

THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF FOUR  
DISPLACED WORKERS --  
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE DIFFICULTIES  
ENCOUNTERED BY DISPLACED WORKERS  
DURING RETRAINING

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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ERIC B. LUSH







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**THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES  
OF FOUR DISPLACED WORKERS --**  
A Qualitative Study of the Difficulties Encountered  
by Displaced Workers During Retraining

by  
Eric B. Lush

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## Abstract

This qualitative study examined the experiences of four displaced workers as they prepared for, and progressed through, a retraining program. The study's purpose was to identify the difficulties and barriers encountered by displaced workers during retraining, and to offer a better understanding of the college experience from the viewpoint of the student.

Qualitative methods were chosen because of the exploratory and emergent nature of the study. Oral histories were obtained through extensive interviews with four participants. These interviews were audio-taped and from each a first-person narrative was produced. The analysis of these narratives provided an understanding of the retraining experiences from the participant's perspective.

The findings indicate that the greatest difficulty encountered by the four participants was academic weakness. It was concluded that, with respect to the four displaced workers who participated in this study, the system failed to give adequate counselling before entrance into college and was not equipped or prepared to address the participant's academic deficiencies after enrolment.

As a result of this study, the following recommendations are presented as a basis for further investigation.

- Recommendation 1:** Counselling services should be provided by the funding agency to ensure workers make appropriate program selections.
- Recommendation 2:** Training institutes should be more discriminating in their use of a mature student admissions policy.
- Recommendation 3:** Institutions should consider making programs flexible for older students, especially in their first year.
- Recommendation 4:** All institutions involved with retraining displaced workers should offer special counselling services to assist individuals in their first year of studies.
- Recommendation 5:** Training institutions should stress the importance of social integration of students, and promote the involvement of all students in extra-curricular activities and events.
- Recommendation 6:** Institutions should promote the creation of peer groups amongst older students.

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**CHAPTER 1**  
**CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this research was to examine and analyze the experiences of four adult learners who have returned to college for retraining after being displaced from long-term, stable jobs. Four participants with varying backgrounds were asked to give oral histories of their educational experiences as they progressed through a post-secondary college program. The issues related to the difficulties encountered by older college students were scrutinized, and an alternate interpretation of the experiences of each participant was developed.

This chapter clarifies the context of the study and presents the statement of the problem, the focus of the study, the research questions, and a description of the background from which the participants were chosen. The chapter concludes with a brief overview.

**Statement of the Problem**

In Newfoundland, a large number of displaced workers will be seeking retraining in provincial community colleges over the next three to six years; many under the sponsorship of the Northern Cod Adjustment and Recovery

Program (NCARP) and other governmental programs. Researchers believe that if the educational system is to deal effectively with the needs of these adult learners, educators should understand and address the many problems and difficulties encountered during retraining (Franz, 1983; Bloom, 1987; Wojcicki and Kaufman, 1990). To achieve this understanding, researchers need to examine the training process from the viewpoint of the trainee (Munro, 1990). The displaced workers presently enrolled in community college programs in Newfoundland provide educational researchers with an excellent opportunity to gather essential information for the design and implementation of future programs. Furthermore, the research findings will add to the existing knowledge of adult learners.

### **Focus of Study**

This study focuses on the experiences of four individuals who have returned to college to retrain for new careers after several years of employment in the fishing industry. All four persons were sponsored by NCARP and attended Cabot College of Applied Arts, Technology and Continuing Education in St. John's, Newfoundland. The participants were extensively interviewed and provided data concerning their personal

experiences from high school to their first year of college. Particular emphasis was placed on the difficulties experienced during the first semester of college, and the support services offered.

### **Research Questions**

The study concerned itself with three issues, all viewed from the displaced worker's perspective. These issues are: (1) difficulties and barriers; (2) counselling services; and (3) the retraining system in general. From these the following questions were developed and served as a guide for the study.

1. Difficulties and Barriers
  - a. What are the difficulties experienced by displaced workers as they: (1) prepare for training; and (2) commence training?
  - b. What are some of the perceived barriers to successful completion of retraining as influenced by societal characteristics?
  - c. What are some of the perceived barriers to successful completion of retraining as influenced by institutional/organizational characteristics?

- d. What are some of the perceived barriers to successful completion of retraining as influenced by personal characteristics?
2. Counselling Services
- a. To what extent do displaced workers consult with people other than professional counsellors during retraining?
  - b. To what extent do displaced workers consult with professional counsellors during retraining?
  - c. What professional counselling do trainees find most useful?
3. The Training System
- a. What are displaced workers' views of the present training system?
  - b. What suggestions do trainees have for improving the present training system?

**Background.**

The four participants of this study were selected from a group of displaced fishery workers who attended Cabot College under the sponsorship

of NCARP between 1991 and 1994.

For centuries the Newfoundland economy had been sustained by the fishing industry. The large abundance of cod fish around the coast of Newfoundland not only provided the local settlers with a livelihood, but also provided the many countries who sent fishing fleets to the island each year with a vital food source. In the early part of this century it was inconceivable that the fish stocks could be depleted. However, with the development of modern harvesting technology, and uncontrolled harvesting by both foreign and domestic fishing fleets, the once abundant fish stocks had been decimated by the late 1980s (Chantraine, 1993).

On July 2, 1992 the federal Minister of Fisheries announced a two-year moratorium on commercial cod fishing off the coast of Newfoundland. The minister also suggested that if and when the fish stocks recovered, the fishery would be conducted on a considerably smaller scale. Thus, some 25,000 Newfoundland fishery workers were permanently displaced from their jobs.

