 | 9  | 6  |
| 4 | 0  | 20 | 13 | 7  |
| 0 | 15 | 25 | 3  | 12 |
| 0 | 6  | 23 | 14 | 1  |
| 2 | 7  | 22 | 4  | 8  |
| 8 | 10 | 19 | 7  | 1  |

6. How do you feel about re-enrolling at Douglas College or at some other post-secondary institution in the future?

- 01) I plan to re-enrol eventually in the same program at Douglas College
- 02) I plan to re-enrol in the same program but at another institution
- 03) I feel undecided about re-enrolling at all
- 04) I do not plan to re-enrol

|   |    |    |   |    |
|---|----|----|---|----|
| 8 | 1  | 11 | 2 | 12 |
| 2 | 0  | 22 | 9 | 2  |
| 2 | 8  | 10 | 3 | 13 |
| 7 | 10 | 10 | 3 | 19 |

Part 2

This section deals more specifically with your reactions to your training in the Office Careers program.

7. Consider your reasons for choosing to enter the Office Careers program, rather than any other career program. To what extent do the following reflect your reasons for having chosen this occupation?

- 01) Job opportunities in an office are good
- 02) Training time is relatively short
- 03) I disliked office work but couldn't see myself in anything else
- 04) I am interested in the work
- 05) Cost of training is reasonable.
- 06) It seemed like a good place to begin my career in business
- 07) I didn't consider any other kind of training
- 08) It suited my abilities and personality
- 09) My family wanted me to take it

|    |    |    |   |    |
|----|----|----|---|----|
| 13 | 27 | 2  | 1 | 2  |
| 4  | 32 | 1  | 0 | 6  |
| 0  | 6  | 23 | 9 | 6  |
| 10 | 32 | 0  | 1 | 3  |
| 5  | 50 | 0  | 0 | 7  |
| 5  | 31 | 1  | 0 | 5  |
| 1  | 23 | 29 | 4 | 6  |
| 2  | 24 | 5  | 4 | 10 |
| 4  | 6  | 4  | 9 | 8  |

Table 2 Continued

- 4 -

8. Consider the aspects of your training that created pressures and anxieties for you. To what extent do you feel the following created a tense and uncomfortable climate in which to work?
- 01) Constant testing
  - 02) Some instructor's attitudes toward subject matter
  - 03) Class discussions
  - 04) Lack of prior skills including reading and comprehension
  - 05) Unable to organize my time and set goals for myself
  - 06) Timed assignments (typing, calculator drills)
  - 07) No quiet place to study
  - 08) Conflicting demands on my time (home, job, school)
  - 09) Too long a day to study.

9. Consider the elements of the program, as well as the non-academic pressures, which made you withdraw. To what extent do each of the following reflect your decision to withdraw?

A.

Academic

- 01) I dislike individualized instruction
- 02) I prefer to get grades for my efforts (A's, B's, etc.)
- 03) The program was too tough for me
- 04) The atmosphere was too relaxed for me
- 05) Course content didn't challenge my intellect
- 06) Some instructors weren't fair in their assessment
- 07) I prefer lectures/more structure
- 08) I just wanted to learn to type (or one other single skill)
- 09) Five courses were too heavy

B.

Non-Academic

- 01) Lack of self-confidence
- 02) Family was non-supportive
- 03) I was unable to set my own goals and work independently
- 04) Guilt about neglect of children
- 05) Lack of energy
- 06) Time of classes was bad for me
- 07) No time for social life, hobbies, etc.
- 08) I prefer evening classes
- 09) Personality conflict with instructor

|                |       |          |                   |            |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | No Opinion |
| 1              | 2     | 3        | 4                 | 5          |

|    |    |    |   |   |
|----|----|----|---|---|
| 4  | 6  | 23 | 5 | 7 |
| 7  | 23 | 7  | 5 | 4 |
| 1  | 3  | 33 | 5 | 4 |
| 0  | 7  | 29 | 9 | 6 |
| 7  | 20 | 6  | 9 | 3 |
| 7  | 7  | 21 | 9 | 1 |
| 5  | 7  | 25 | 8 | 3 |
| 12 | 23 | 5  | 4 | 3 |
| 2  | 2  | 27 | 4 | 7 |

|   |    |    |    |   |
|---|----|----|----|---|
| 2 | 2  | 27 | 11 | 1 |
| 4 | 4  | 22 | 8  | 6 |
| 1 | 16 | 23 | 17 | 1 |
| 4 | 5  | 25 | 6  | 3 |
| 5 | 1  | 26 | 7  | 2 |
| 4 | 7  | 24 | 7  | 6 |
| 3 | 6  | 16 | 7  | 9 |
| 1 | 6  | 16 | 15 | 2 |
| 3 | 6  | 16 | 12 | 8 |

|   |    |    |    |    |
|---|----|----|----|----|
| 5 | 7  | 14 | 12 | 5  |
| 1 | 0  | 26 | 3  | 7  |
| 0 | 14 | 1  | 11 | 5  |
| 6 | 2  | 3  | 11 | 10 |
| 3 | 4  | 5  | 14 | 5  |
| 2 | 4  | 23 | 11 | 2  |
| 0 | 7  | 17 | 9  | 6  |
| 0 | 7  | 13 | 10 | 11 |
| 3 | 5  | 13 | 18 | 2  |

Table 2 Continued

- 5 -

10. Sometimes those persons closest to us withdraw their support when it is most needed. Consider the influence of the people around you when you decided to withdraw from the program. To what extent did each of the of the following (if applicable to you) encourage you to remain in the program?

- 01) Husband
- 02) Children
- 03) Parents
- 04) Brothers and sisters
- 05) Male friends
- 06) Female friends
- 07) Employer
- 08) Office Career Instructors
- 09) Classmates

|                |       |          |                   |            |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | No Opinion |
| 1              | 2     | 3        | 4                 | 5          |

|   |     |   |   |      |
|---|-----|---|---|------|
| 2 | 9   | 2 | 4 | (21) |
| 1 | 1   | 6 | 3 | (18) |
| 3 | 1   | 5 | 1 | (15) |
| 4 | 5   | 4 | 3 | (17) |
| 1 | 5   | 5 | 0 | (23) |
| 0 | (8) | 6 | 2 | (8)  |
| 1 | 2   | 2 | 0 | (27) |
| 3 | (8) | 4 | 5 | (4)  |
| 2 | 6   | 4 | 3 | (21) |

11. Of the courses which you took, do you agree that each served to prepare you well for the world of work? Please rate those courses you took according to your preceptions of how worthwhile each was to your immediate or future goals.

- 01) Typing
- 02) Business English
- 03) Business Math and Machines
- 04) Bookkeeping
- 05) Office Procedures
- 06) Shorthand
- 07) Legal Office Procedures
- 08) Medical Office Procedures

|      |      |   |   |      |
|------|------|---|---|------|
| (21) | 16   | 2 | 4 | 3    |
| (18) | 4    | 4 | 6 | 1    |
| 16   | (15) | 2 | 6 | 2    |
| (26) | 6    | 0 | 2 | 3    |
| 8    | (14) | 6 | 4 | 2    |
| 4    | 2    | 2 | 2 | (25) |
| 2    | 2    | 2 | 0 | (23) |
| 2    | 2    | 2 | 0 | (27) |

Part 3

This section covers a variety of questions about your background.

12. What is your age? (check)

- 01) 9 20 or under
- 02) 10 21 - 25 years of age
- 03) 8 26 - 30 years of age
- 04) 4 31 - 35 years of age
- 05) 5 36 - 40 years of age
- 06) (16) 40 - 50 years of age
- 07) 2 51 - 60 years of age
- 08) 1 61 or over

13. What is your marital status? (check)

- 01) 21 single (never married)
- 02) 4 separated or divorced
- 03) (29) married
- 04) 0 widowed

14. How many children do you have? (check)

- 01) 18 none
- 02) 7 one
- 03) (19) two
- 04) 6 three
- 05) 2 four
- 06) 1 five or more

15. Are you a single parent? (check)

- 01) 5 yes
- 02) (47) no

Table 2 Continued

- 6 -

16. Indicate whether you have children in any of the following age categories. (check)

- 01) 2 birth - 3 years
- 02) 2 4 - 6 years
- 03) 10 6 - 12 years
- 04) 12 13 - 17 years
- 05) (7) 18 - 22 years
- 06) 12 23 years and over

17. How old did you feel the children had to be before you returned to school/work? (check)

- 01) 2 infancy
- 02) 1 2 - 5 years
- 03) 7 6 years (school entry)
- 04) 2 7 - 12 years
- 05) (9) 13 - 17 years
- 06) 3 18 years or over

18. Was your mother employed outside the home while you were growing up (before you were 18)? (check)

- 01) 15 yes
- 02) (30) no
- 03) 7 not applicable

**Part 4**

This section deals with questions regarding your education and work experience.

19. What was the highest level of education you reached? (check one)

- 01) Less than high school 16
- 02) High school grad (25)
- 03) Technical or trade school 4
- 04) Some college or university 7
- 05) College diploma 2
- 06) Bachelors degree 0
- 07) Professional designation (C.G.A., LL.B., etc.) 0
- 08) Doctorate degree 0

20. If applicable, what was the highest level of education reached by your spouse? (check one)

- 01) Less than high school (15)
- 02) High school grad 8
- 03) Technical or trade school 2
- 04) Some college or university 0
- 05) College diploma 2
- 06) Bachelors degree 2
- 07) Professional designation (C.G.A., LL.B., etc.) 0
- 08) Doctorate degree 0

21. What was your approximate grade average during your last years at school? Assume that 80% and above = A; 65% to 79% = B; 50% to 64% = C, if grades were not assigned in your school system. (check)

- 01) 8 A
- 02) (23) B
- 03) 19 C
- 04) 0 below C
- 05) 4 can't remember





## Table 2 Continued

- 8 -

THAT COMPLETES THE QUESTIONNAIRE!

*Would you kindly place the last four digits only of your telephone number on the line to the right. This will allow the computer to sort the responses while retaining complete anonymity.*

---

THANK YOU: Your assistance is greatly appreciated. If you believe you could assist me more through a personal interview, please forward the postcard included with the questionnaire. I will be in touch with you to make an appointment when it will be most convenient for you.

Table 2 Continued

Note. The modal response has been circled for each questionnaire item.

<sup>a</sup>The data for Question 23 are:

| <u>Occupation</u> | <u>Length of<br/>Time at Job</u> | <u>Full Time<br/>or Part Time</u> |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Clerical - 11     | 0 - 12 months - 8                | Full time - 13                    |
| Sales - 5         | 13 - 24 months - 8               | Part time - 6                     |
| Health - 2        | 25 months & over - 4             |                                   |
| Police - 1        |                                  |                                   |
| Farmer - 1        |                                  |                                   |
| Housewife - 2     |                                  |                                   |
| Unemployed - 1    |                                  |                                   |

Table 3

Distribution of Respondents  
By Selected Demographic Variables

| Age               | Marital Status |                    |         | Number of Children |   |    |   |   |           | Income         |          |                 |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|---|----|---|---|-----------|----------------|----------|-----------------|
|                   | Single         | Separated/Divorced | Married | 0                  | 1 | 2  | 3 | 4 | 5 or more | Under \$20,000 | \$20,000 | \$20,000 + over |
| 25 years or under | 9              | 0                  | 0       | 8                  | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0         | 17             |          | 3               |
| Over 25 years     | 12             | 4                  | 29      | 10                 | 7 | 19 | 6 | 2 | 1         | 8              |          | 15              |
| Total = 55        | 21             | 4                  | 29      | 18                 | 7 | 19 | 6 | 2 | 1         | 25             |          | 18              |