Immediately following the announcement of the cod moratorium, the Minister of Fisheries began the implementation of the Northern Cod Adjustment and Recovery Program (NCARP) to assist fisherpersons, plant workers, and trawlermen in adjusting to unemployment. One of the major

components of the program was to offer displaced workers funding to retrain for new occupations. Although not all would elect to retrain, preliminary research by NCARP revealed that over 90 percent of workers did not qualify academically to enter college programs (NCARP, 1993). Furthermore, it was recognized that the sudden influx of students to an already overcrowded community college system required cooperation from both the Department of Education and the community colleges.

Cabot College of Applied Arts, Technology and Continuing Education, being one of the major provincial educational institutions in Newfoundland, responded immediately by developing a strategy whereby additional training seats would be made available. The extra seats would be located in regular programs, but Cabot College was also prepared to provide extra course sections as needed, particularly in the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program.

In addition to providing extra training seats, Cabot's strategy also provided bridging programs and a Student Support Services Unit. Bridging programs consisted of an orientation course of several weeks duration for students who did not require upgrading, but who had been absent from school for several years. It included career exploration training as well as refresher courses in academic subjects. The Student Support Services Unit was intended

to provide all possible services necessary to increase the likelihood of students achieving success in their chosen areas. Counsellors were available to students at any time, and dealt with all aspects of the student's college life.

Two of the four participants in this study did not meet the academic requirements for post-secondary studies, and consequently were required to complete the ABE program. The remaining two participants, although meeting the academic requirements for post-secondary study, still elected to participate in the bridging program in preparation for their studies.

### **Overview of the Study**

A preliminary literature search was conducted prior to data collection and focused on the concept of older adults returning to college. The findings assisted the researcher in focusing the study and developing the research questions. Following data collection, a more elaborate search was undertaken concentrating on research pertaining to adult learners and persistence-withdrawal behaviour of post-secondary students. A review of the findings are presented in Chapter 2.

The research methodology used for the study is outlined in Chapter 3. The rationale for choosing the design as well as a description of the methods

used to collect and analyze the data are discussed in detail.

The analysis of the data was conducted on three levels. Firstly, the recorded interviews of each participant were studied and four narratives were developed. These are presented in Chapter 4. Secondly, the narratives were subjected to further analysis out of which emerged various constructs reflecting the research questions. Thirdly, a content analysis was performed on each narrative using guidelines developed from the literature search. The results of this analysis are presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 contains a summary of the findings, a summary of the conclusions, and recommendations for consideration by training institutions and funding agencies.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Much of the recent research pertaining to the retraining of displaced workers is quantitative in nature, and focuses on the evaluation of programs in terms of student success in attaining employment (Bloom, 1984; Kulik et al., 1984; Corson et al., 1985; Leigh, 1990). These studies offer little insight into the understanding of the difficulties faced by displaced workers who return to college, nor do they explore the reasons why some of these individuals fail to complete a program. Consequently, the literature search for this study focused on related qualitative studies pertaining to: (a) the displaced worker in terms of being an adult learner; and (b) factors that influence students to withdraw from training programs before completion (commonly referred to as persistence-withdrawal behaviour). Findings from these areas contribute to the understanding of difficulties encountered by mature college students.

#### **The Displaced Worker as an Adult Learner**

Three central issues were explored in considering the displaced worker as an adult or mature learner: (1) cognitive development and career retraining in older adults; (2) social relations in classes of mixed age groups; and (3) the

need for special support. Ironically, the literature search revealed that, for the most part, the former two areas present no difficulties or barriers to adult learning. With regard to special support for displaced workers as college students, research indicates a wide recognition of the need for such support.

#### Cognitive Development and Career Retraining in Older Adults

Although preferring a slower pace, older students perform at least as well and often better than their younger classmates ( Perkins and Robertson-Tchabo, 1981; Jacobowitz and Shanon, 1982; Kingston, 1982). However, there is strong empirical data to suggest that, on the average, aging is accompanied by a decline in the ability to process new information. (Cattel 1963, 1971; Baltes and Labouvie, 1973; Labouvie-Weif, 1977; Botwinick, 1978). Researchers are still debating the exact nature and causes of the decline, but most attribute the decline to both biological and environmental factors. It is believed that older students can make environmental adjustments that offset the decline in cognitive functioning, and thus the decline is usually considered an insignificant factor in adult learning.

Researchers have attempted to explain the paradox of why adults prove to be good learners, despite the generally accepted notion that cognitive

functioning declines with age. There have been several laboratory studies indicating older adults can improve their performance in problem solving, reasoning, and other cognitive skills with instruction (Schaie, 1973; Baltes and Labouvie, 1973; Willis, 1985). Schaie (1973) found that people often make adjustments for the decline in their cognitive ability by taking advantage of previous experiences. Baltes and Labouvie (1973) suggested that the cognition level of an adult at any stage of life depends on the context of development, the environment, and experiences of the individual.

McCrary and Long (1980) reviewed the empirical data available concerning the effects of environment on cognition and concluded that there is little doubt as to the "...positive effects of stimulating activity and the negative effects of decreased environmental stimulation on cognitive functioning" (1980: 40). This position is supported by Labouvie-Veif (1977) who suggested that "the intellectual deficits often observed in older populations are in fact subject to improvement as a result of training, improved living conditions and raised activity levels" (1977: 258).

Life-phase research also contributes to the understanding of adults as learners. For example, the developmental stages of children described by Piaget (1972) has been expanded by other researchers (Lowenthal, 1975;

Neugarten, 1970) to include specific stages of adult life. Sheehy, in her popular book *Passages: Predictable Crisis of Adult Life* (1976), proposed that there are distinct stages of adult life which are characterized by a crisis for the individual when passing from one stage to another. She suggests that career changes are natural and are sometimes positive occurrences in one's life.