Level of Education

| Age               | Level of Education |          |             |              | Degree/Prof. Desig. |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|
|                   | Less Than H/S      | H/S Grad | Tech./Trade | Some College |                     |
| 25 years or under | 2                  | 4        | 0           | 2            | 1                   |
| Over 25 years     | 14                 | 21       | 4           | 5            | 1                   |
| Total = 55        | 16                 | 25       | 4           | 7            | 2                   |

Occupation

| Age               | Occupation |       |        |        |           |        |            |
|-------------------|------------|-------|--------|--------|-----------|--------|------------|
|                   | Clerical   | Sales | Health | Farmer | Housewife | Police | Unemployed |
| 25 years or under | 4          | 1     | 0      | 0      | 0         | 0      | 0          |
| Over 25 years     | 7          | 4     | 2      | 1      | 1         | 1      | 1          |
| Total = 55        | 11         | 5     | 2      | 1      | 1         | 1      | 1          |

Note. Age levels were collapsed to 25 years or under and Over 25 years for the purpose of cross-tabulations.

H/S = High School; Tech./Trade = Technical or Trade School; Prof. Desig. = Professional Designation (e.g. C.G.A.)

Questionnaire Items Reaching  
Level of Significance  
for Selected Variables

SURVEY OF FORMER STUDENTS  
in  
OFFICE CAREERS TRAINING

**Part 1**

This section deals with your experiences while a student at Douglas College. Please respond to each item by circling the appropriate number

For example, if your main reason for coming to Douglas was to prepare for a job, your response in No. 1(01) will be:

To prepare for a job (1) 2 3 4 5

Be sure to respond to each item in each question.

1. To what extent do the following reflect your reasons for returning to school?

- 01) To prepare for a job
- 02) To become more educated
- 03) To enter the job market quickly
- 04) For personal growth
- 05) To qualify for a promotion
- 06) To receive a certificate or college credit
- 07) To make contact with other people
- 08) To achieve independence
- 09) To develop skills to become more effective with my family or community

2. Consider the factors that led you to attend college at this particular time. To what extent do the following reflect your reasons for returning when you did, rather than earlier, or later.

- 01) Dissatisfaction with my job
- 02) Lessening of home responsibilities
- 03) Economic need to work
- 04) Intrinsic appeal of courses offered
- 05) In a rut at home
- 06) Family or marital changes (death, divorce, separation)
- 07) Not happy with myself
- 08) Couldn't get a job

|  | Age | Marital Status | Income | Level of Education of Respondent | Attitude Toward Age of Children Upon Re-Entry |
|--|-----|----------------|--------|----------------------------------|---|
| 01) To prepare for a job   | ✓   | ✓              | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 02) To become more educated  |     | ✓              |        |                                  |   |
| 03) To enter the job market quickly  | ✓   |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 04) For personal growth  | ✓   |                |        |                                  |   |
| 05) To qualify for a promotion   | ✓   | ✓              | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 06) To receive a certificate or college credit                             | ✓   |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 07) To make contact with other people                                      | ✓   |                |        | ✓                                |   |
| 08) To achieve independence  | ✓   |                |        |                                  |   |
| 09) To develop skills to become more effective with my family or community | ✓   |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
|  |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 01) Dissatisfaction with my job  | ✓   | ✓              | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 02) Lessening of home responsibilities                                     | ✓   |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 03) Economic need to work  | ✓   |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 04) Intrinsic appeal of courses offered                                    | ✓   |                |        | ✓                                |   |
| 05) In a rut at home   |     | ✓              |        |                                  |   |
| 06) Family or marital changes (death, divorce, separation)                 |     | ✓              |        |                                  |   |
| 07) Not happy with myself  |     | ✓              |        |                                  |   |
| 08) Couldn't get a job   | ✓   |                | ✓      |                                  |   |



Table 4 Continued

5.

C.  
Personal

- 01) Too hard to keep house and go to school.
- 02) I learned all I needed to learn to get a job
- 03) Marriage situation changed plans
- 04) Participation in class made me nervous
- 05) Inadequate study skills
- 06) Illness - personal or family
- 07) I got a job
- 08) Family didn't want me to continue
- 09) I didn't feel the certificate was important

D.

Institutional

- 01) Didn't have enough knowledge of options to make a good choice of programs
- 02) Wasn't able to get the schedule/time I needed
- 03) Better counseling may have changed my mind about leaving
- 04) The atmosphere was so impersonal, I felt like a number.
- 05) The counsellor didn't suggest alternatives
- 06) The college was not what I expected

6. How do you feel about re-enrolling at Douglas College or at some other post-secondary institution in the future?

- 01) I plan to re-enrol eventually in the same program at Douglas College
- 02) I plan to re-enrol in the same program but at another institution
- 03) I feel undecided about re-enrolling at all
- 04) I do not plan to re-enrol

Part 2

This section deals more specifically with your reactions to your training in the Office Careers program.

7. Consider your reasons for choosing to enter the Office Careers program, rather than any other career program. To what extent do the following reflect your reasons for having chosen this occupation?