Earlier research by Neugarten (1970) concluded that people are socialized to expect their development to follow a normal predictable path, and transitional events (e.g., being displaced from one's employment) can constitute a major crisis and have a negative effect on cognitive ability.

Schaie (1977-78) developed an hierarchical model of cognitive complexity based on Lowenthal's (1975) analysis of adult life transition and the concomitant changes in cognitive stages resulting from environmental influences. The model highlights the importance of ecological valid criteria (i.e., life context) on cognitive functioning, and presents five different stages of cognitive functioning from acquisitive (i.e, childhood and adolescence) to reintegrative (i.e., old age). The stage development theory of childhood developed by Piaget (1972) is extended into adult life and integrated with recent research on life cycle development. The model emphasizes the positive effect of cognitive activity on cognitive functioning.

In summary, there is strong evidence to indicate that environmental stimulation can offset the decline in cognitive functioning that researchers believe accompanies aging. Also, it is believed that adults pass through life stages, including stages of cognitive ability, and the degree of cognitive functioning at each stage is largely influenced by environmental stimulation. Thus, the decline in cognitive ability accompanying age does not influence the success or failure of older adult college students.

#### Social Relations in College Classes with Mixed Aged Groups

When older adults are integrated into regular college programs with younger students, they are expected to adjust and deal with college life the same as their younger classmates. The interactions of the different age groups, and the influences each has on the other, have been studied by a number of researchers. Most agree that the results of mixing various age groups in college classes are positive.

Jensen-Oskinski, Beidler, and Aronscn (1981) examined the effect of the presence of older students in the college classroom on the attitudes and performance of college freshmen. Using a pretest-treatment-posttest format, researchers examined two sections of a second-semester freshman English

class. One section was an intergenerational class composed of 14 college freshmen and 10 non-matriculating, for-credit students 60 years of age or older, and the other was a regular all-freshman class. Both sections studied composition and literature using the life cycle theme as a central approach. The control group consisted of three sections of the same course, all comprised of college freshmen without the superimposition of the life cycle theme. Researchers used a student opinion questionnaire to measure participant attitude changes. Analysis of the data revealed that participation in the intergenerational class resulted in younger students developing highly positive attitudes toward their own aging and toward intergenerational classes. In addition, rates of participation and general activity were higher in the intergenerational class.

In a similar study Mishler and Davenport (1983) studied the attitudes of college faculty toward adult students in classes comprised of both adult and traditional-aged students. Ten teachers of intergenerational classes at the Green Bay Campus of the University of Wisconsin were interviewed and 259 students from their classes were surveyed. Based on data from these two sources, it appeared that both the younger and older students and their professors have overwhelmingly positive attitudes concerning a mix of ages in

the college classroom. When asked about the effect of adult participation in college classes, teachers commented that adult students often contributed to lively and sophisticated discussions, provided an added personal dimension based on real-life experiences, and possessed a high motivation and commitment that set high standards for all.

In a case study on a special course at McGill University, MacLean and Marcus (1981) observed the classroom activity between older and younger students and teachers. They reported that younger students were sometimes bored when teachers slowly explained concepts to older students. They also commented on teachers' reaction to having older students in the classroom, saying that teachers felt they were too deferent to the older students. Teachers also felt older students were more interested in practical and realistic aspects of studies rather than theoretic issues. But, despite these somewhat negative observations, they reported that mixed-aged classes appeared to have positive overall results for both the students and the teachers.

Other researchers (Jensen-Osinski et al., 1981; Mishler and Davenport, 1984) support the conclusions of these studies. Long (1980), for example, suggested that the presence of older students in college classes provided an incentive in some way for younger students, and that both age groups learn

some things that are beyond the course content.

In summary, research indicates that mixing age groups in college classes does not create problems for either the younger or the older students. Rather, indications are that mixed-age classes can have a positive effect on both age groups.

#### The Need for Special Support Counselling for Retraining Workers

A worker faced with long term unemployment can experience tremendous turmoil and stress. Wojcicki and Kaufman (1990) suggested that adults who "have lost their means of economic support express anger, anxiety, denial, uncertainty, and depression. The loss of one's job has been compared to losing an arm or a leg." (1990: 77) Ironically, it is during this disruptive phase of the individual's life that he or she is expected to select an appropriate career choice and become a highly motivated college student.

Kieselback and Svensson (1987) studied the scope of problems that impinge on workers' retraining efforts in Europe. They discovered that workers often experienced feelings of demoralization which was seen to disempower individuals over time, and impair the effectiveness of training programs. To counteract and reduce the consequences of unemployment's

negative developmental processes, they recommended that training efforts be complimented with professional counselling.

In 1987 the Delaware Department of Labor sponsored a pilot project called Retraining Delaware's Dislocated Workers. The project was intended to provide information to governmental agencies for the development of similar programs in other areas. Among the services provided to participants were individual counselling and retraining. The counselling service provided clients with assistance in selecting an appropriate retraining program. Bloom (1987) conducted a process and impact analysis of the program and concluded, among other things, that retraining is "...neither required nor appropriate for all participants...", and that participant screening and career assessment should become a routine part of such programs to maximize the amount of information available for retraining decisions. Furthermore, counsellors given this responsibility should be highly trained to ensure that individuals selected for retraining choose only programs for which they have appropriate aptitudes and interests.