- 01) Job opportunities in an office are good
- 02) Training time is relatively short
- 03) I disliked office work but couldn't see myself in anything else
- 04) I am interested in the work
- 05) Cost of training is reasonable
- 06) It seemed like a good place to begin my career in business
- 07) I didn't consider any other kind of training
- 08) It suited my abilities and personality
- 09) My family wanted me to take it

|   | Age | Marital Status | Income | Level of Education of Respondent | Attitude Toward Age of Children Upon Re-Entry |
|---|-----|----------------|--------|----------------------------------|---|
| 01) Too hard to keep house and go to school.                                  | ✓   | ✓              |        | ✓                                | ✓   |
| 02) I learned all I needed to learn to get a job                              |     |                |        | ✓                                |   |
| 03) Marriage situation changed plans  |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 04) Participation in class made me nervous                                    | ✓   |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 05) Inadequate study skills   |     | ✓              | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 06) Illness - personal or family  |     |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 07) I got a job   | ✓   |                |        |                                  |   |
| 08) Family didn't want me to continue   | ✓   |                |        |                                  |   |
| 09) I didn't feel the certificate was important                               |     |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 01) Didn't have enough knowledge of options to make a good choice of programs |     | ✓              | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 02) Wasn't able to get the schedule/time I needed                             |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 03) Better counseling may have changed my mind about leaving                  |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 04) The atmosphere was so impersonal, I felt like a number.                   |     | ✓              |        |                                  |   |
| 05) The counsellor didn't suggest alternatives                                |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 06) The college was not what I expected                                       | ✓   | ✓              |        |                                  |   |
| 01) I plan to re-enrol eventually in the same program at Douglas College      | ✓   |                |        |                                  |   |
| 02) I plan to re-enrol in the same program but at another institution         |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 03) I feel undecided about re-enrolling at all                                |     |                |        |                                  | ✓   |
| 04) I do not plan to re-enrol   |     |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 01) Job opportunities in an office are good                                   | ✓   |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 02) Training time is relatively short   |     | ✓              |        |                                  |   |
| 03) I disliked office work but couldn't see myself in anything else           |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 04) I am interested in the work   |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 05) Cost of training is reasonable  |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 06) It seemed like a good place to begin my career in business                |     | ✓              |        |                                  |   |
| 07) I didn't consider any other kind of training                              |     |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 08) It suited my abilities and personality                                    |     |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 09) My family wanted me to take it  |     |                |        | ✓                                |   |

Table 4 Continued

- 4 -

8. Consider the aspects of your training that created pressures and anxieties for you. To what extent do you feel the following created a tense and uncomfortable climate in which to work?
- 01) Constant testing
  - 02) Some instructor's attitudes toward subject matter
  - 03) Class discussions
  - 04) Lack of prior skills including reading and comprehension
  - 05) Unable to organize my time and set goals for myself
  - 06) Timed assignments (typing, calculator drills)
  - 07) No quiet place to study
  - 08) Conflicting demands on my time (home, job, school)
  - 09) Too long a day to study.

9. Consider the elements of the program, as well as the non-academic pressures, which made you withdraw. To what extent do each of the following reflect your decision to withdraw?

A.

Academic

- 01) I dislike individualized instruction
- 02) I prefer to get grades for my efforts (A's, B's, etc.)
- 03) The program was too tough for me
- 04) The atmosphere was too relaxed for me
- 05) Course content didn't challenge my intellect
- 06) Some instructors weren't fair in their assessment
- 07) I prefer lectures/more structure
- 08) I just wanted to learn to type (or one other single skill)
- 09) Five courses were too heavy

B.

Non-Academic

- 01) Lack of self-confidence
- 02) Family was non-supportive
- 03) I was unable to set my own goals and work independently
- 04) Guilt about neglect of children
- 05) Lack of energy
- 06) Time of classes was bad for me
- 07) No time for social life, hobbies, etc.
- 08) I prefer evening classes
- 09) Personality conflict with instructor

|      | Age | Marital Status | Income | Level of Education of Respondent | Attitude Toward Age of Children upon Re-Entry |
|------|-----|----------------|--------|----------------------------------|---|
| 8.01 | ✓   |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 8.02 |     |                |        | ✓                                |   |
| 8.03 |     |                | ✓      | ✓                                |   |
| 8.04 |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 8.05 |     |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 8.06 |     |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 8.07 |     |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 8.08 |     |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 8.09 | ✓   |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 9.01 |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 9.02 |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 9.03 |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 9.04 | ✓   |                |        |                                  |   |
| 9.05 | ✓   |                | ✓      |                                  |   |
| 9.06 |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 9.07 |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 9.08 | ✓   |                |        | ✓                                |   |
| 9.09 | ✓   |                |        |                                  | ✓   |
| 9.10 |     |                |        |                                  |   |
| 9.11 | ✓   |                |        |                                  |   |
| 9.12 | ✓   |                |        |                                  |   |
| 9.13 |     |                |        | ✓                                |   |
| 9.14 |     | ✓              | ✓      | ✓                                | ✓   |
| 9.15 |     |                |        | ✓                                |   |
| 9.16 | ✓   |                |        | ✓                                |   |
| 9.17 |     |                |        |                                  | ✓   |
| 9.18 |     |                | ✓      |                                  |   |

Table 4 Continued

- 5 -

10. Sometimes those persons closest to us withdraw their support when it is most needed. Consider the influence of the people around you when you decided to withdraw from the program. To what extent did each of the following (if applicable to you) encourage you to remain in the program?
- 01) Husband
  - 02) Children
  - 03) Parents
  - 04) Brothers and sisters
  - 05) Male friends
  - 06) Female friends
  - 07) Employer
  - 08) Office Career Instructors
  - 09) Classmates

|                               | Age                                 | Marital Status                      | Income                              | Level of Education of Respondent | Attitude Toward Age of Children Upon Re-Entry |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 01) Husband                   |                                     |                                     |                                     |                                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>           |
| 02) Children                  |                                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |                                     |                                  |   |
| 03) Parents                   |                                     |                                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |                                  |   |
| 04) Brothers and sisters      |                                     |                                     |                                     |                                  |   |
| 05) Male friends              |                                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |                                     |                                  |   |
| 06) Female friends            |                                     |                                     |                                     |                                  |   |
| 07) Employer                  |                                     |                                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |                                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>           |
| 08) Office Career Instructors | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |                                     |                                     |                                  |   |
| 09) Classmates                |                                     |                                     |                                     |                                  |   |

11. Of the courses which you took, do you agree that each served to prepare you well for the world of work? Please rate those courses you took according to your preceptions of how worthwhile each was to your immediate or future goals.
- 01) Typing
  - 02) Business English
  - 03) Business Math and Machines
  - 04) Bookkeeping
  - 05) Office Procedures
  - 06) Shorthand
  - 07) Legal Office Procedures
  - 08) Medical Office Procedures

Part 3  
~~This~~ section covers a variety of questions about your background.

12. What is your age? (check)
- 01)  20 or under
  - 02)  21 - 25 years of age
  - 03)  26 - 30 years of age
  - 04)  31 - 35 years of age
  - 05)  36 - 40 years of age
  - 06)  40 - 50 years of age
  - 07)  51 - 60 years of age
  - 08)  61 or over
13. What is your marital status? (check)
- 01)  single (never married)
  - 02)  separated or divorced
  - 03)  married
  - 04)  widowed
14. How many children do you have? (check)
- 01)  none
  - 02)  one
  - 03)  two
  - 04)  three
  - 05)  four
  - 06)  five or more
15. Are you a single parent? (check)
- 01)  yes
  - 02)  no



Table 4 Continued

- 6 -

16. Indicate whether you have children in any of the following age categories. (check)
- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 01) ___ birth - 3 years | 04) ___ 13 - 17 years     |
| 02) ___ 4 - 6 years     | 05) ___ 18 - 22 years     |
| 03) ___ 6 - 12 years    | 06) ___ 23 years and over |
17. How old did you feel the children had to be before you returned to school/work? (check)
- |                                |                          |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 01) ___ infancy                | 04) ___ 7 - 12 years     |
| 02) ___ 2 - 5 years            | 05) ___ 13 - 17 years    |
| 03) ___ 6 years (school entry) | 06) ___ 18 years or over |
18. Was your mother employed outside the home while you were growing up (before you were 18)? (check)
- |             |            |                        |
|-------------|------------|------------------------|
| 01) ___ yes | 02) ___ no | 03) ___ not applicable |
|-------------|------------|------------------------|

Part 4

This section deals with questions regarding your education and work experience.

19. What was the highest level of education you reached? (check one)
- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 01) Less than high school                        | _____ |
| 02) High school grad                             | _____ |
| 03) Technical or trade school                    | _____ |
| 04) Some college or university                   | _____ |
| 05) College diploma                              | _____ |
| 06) Bachelors degree                             | _____ |
| 07) Professional designation (C.G.A.,LL.B.,etc.) | _____ |
| 08) Doctorate degree                             | _____ |
20. If applicable, what was the highest level of education reached by your spouse? (check one)
- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 01) Less than high school                        | _____ |
| 02) High school grad                             | _____ |
| 03) Technical or trade school                    | _____ |
| 04) Some college or university                   | _____ |
| 05) College diploma                              | _____ |
| 06) Bachelors degree                             | _____ |
| 07) Professional designation (C.G.A.,LL.B.,etc.) | _____ |
| 08) Doctorate degree                             | _____ |
21. What was your approximate grade average during your last years at school? Assume that 80% and above = A; 65% to 79% = B; 50% to 64% = C, if grades were not assigned in your school system. (check)
- 01) \_\_\_ A    02) \_\_\_ B    03) \_\_\_ C    04) \_\_\_ below C    05) \_\_\_ can't remember

Note. Variables having  $\chi^2$  of  $p < .01$  are indicated by a check. (✓)

Note. When Item 18 (Was your mother employed outside the home while you were growing up) was used as Factor B, none of the items reached level of significance; therefore are not included in this table.

**Table 5**  
**Distribution of Respondents**  
**By Age**

| Years       | Number | Percentage |
|-------------|--------|------------|
| 20 or under | 9      | 16.4       |
| 21 - 25     | 10     | 18.2       |
| 26 - 30     | 8      | 14.5       |
| 31 - 35     | 4      | 7.3        |
| 36 - 40     | 5      | 9.1        |
| 41 - 50     | 16     | 29.1       |
| 51 - 60     | 2      | 3.6        |
| 61 or over  | 1      | 1.8        |
| Total       | 55     | 100.0      |

Table 6  
 Factors Leading To Enrollment  
 Distribution of Respondents

| Factor                 | Agree/Strongly Agree |         | Disagree/ Strongly Disagree |         | No.<br>of<br>Responses |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------|------------------------|
|                        | Number               | Percent | Number                      | Percent |                        |
| Job Preparation        | 47                   | 94      | 3                           | 6       | 50                     |
| Become More Educated   | 42                   | 93.3    | 3                           | 6.7     | 45                     |
| Enter Job Market       | 32                   | 71.1    | 6                           | 13.3    | 45                     |
| Personal Growth        | 35                   | 79.5    | 5                           | 11.4    | 44                     |
| Promotion on the Job   | 12                   | 23.3    | 20                          | 46.5    | 43                     |
| Receive College Credit | 29                   | 64.4    | 12                          | 26.7    | 45                     |
| Socialization          | 29                   | 65.9    | 11                          | 25      | 44                     |
| Achieve Independence   | 31                   | 70.5    | 10                          | 22.7    | 44                     |
| Family/Community Needs | 27                   | 61.4    | 10                          | 22.7    | 44                     |