The Holistic Counselling Model (Wojcicki and Kaufman, 1990), shown in Table 2-1, was used in the Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Displaced Worker

Table 2-1

The Holistic Counselling Model

I. ORIENTATION PHASE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview client</li> <li>• Establish counsellor-client relationship</li> <li>• Assess needs, attitudes, and motivation</li> <li>• Explain counselling process</li> </ul>
II. STATUS REVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess work history, education, and personal circumstances</li> <li>• Determine needs and support</li> <li>• refer client to appropriate assistance agencies</li> </ul>
III. EVALUATION PROCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess aptitudes, abilities, temperament, and interests</li> <li>• Introduce computerized guidance information system</li> </ul>
IV. CAREER PATH EXPLORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify specific aptitudes, abilities and interests</li> <li>• Review appropriate occupations</li> <li>• Establish short-term goals</li> <li>• Determine prerequisite education or work</li> <li>• Establish long-term goals</li> <li>• Gather placement information</li> </ul>
V. QUALIFY CAREER CHOICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather supply and demand</li> <li>• Identify potential employers</li> </ul>
VI. MAKE THE CAREER CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for and enter training</li> <li>• Provide supportive counselling</li> <li>• Assess progress and refer problems</li> </ul>
VII. COMPLETE THE CAREER CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the job search</li> <li>• Develop resume</li> <li>• Address interview and job search skills</li> <li>• Implement marketing strategy</li> </ul>

Note. From "Vocational-Technical Schools Must Implement a Holistic Counselling Model Before Retraining Adult Learners" by Thomas P. Wojcicki and Kim Kaufman, 1990, *The Journal of Industrial Teacher Education*, 22, p. 34. Copyright 1990 by Wojcicki and Kaufman.

Retraining Project. The purpose of the model was to first identify the worker's specific needs, then fill those needs by guiding the worker through the whole process. It was intended that the client play a key role in determining his or her vocational future, and that the counsellors would provide support services, technical advice, and guidance. The fifth step in the Holistic Counselling Model is the training itself. Wojcicki and Kaufman (1990) stress that the client must not be abandoned during this critical phase. They describe the role of the counselling service at this step in the following manner:

Regularly scheduled counselling sessions should be established to monitor the client's progress and ensure his or her success. Those sessions should include a review of each client's progress and performance as well as any difficulties the client is experiencing. The counsellor will provide insight and assistance in identifying appropriate supportive action. (1990: 81)

The model was first used in 1985 and, based on the first four years of implementation, has successfully served hundreds of clients.

In summary, research indicates that displaced workers often require assistance and counselling in selecting an appropriate retraining program. Also, special counselling support during the retraining process has shown to be effective in helping students successfully complete training programs.

### **Persistence-Withdrawal**

Persistence-withdrawal behaviour in post-secondary college students may also offer some understanding into the difficulties faced by adult learners. Such studies attempt to identify the many factors influencing college students to withdraw from programs before graduation. This section presents a brief review of recent research findings, and in particular, the work of Vincent Tinto. Tinto (1987) has developed a Model of Institutional Departure which describes the various events and situations leading to early departure from college.

### Recent Findings

Traditionally persistence-withdrawal research has focused on the pre-enrolment characteristics of the student and identifies such characteristics as academic preparedness, individual abilities, goal commitment, personality, and socio-economic status (SES) as reliable predictors of potential dropouts (Summerskill, 1962; Marks, 1967). In recent years research has taken the form of complex multivariate designs involving both pre-enrolment and post-enrolment factors (Munro, 1981). Generally, researchers agree that students withdraw early from college because of a combination of both pre-enrolment

and post-enrolment factors. All factors leading to a student's decision to withdraw from college are typically described in terms of adjustment, difficulty, incongruence, and isolation (Tinto, 1987).

Adjustment refers to how well students cope with the stress of making the transition to college life. For some the stress and sense of isolation can lead directly to a decision to withdraw after only a few weeks (Cutrona, 1982; Blanc, DeBuhr, and Martin, 1983). Interestingly, Byrne (1990) indicated that 21% of withdrawals from post-secondary programs at Cabot College during the 1989/90 academic year occurred in the first semester. It is reasonable to assume that adjustment-related stress was a significant contributing factor, however, no evidence exists to support this position.

The degree of difficulty a student encounters with post-secondary studies often reflect the individual's lack of academic preparation. Blanchfield (1971) noted the close association of past school performance with withdrawal behaviour. A recent study of the high attrition rate at Cabot College supports these findings. It concluded that the most significant factor influencing the dropout rate at Cabot College for the 1989/90 school year was poor academic preparation. Recommendations included improvement in selection procedures, and remedial programs for new students.

Still, academic weakness does not account for all of the students who drop out of college each year (Marsh, 1966). In recent years, focus has shifted to the institutional experiences of the student in attempting to understand persistence-withdrawal behaviour more fully. How well a student integrates into the academic and social communities of the institution is seen as a reliable predictor of persistence-withdrawal behaviour (Tinto, 1987). Absence of integration is thought to be a function of incongruence and isolation. Incongruence refers to the unsuitability of a program for a particular student, while isolation describes a student's lack of interaction with faculty and peers within the institute. Any one of these factors, or a combination of both, may lead to withdrawal.

Several models and designs are used by researchers in the study of persistence-withdrawal behaviour (Pascarella, 1980; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1987). These attempt to explain the complex patterns of college attrition. The work of Vincent Tinto (1987) is representative of these and is described below in more detail.

#### Tinto's Model

Building largely on early sociological research (Van Gennep, 1960;

Durkheim, 1951) as well as recent studies of college student behaviour (Lenning, Beal and Sauer 1980; Bianchi and Bean, 1980; Crubb, 1989; Eckland, B.K., 1964), Tinto (1987) has developed a model of institutional departure which attempts to identify all factors influencing a student's decision to persist or withdraw from a program (see Figure 2-1). The model suggests that post-enrolment factors such as social and academic integration within the institution, student's goals and commitments to the institution, and external commitments may have greater influence on persistent-withdrawal behaviour than the student's pre-enrolment characteristics. According to Tinto, the model "...posits that, all things being equal, the lower the degree of one's social and intellectual integration into the academic and social communities of the college, the greater the likelihood of departure." (1987: 116) He suggests that difficulties encountered by college students come as a result of negative experiences within the institution.

Tinto acknowledges the validity of numerous studies (Demitroff 1974; Astin 1975; Moore and Carpenter, 1985; Byrne, 1990) which suggest that a significant number of students drop out of college because of academic difficulties. But he believes that in most instances, the decision to drop out of college "...reflects the character of the individual's social and intellectual

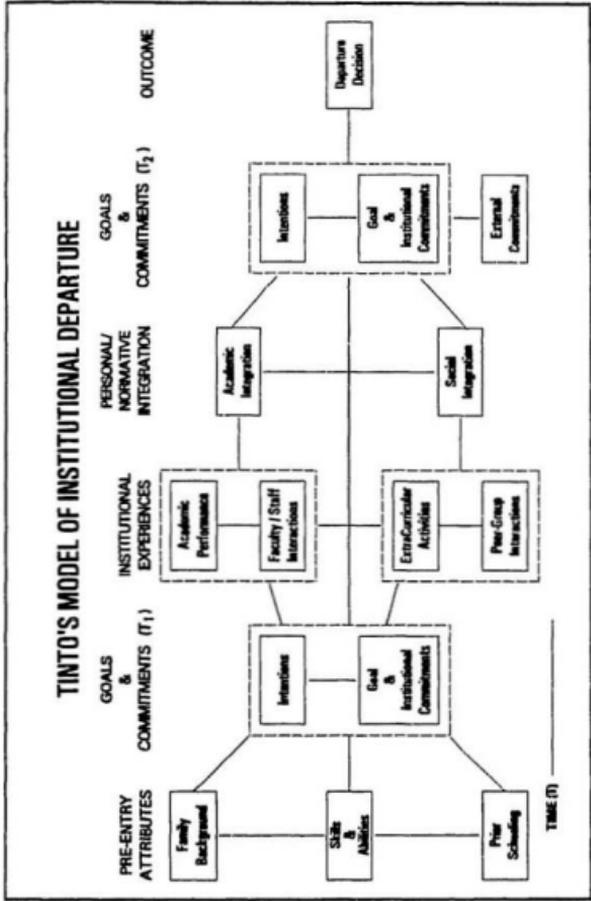


Figure 2-1

Note: V. Tinto, 1987, *Leaving College*, p.114.

experiences within the institution following entry." (1987: 53)

Tinto views academic integration as not only being linked to the match between the individual's skills and abilities to the level of academic demand, but also to the formal and informal day-to-day interactions with the faculty. He acknowledges the direct influence of the individual's background, such as family and community background, personal attributes such as race or age, skills, and educational experience and achievement, on academic integration. But he believes that, assuming institutes have set appropriate minimum entrance standards, contact with faculty and staff becomes the most important factor in the student's academic integration. The absence of interaction "...results not only in lessened commitments and possibly lowered individual goals, but also in the person's isolation from the intellectual life of the college." (Tinto, 1987: 117) Tinto suggests that academic integration into the college community can be achieved through remedial intervention on the part of the institute.

The social integration described by Tinto involves the interactions within the institute. Tinto believes that daily personal contacts with other members of the college will lessen the stress felt by new students, and will aid in the social integration process. He suggests that, in many cases, external

assistance (counsellors) may be necessary to ensure the student's intellectual and social membership in the communities of the college.

The model places a high degree of importance on the individual's intentions and commitments with respect to persistence-withdrawal behaviour. Intentions reflect the individual's desires relative to his or her future occupation, while commitments indicate the degree to which individuals are committed both to the attainment of his or her educational goals, and to the institution. Each refers to important personal dispositions with which individuals enter college. Tinto believes that these goals and commitments (identified as  $T_1$  in the model) change as the individual progresses through his or her studies. The degree to which they are reinforced and strengthened depends on the degree to which the individual has integrated academically and socially into the college community. The model shows that if a student fails to achieve what Tinto refers to as "personal/normative integration", then that person's goals and commitments (identified as  $T_2$  in the model), are negatively affected. This may result in a decision by the student to withdraw from the institution.

Tinto describes the interactional outcomes arising from interactions within the institution in terms of adjustments, difficulties, congruence (i.e., the

degree of match between the intellectual orientation of the student with that of the institution), and isolation. " Though these are largely the result of events which take place within the institution following entry, they necessarily also mirror the attributes, skills, and dispositions of the individuals prior to entry, and the effect of external forces on individual participation in college." (Tinto, 1987: 39) The external forces to which Tinto refers include family roles and responsibilities, work requirements, and expectations from external social networks. Even if students are successful in achieving personal/normative integration, external forces may exert enough pressure to compel that student to withdraw from college. On the other hand, external forces may also be positive influences.

Tinto acknowledges that older students face distinct problems in seeking to become integrated into the college community. He suggests that older students sometimes experience an initial sense of being different or out of place in the youthful environment of the institution. Older students may also be less willing to ask for help when academic problems arise, or less willing to ask for assistance in making the transition to college. Integration into the college community by older students can also be hampered by conflict arising from the individual's roles outside of the college. These include being a

parent, head of a household, spouse, and worker. Sometimes these roles are in conflict with each other, as well as with the goals of the college.