Table 7  
 Perceived Changes to Enable Completion  
 Distribution of Respondents

| Change                         | Agree/Strongly Agree |         | Disagree/Strongly Disagree |         | No. of Responses |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------------|---------|------------------|
|                                | Number               | Percent | Number                     | Percent |                  |
| Lower Tuition                  | 11                   | 24.4    | 30                         | 66.7    | 45               |
| Provide Child Care             | 8                    | 17.8    | 19                         | 42.2    | 45               |
| Career Planning                | 35                   | 77.8    | 4                          | 8.9     | 45               |
| Fewer Social Activities        | 2                    | 4.4     | 26                         | 57.8    | 45               |
| Improve Quality of Instructors | 14                   | 31.1    | 23                         | 51.1    | 45               |
| Part-time Study                | 23                   | 48.9    | 14                         | 29.8    | 47               |
| Screen Out Poorer Students     | 7                    | 15.2    | 28                         | 60.9    | 46               |
| Financial Aid                  | 20                   | 44.4    | 14                         | 31.1    | 45               |
| Job Placement                  | 33                   | 68.8    | 6                          | 12.5    | 48               |

Table 8  
 Motivations for Choice of Specialty  
 Distribution of Respondents

| Motivations                        | Agreed/Strongly Agreed |         | Disagreed/Strongly Disagreed |         | No. of Responses |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------|------------------------------|---------|------------------|
|                                    | Number                 | Percent | Number                       | Percent |                  |
| Job Opportunities Good             | 40                     | 88.9    | 3                            | 6.7     | 45               |
| Dislike Work But See Nothing Else  | 6                      | 13.6    | 32                           | 72.7    | 44               |
| Like Office Work                   | 42                     | 91.3    | 1                            | 2.2     | 46               |
| Cost Reasonable                    | 35                     | 83.3    | 0                            | 2.4     | 42               |
| Good Place to Start                | 36                     | 85.7    | 1                            | 2.4     | 42               |
| Didn't Consider Anything Else      | 24                     | 55.8    | 33                           | 76.7    | 43               |
| Suits my Abilities and Personality | 26                     | 57.8    | 9                            | 20      | 45               |
| Family Wanted this Program         | 10                     | 24.4    | 23                           | 56.1    | 41               |
| Short Training Time                | 34                     | 79.1    | 1                            | 2.3     | 43               |

Table 9  
Academic Pressures  
Distribution of Respondents

| Pressures                        | Agreed/Strongly Agreed |         | Disagreed/Strongly Disagreed |         | No.<br>of<br>Responses |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|---------|------------------------------|---------|------------------------|
|                                  | Number                 | Percent | Number                       | Percent |                        |
| Dislike Individual Instruction   | 4                      | 9.1     | 38                           | 86.4    | 44                     |
| Program Grades                   | 8                      | 18.6    | 30                           | 69.8    | 43                     |
| Program Too Tough                | 17                     | 38.6    | 42                           | 95.5    | 44                     |
| Atmosphere too Relaxed           | 9                      | 20.5    | 24                           | 54.5    | 44                     |
| Course Content too easy          | 6                      | 13.6    | 33                           | 75      | 44                     |
| Unfair Assessment by Instructors | 11                     | 25.6    | 31                           | 72.1    | 43                     |
| Prefer Lectures                  | 9                      | 20.9    | 23                           | 53.5    | 43                     |
| Just Wanted to Learn to Type     | 7                      | 16.7    | 31                           | 73.8    | 42                     |
| Five Courses too Heavy           | 9                      | 20.5    | 29                           | 65.9    | 44                     |

Table 10  
 Nonacademic Pressures  
 Distribution of Respondents

| Pressures                           | Agreed/Strongly Agreed |         | Disagreed/Strongly Disagreed |         | No.<br>of<br>Responses |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---------|------------------------------|---------|------------------------|
|                                     | Number                 | Percent | Number                       | Percent |                        |
| Lacked Self-Confidence              | 12                     | 27.9    | 26                           | 60.5    | 43                     |
| Family nonsupportive                | 1                      | 2.4     | 23                           | 56.1    | 41                     |
| Unable to set Goals                 | 14                     | 34.1    | 12                           | 29.3    | 41                     |
| Guilt Over Children                 | 8                      | 19.     | 24                           | 57.1    | 42                     |
| No Energy                           | 7                      | 17.1    | 29                           | 70.7    | 41                     |
| Time of Classes Poor                | 6                      | 14.6    | 33                           | 80.5    | 41                     |
| No Social Life                      | 7                      | 17.1    | 28                           | 68.3    | 41                     |
| Prefer Evening Classes              | 7                      | 17.1    | 23                           | 56.1    | 41                     |
| Didn't get Along With<br>Instructor | 8                      | 19.5    | 31                           | 75.6    | 41                     |



Table 11  
Rating of Value of Courses Studied  
Distribution of Respondents

| Courses                   | Agreed/Strongly Agreed |         | Disagreed/Strongly Disagreed |         | No. of Responses |
|---------------------------|------------------------|---------|------------------------------|---------|------------------|
|                           | Number                 | Percent | Number                       | Percent |                  |
| Typing                    | 37                     | 80.4    | 6                            | 13.1    | 46               |
| Business English          | 22                     | 66.7    | 10                           | 30.3    | 33               |
| Math & Machines           | 34                     | 77.3    | 8                            | 18.2    | 44               |
| Office Procedures         | 27                     | 69.2    | 10                           | 25.6    | 39               |
| Bookkeeping               | 32                     | 86.5    | 2                            | 5.4     | 37               |
| *Shorthand                | 6                      | 17.6    | 4                            | 11.8    | 34               |
| *Legal Office Procedures  | 4                      | 11.8    | 2                            | 5.9     | 34               |
| *Medical Office Procedure | 4                      | 11.8    | 2                            | 5.9     | 34               |

\* Note. Shorthand, Legal and Medical Office Procedures are all optional courses.