Support for Tinto's model of institutional departure is abundant. For example, Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) found that both academic and social integration influenced the student's goals and commitments, and thus influences persistence-withdrawal behaviour. Gilbert and Gomme (1986) studied the effect of interaction between students and faculty, and concluded that it promoted social integration and resulted in a lower dropout rate.

In summary, persistence-withdrawal research of post-secondary students offers some understanding of the problems encountered by older college students. It is thought that students who leave a program early do so because of difficulties encountered due to a combination of pre-enrolment and post-enrolment factors. Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure attempts to identify the wide range of problems encountered by college students. The model suggests that if appropriate prerequisites are met, success may be influenced more by post-enrolment experiences within the college community, than the student's pre-enrolment characteristics. It is Tinto's position that when students are accepted into a program, the institution has a responsibility to assist that student to integrate into the college community, and this

assistance may take the form of remedial intervention.

### **Research Findings Applied to Displaced Workers**

Research findings suggest that the efforts being made to retrain older workers is not a futile one. Indications are that with proper support systems, older students have an enhanced success rate. Tinto's model, when viewed in the context of displaced fishery workers, can be used to predict the difficulties a student may encounter. Also it emphasizes the responsibilities of the institution in providing students with the proper interactions and support to ensure a positive integration of the older student into the college community.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

After reviewing the literature on research methodology, and considering the exploratory and emergent nature of the study, qualitative methods were chosen. First-person narratives were collected from each of the four participants through extensive individual interviewing. These narratives, referred to as oral histories, are a form of the case study method. The oral history approach was selected because it provided the best means of discovering the actual experiences of each participant. This chapter presents a rationale for the use of qualitative methods and describes in detail the procedures used for both collecting and analyzing the data. Also, the limitations of the study are discussed briefly.

#### **The Rationale for Qualitative Methods**

The positivist paradigm of inquiry, utilizing quantitative methods, has been widely used in natural and social sciences research. This has been due, at least in part, to the perceived objectivity associated with quantitative methods, particularly where the goal of the research is to test theories, to show the relationship between variables, to establish facts, or to make predictions

(Patton, 1990). However, researchers have recognized that quantitative approaches are not entirely appropriate to social research where the goal is to develop understanding by illuminating issues and assessing social experience. With respect to certain aspects of educational research, this has resulted in a shift to the opposite end of the paradigm continuum to what is known as constructivism, which employs more qualitative or naturalistic techniques similar to those used in ethnographic studies. Unlike quantitative inquiry, with its pre-specified intent, the open emergent nature of qualitative inquiry is evolutionary, with a problem statement, a design, interview questions, and interpretations developing and changing along the way (Glesne and Peshkin, 1991).

Qualitative research is concerned with the influence of interactivity. The research data "may represent the researcher's impressions of what was observed as well as a description of actual incidents occurring during the observation" (Miller and Seller, 1990: 305). Quantitative inquiry imposes constraints on what can be studied, how it is studied, and how the final set of data is analyzed; whereas, qualitative inquiry imposes no restrictions either at the beginning or during an inquiry, and all variables or outcomes may or may not be considered, depending on the judgement of the researcher (Guba and

Lincoln, 1981). Furthermore, analysis of data, because of its predominantly qualitative form, is judgement-oriented and not reduced to a statistical result. Participant observation along with the interview and document analysis are the primary means of data collection in qualitative research.

Because the focus of this study is on the understanding of the experiences of displaced workers as they prepare for, and progress through, a retraining program, qualitative methods were selected as the most appropriate methodology. It provides ideal techniques and procedures for eliciting the data required to achieve the goals of the study.

#### **Data Collection**

The case-study, in its many forms, has been used extensively in educational research. Where a limited number of individuals are being investigated (such as in this study), the case study method provides the researcher with an opportunity of having an intimate knowledge of the subject's condition, thoughts, feelings, actions (past and present), intentions and environment (Polit and Hungler, 1978). The case studies which form the nucleus of this research consists of four first-person narratives developed from taped interviews of the participants. Essentially, the data are oral histories of

the experiences of the subjects. Supplementary data from discussions with counsellors and instructors were used only to aid the researcher in the final analysis of the interviews.

#### Selection of the Participants

Particular attention was paid to the selection of participants to ensure they were representative of displaced workers undergoing retraining for new occupations. It was decided early in the project that four participants would be used. Although this small number placed limitations on the findings, it was considered to be adequate given the study's purpose and scope.

Cabot College of Applied Arts, Technology, and Continuing Education in St. John's, Newfoundland was chosen as the site for the study. This was due largely to the fact that Cabot College had been involved with the retraining of fishery workers from the inception of NCARP, and continues to be a major provincial institution for the retraining of workers. Written permission from the president of Cabot College was obtained, and the complete list of all NCARP-sponsored students was examined. Using the following criteria a list of potential subjects was made:

- (a) All subjects were to be displaced workers who had elected to be

retrained for a new occupation.

- (b) Subjects must have been fully employed in their previous occupation for at least 10 years. This would tend to narrow the study towards mature adults.
- (c) Subjects must have been enrolled, either currently or initially, in a post secondary program of two or three years duration.
- (d) Subjects must have experienced at least two semesters of college life.

The initial list of potential subjects consisted of over 100 names. Eight of these names were chosen randomly. It was intended that these subjects would be contacted one at a time, until four students were found who were willing to participate. The first four students from the list of eight names expressed an interest in participating in the study and therefore were selected. The other four students were not contacted.

#### The Interviews

To elicit a narrative from each of the participants a structured interview was used. The intention was to expose the subjective realities of the participants, and thereby promote understanding of individual experiences.

The interview technique offered some definite advantages over other approaches for revealing the participant's feelings and viewpoints. Firstly, the interview permitted the researcher to immediately follow-up on the participant's responses, allowing relevant issues to be pursued in more depth or simply clarified. Secondly, the interview was more likely to elicit information that the participant would probably not reveal under other circumstances (Borg and Hall, 1989). Such information may include negative aspects of the self or negative feelings towards others.

To achieve full benefit from using the interview approach an appropriate rapport was maintained and the participant was made to feel comfortable. The researcher wrote a statement describing the general purpose of the research, and outlined to each participant the complete research plan. Based on findings from a preliminary literature search, and the research questions, the researcher conducted the interview in a conversational mode. Because each participant appeared to be grateful for an opportunity to tell his or her story, a rapport was easily established. All interviews were audio-taped and a first-person narrative was produced from each tape. Subsequent meetings and interviews were less structured, and served the purpose of clarification and verification of the data.

Three interviews were conducted at the college while the fourth interview took place in the subject's home. Each began with a 10 to 20 minute discussion about the study. Each participant was informed of the procedure and signed a consent form, which outlined the ethical guidelines under which the researcher was working. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, and ended only when the subject felt that all information pertaining to his or her college experience had been discussed. During the interviews, the researcher observed non-verbal cues of the subject and made notes accordingly. After the initial transcripts were produced, a more extensive literature search was conducted. Before the final analysis of the data took place, the researcher again met with each subject to explore new areas resulting from the literature research. The time frame for the whole process, from conducting the initial interviews to the final analysis of the data, was approximately 4 months.

#### Data Analysis

The analysis of the data consisted of three distinct levels. Firstly, a narrative was produced from each taped interview which represents the experiences of the participant from the time he or she left high school to the

end of the first year of college. Except for some minor editing and re-arranging to ensure that the experiences described by the participants are in chronological order, the narratives represent the exact words of the participant, and therefore are written in the first-person. Secondly, each narrative was studied for commonalities from which a rudimentary coding and sorting system evolved. From this an organizational framework based on the research questions was developed to identify the various problems that the subjects encountered as college students. Thirdly, the narratives were analyzed in the context of the findings from the literature search, mainly in terms of Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure described in Chapter 2.

Throughout the analysis the researcher gave consideration to maintaining the internal and external validity of the findings within the limitations of the study. This was accomplished by using the following guidelines as suggested by Glasne and Peskkin (1990):

- (a) The researcher was at all times aware of time spent at each phase of the research project.
- (b) The researcher was alert to the effect of his own biases and subjectivity to the whole process.
- (c) The researcher used the assistance of other researchers, and

even some of the respondents.

- (d) The researcher considered the limitations of the research.

External and internal validity are discussed in more detail in the next section.

### **Limitations**

The researcher recognizes the limitations of conducting a qualitative investigation into the difficulties encountered by adults entering retraining programs. These limitations are largely related to the establishment of the validity of the study. According to Borg and Gall (1989) the external validity, or the degree to which the findings can be generalized to the population from which the participants are drawn, has been frequently criticized. The degree to which the participants under investigation represent the population is difficult to verify. This is particularly true for the case study method where only a limited number of participants are used. In this study, the subjects were purposely selected from a limited range of the population, which further narrows the range of the results. However, generalizability is not one of the objectives of this study. The researcher merely wishes to understand the experiences of the four participants, and acknowledges that the findings can only be generalized with extreme caution.

Critics may also point out that because the researcher is a vocational teacher at the same institution where the participants were students, the data may have been tainted by the researcher's own particular biases and expectations. However, none of the subjects knew the researcher prior to the initial contacts. And familiarity with the setting on the part of the researcher allowed for easy access to supplementary data through conversations with instructors, counsellors and the registrar's office.

Qualitative methods may also be subject to errors in the data collection process (i.e., internal validity). Examples of such errors are as follows: (a) the data can sometimes be distorted because the subjects may respond to what they feel is expected of them, rather than giving natural responses; (b) participants may tend to choose specified roles while being observed; (c) the measurement in itself may induce some change in the setting; and, (d) the respondent may tend to always agree with the interviewer (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1982). However, these threats to the internal validity of the study can be offset somewhat by the researcher's awareness of the potential problems, and by conducting interviews and other data collection appropriately. In this study the participants were so willing to tell their stories that the researcher's job was essentially that of a recorder and listener.

Although occasionally directing the conversation, the researcher was confident the participants were being totally open and honest in their stories.

The researcher is confident that the findings of this study will contribute to the overall understanding of difficulties encountered by displaced workers while retraining for new occupations.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE ORAL HISTORIES OF FOUR DISPLACED WORKERS**

Each narrative presented in this chapter represents the oral history of the individual's experiences as he or she made the transition from unemployed fishery worker to college student. The narratives are derived from the taped interviews and represent the first level of the analysis. Except for some minor editing they are presented in each of the participant's own words. A brief biography of the participant is given with each narrative. The names given are not the real names of the participants.

#### **Abe Johnson**

Abe Johnson is 40 years old, and married with six children. Abe completed grade 10, then dropped out of high school to go to work. He worked in the fishing industry for 15 years prior to becoming a student at Cabot College.

According to the Cabot College calendar, the three year Business Management program, in which Abe initially enrolled, involves general financial accounting. This is an advanced post-secondary level program requiring a high degree of math skills. The program proved to be too

demanding, and consequently Abe was forced to withdraw. He subsequently completed the Human Services Worker Program, a 10 month certificate level program. He graduated in June, 1994.