January 25, 1980



douglas college

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Mail correspondence to:  
PO Box 2503  
New Westminster  
British Columbia  
Canada, V3L 5B2

Dear Former Student:

The Office Careers discipline at Douglas College is very concerned about the attrition rate in our programs. The more that we know about why students leave our programs before completion, the more help we will be able to build into the college and the programs to encourage students to complete their course of studies. The best way to obtain this vital information is to ask students like yourself what kinds of support facilities we should provide and how we can improve our programs and our instruction.

The enclosed questionnaire will enable us to know some of the problems and pressures women meet when they come to college. It will also give educators a clearer picture of students' backgrounds and resources so that they may use this data as a starting point when designing new programs. The information you provide is completely anonymous, but will be invaluable to myself and others who are concerned with the success of vocational programming at Douglas College.

The questions cover your attitudes toward the college itself and toward the program you were in, as well as the reasons which made you withdraw. It will take 15 to 20 minutes to complete, but I would encourage you to think about the issues deeply, as the success of future students may rest in part on your responses. If there is something about our courses you've always wanted to tell us but it's not covered in the questionnaire, please feel free to state your views in question 27 at the end.

As I will be using the results for a Masters thesis in Education, I would appreciate the opportunity to interview you personally after you've completed the questionnaire. If you would agree to an interview at your convenience, please mail the enclosed postcard with your name, address and phone number. This ensures that your questionnaire responses remain anonymous, and would enable me to contact you by phone to arrange an appointment.

Please complete and return the questionnaire in the enclosed business reply envelope by February 15. I will be contacting all respondents by phone prior to the end of February, so please return your questionnaire as soon as possible.

Your participation in this survey will be greatly appreciated, as it will provide much valuable and much needed information. If after completing the questionnaire, you find you have a lot more you would like to say, please consider a personal interview and mail the postcard right away.

Very sincerely yours,

Marian D. Justus  
Instructor  
Department of Business and Commerce



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3. In what ways did your experiences with the college influence you? To what degree do the following reflect changes within yourself?

| 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree    |   |   |   |   |
| Agree             |   |   |   |   |
| Disagree          |   |   |   |   |
| Strongly Disagree |   |   |   |   |
| No Opinion        |   |   |   |   |

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01) I feel confused, restless and discontent             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 02) It gave me self-respect and confidence               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 03) It made me decide that my place is in the home       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 04) I can relate better with other people and age groups | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 05) It decreased my respect and liking for other women   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 06) I am a happier woman                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 07) I feel worthless because I didn't complete           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 08) Nothing has changed for me                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 09) I developed employable skills                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

4. Consider the changes you would like to see at the college based on your experiences there. Which ones may have enabled you to complete the program? To what extent would you like to see changes made in the following areas?

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01) Lower tuition                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 02) Provide child care                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 03) Provide more help with career planning | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 04) Provide fewer social activities        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 05) Improve quality of instructors         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 06) Allow for part-time study              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 07) Screen out poorer students             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 08) Provide more financial aid             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 09) Provide job placement                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

5. Consider the obstacles which prevented you from completing the training program and obtaining a certificate. To what extent were these your reasons for leaving Douglas College?

A.

Academic

- |                                       |   |   |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01) Course work not challenging       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 02) Grades were too low               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 03) Lack of prior education           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 04) Specialized courses not available | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

B.

Financial

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01) Not enough money to continue                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 02) Child care too expensive                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 03) Could not get financial aid                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 04) Spouse would not support education financially | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

|                |       |          |                   |            |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | No Opinion |
| 1              | 2     | 3        | 4                 | 5          |

5.

C.

Personal

- 01) Too hard to keep house and go to school
- 02) I learned all I needed to learn to get a job
- 03) Marriage situation changed plans
- 04) Participation in class made me nervous
- 05) Inadequate study skills
- 06) Illness - personal or family
- 07) I got a job
- 08) Family didn't want me to continue
- 09) I didn't feel the certificate was important

D.

Institutional

- 01) Didn't have enough knowledge of options to make a good choice of programs
- 02) Wasn't able to get the schedule/time I needed
- 03) Better counseling may have changed my mind about leaving
- 04) The atmosphere was so impersonal, I felt like a number.
- 05) The counsellor didn't suggest alternatives
- 06) The college was not what I expected

6. How do you feel about re-enrolling at Douglas College or at some other post-secondary institution in the future?

- 01) I plan to re-enrol eventually in the same program at Douglas College
- 02) I plan to re-enrol in the same program but at another institution
- 03) I feel undecided about re-enrolling at all
- 04) I do not plan to re-enrol

Part 2

This section deals more specifically with your reactions to your training in the Office Careers program.

7. Consider your reasons for choosing to enter the Office Careers program, rather than any other career program. To what extent do the following reflect your reasons for having chosen this occupation?

- 01) Job opportunities in an office are good
- 02) Training time is relatively short
- 03) I disliked office work but couldn't see myself in anything else
- 04) I am interested in the work
- 05) Cost of training is reasonable
- 06) It seemed like a good place to begin my career in business
- 07) I didn't consider any other kind of training
- 08) It suited my abilities and personality
- 09) My family wanted me to take it

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- |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Consider the aspects of your training that created pressures and anxieties for you. To what extent do you feel the following created a tense and uncomfortable climate in which to work? |   |   |   |   |   |
| 01) Constant testing  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 02) Some instructor's attitudes toward subject matter   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 03) Class discussions   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 04) Lack of prior skills including reading and comprehension  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 05) Unable to organize my time and set goals for myself   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 06) Timed assignments (typing, calculator drills)   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 07) No quiet place to study   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 08) Conflicting demands on my time (home, job, school)  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 09) Too long a day to study.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Consider the elements of the program, as well as the non-academic pressures, which made you withdraw. To what extent do each of the following reflect your decision to withdraw?         |   |   |   |   |   |
| A.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| <u>Academic</u>   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 01) I dislike individualized instruction  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 02) I prefer to get grades for my efforts (A's, B's, etc.)  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 03) The program was too tough for me  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 04) The atmosphere was too relaxed for me   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 05) Course content didn't challenge my intellect  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 06) Some instructors weren't fair in their assessment   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 07) I prefer lectures/more structure  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 08) I just wanted to learn to type (or one other single skill)  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 09) Five courses were too heavy   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B.  |   |   |   |   |   |
| <u>Non-Academic</u>   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 01) Lack of self-confidence   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 02) Family was non-supportive   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 03) I was unable to set my own goals and work independently   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 04) Guilt about neglect of children   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 05) Lack of energy  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 06) Time of classes was bad for me  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 07) No time for social life, hobbies, etc.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 08) I prefer evening classes  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 09) Personality conflict with instructor  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

|                |       |          |                   |            |
|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | No Opinion |
| 1              | 2     | 3        | 4                 | 5          |

10. Sometimes those persons closest to us withdraw their support when it is most needed. Consider the influence of the people around you when you decided to withdraw from the program. To what extent did each of the of the following (if applicable to you) encourage you to remain in the program?

- |                               |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01) Husband                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 02) Children                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 03) Parents                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 04) Brothers and sisters      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 05) Male friends              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 06) Female friends            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 07) Employer                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 08) Office Career Instructors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 09) Classmates                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

11. Of the courses which you took, do you agree that each served to prepare you well for the world of work? Please rate those courses you took according to your preceptions of how worthwhile each was to your immediate or future goals.

- |                                |   |   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01) Typing                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 02) Business English           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 03) Business Math and Machines | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 04) Bookkeeping                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 05) Office Procedures          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 06) Shorthand                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 07) Legal Office Procedures    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 08) Medical Office Procedures  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Part 3

This section covers a variety of questions about your background.

12. What is your age? (check)

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 01) ___ 20 or under          | 05) ___ 36 - 40 years of age |
| 02) ___ 21 - 25 years of age | 06) ___ 40 - 50 years of age |
| 03) ___ 26 - 30 years of age | 07) ___ 51 - 60 years of age |
| 04) ___ 31 - 35 years of age | 08) ___ 61 or over           |

13. What is your marital status? (check)

- |                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 01) ___ single (never married) | 03) ___ married |
| 02) ___ separated or divorced  | 04) ___ widowed |

14. How many children do you have? (check)

- |              |                      |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 01) ___ none | 04) ___ three        |
| 02) ___ one  | 05) ___ four         |
| 03) ___ two  | 06) ___ five or more |

15. Are you a single parent? (check)

- |             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| 01) ___ yes | 02) ___ no |
|-------------|------------|

16. Indicate whether you have children in any of the following age categories. (check)
- 01)  birth - 3 years                      04)  13 - 17 years  
 02)  4 - 6 years                              05)  18 - 22 years  
 03)  6 - 12 years                            06)  23 years and over
17. How old did you feel the children had to be before you returned to school/work? (check)
- 01)  infancy                                      04)  7 - 12 years  
 02)  2 - 5 years                                05)  13 - 17 years  
 03)  6 years (school entry)            06)  18 years or over
18. Was your mother employed outside the home while you were growing up (before you were 18)? (check)
- 01)  yes    02)  no    03)  not applicable

Part 4

This section deals with questions regarding your education and work experience.

19. What was the highest level of education you reached? (check one)
- 01) Less than high school \_\_\_\_\_  
 02) High school grad \_\_\_\_\_  
 03) Technical or trade school \_\_\_\_\_  
 04) Some college or university \_\_\_\_\_  
 05) College diploma \_\_\_\_\_  
 06) Bachelors degree \_\_\_\_\_  
 07) Professional designation (C.G.A.,LL.B.,etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
 08) Doctorate degree \_\_\_\_\_
20. If applicable, what was the highest level of education reached by your spouse? (check one)
- 01) Less than high school \_\_\_\_\_  
 02) High school grad \_\_\_\_\_  
 03) Technical or trade school \_\_\_\_\_  
 04) Some college or university \_\_\_\_\_  
 05) College diploma \_\_\_\_\_  
 06) Bachelors degree \_\_\_\_\_  
 07) Professional designation (C.G.A.,LL.B.,etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
 08) Doctorate degree \_\_\_\_\_
21. What was your approximate grade average during your last years at school? Assume that 80% and above = A; 65% to 79% = B; 50% to 64% = C, if grades were not assigned in your school system. (check)
- 01)  A    02)  B    03)  C    04)  below C    05)  can't remember





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THAT COMPLETES THE QUESTIONNAIRE!

*Would you kindly place the last four digits only of your telephone number on the line to the right. This will allow the computer to sort the responses while retaining complete anonymity.*

---

THANK YOU: Your assistance is greatly appreciated. If you believe you could assist me more through a personal interview, please forward the postcard included with the questionnaire. I will be in touch with you to make an appointment when it will be most convenient for you.



June 12, 1980

Marian Justus  
Office Administration Program  
Coquitlam Campus  
Douglas College

Dear Marian:

I am delighted that you are researching the female students of the Office Administration Program. We need a great deal more knowledge about this nontraditional group of students, particularly about those for whom the barriers to education are too great to overcome.

You are most welcome to use any part of my M.A. thesis, including the questionnaire, in developing your study.

Good luck in your investigations.

Sincerely,

Margaretha Hoek  
Co-ordinator, Programs for Women

MH/nsd