The researcher made an appointment to meet Mr. Johnson at the Topsail Road Campus of Cabot College at 2 PM where a comfortable room was reserved. This was after Abe had finished classes for the day. In an effort to make the participant more relaxed and at ease, the researcher made a point of dressing casually. However, when Abe arrived he was dressed smartly in a business suit.

#### The Narrative of Abe Johnson

After completing grade 10, I quit school and found a job as a tinsmith apprentice. That was in 1970. But that didn't last because electric heat was becoming popular and there was a declining demand for that sort of work. I then worked at various construction jobs until I went to work in the fishplant in 1977.

In the fifteen years I worked in the fishery, I made a good living. When there were slow times U.I. would take us through it. The last year I worked in the fish plant I made \$30,000; I could get by with that comfortably.

Although my marriage split up, and I was left with small children to raise alone, the fact that I had a job, and could afford to look after my family, made it a little easier. Life went on. I met my present wife soon after my divorce, and we started living together. She also worked at the fishplant and between the two of us we did OK.

The year before the fish plant closed we decided to move into a bigger house. We had two small children together, in addition to four children from our previous marriages. With both of us bringing in good salaries, we felt that we could afford a mortgage. We had a small house that we owned, but when our family started to expand it just became too small. So with six boys in a two bedroom house, we just needed a bigger place. We had no trouble at all in meeting our monthly obligations.

And then the plant closed permanently. Financially we were in big trouble. At the time our plant did not come under the package deal offered by NCARP. This was because our plant was to be converted to a shrimp plant, and was to reopen at a future date. But of course it never did. The closure became permanent. Eventually, our union leaders were successful in securing NCARP funding for us.

I had some big decisions to make. Basically, I was given three

options: 1) retirement; 2) training; or 3) relocation. Retirement was not practical. I am only 40 years old and I still have a responsibility to provide for my family. No, I couldn't retire with small children depending on me. I couldn't raise them on the small pension I would have received.

I couldn't see me relocating. To where? And to do what?

The retraining option looked very attractive though. So I enrolled in a 7 week preparatory course at Cabot. This course was intended to ease us back into school life. We did some work with math, English, public speaking and so on. It was extremely helpful, but up to this time I had not decided what field I was going to go into, and the course did not include career exploration.

There was a lot for me to consider. It was not just a matter of selecting an area that interested me, or that I may enjoy. I also had to consider that my financial assistance would last for the whole time of the program. So I thought that I should select a three year course. This would ensure financial stability and allow me to make my mortgage payments, and provide food and clothing for my children for at least three more years. So I decided on Business Management. I had worked with the union a fair bit, and enjoyed helping people with their taxes. So without really exploring what the program was all about I enrolled in Business Management, mainly because it

was a three year program.

Nobody gave me any help with this decision, or even questioned it. Once I decided that I was going to take Business Management, the only criteria was that I had to get accepted to the program. Although I didn't meet the academic requirements for the program I was accepted as a mature student. I had no reason to believe that I would have any difficulties. Besides, I did quite well in the seven-week orientation program I took prior to starting the business program.

However, it didn't take long to find out that I was in over my head. Along with trying to fit in and everything, I soon found I was going to have problems with some of my subjects. My math skills were extremely inadequate, and despite help from classmates (who were much younger than me), and long hours of study, I was starting to fade after only a few weeks. My instructors could not take the time to go back and clarify simple things that I needed to know before starting the course, and I found myself having the double work of backtracking on my own, then trying to keep up with what was going on in class. It seemed that all my time was devoted to study. Furthermore, I was beginning to find out what business management was all about and I was reaching the conclusion that even if I were not having

difficulties with my studies, I still would not enjoy it.

So about two months or so into the course, my youngest son became sick and was hospitalized for a week. I found it impossible to attend classes during this time and fell behind in my work. In fact, I think I was pleased that I had a valid reason for not going to school. When I did return to class, I found that I was too far behind to catch up. The counsellor at Cabot recommended I find a tutor to assist me, but I knew this was not what I wanted to do. So I dropped out. This was not an easy decision. I gave it a good try. But I needed to devote my whole life to the books in order to succeed in that course. And I had social and family obligations in addition to studies. And besides I also decided that I did not enjoy this type of work enough to devote my whole time to it anyways.

My monthly assistance didn't change after I dropped out of school. So I had all winter to contemplate and consider what I was going to do. Finally in March of 1993, a friend who was taking an upgrading course at Cabot, told me about a new program that was due to begin in September of 1993. The program was Human Services Workers, and involved training people to assist invalid persons such as paraplegics, amputees, or otherwise infirm individuals. The program also offered an option for similar workers who provided this

service within correctional institutes. After some investigation I knew this was something that I would enjoy doing and so I applied.

Although this was only a 10 month program, I was now starting to see this retraining in a different light. I was starting to hope that I could find a new career that would support my family for the next 20 years or so, and not just for three. So after clearing things with the NCARP office, which was not difficult, I enrolled in Human Services Worker.

It is interesting to note that when I dropped out there was nobody from NCARP who asked me why I dropped out. Although a counsellor from Cabot contacted me, the people who were paying me didn't seem interested or simply had no time to speak to me about it. Nobody offered me help in finding a new area to study. I came up with this new program the same way I came up with Business Management: on my own.

I have done really well with this program. It's not as demanding as the Business Management, and there is no math. There are a few problems with the course. For instance, I am taking the correctional option, and this should involve on-the-job training at the various correctional institutes in the province. But up to now the program has not been recognized, and we have been denied access to these potential training areas. This is, of course, Cabot's problem,

but still it affects me in that I may be taking a course that I will not get to use because it is not recognized. I believe also that Cabot did not do the proper PR work in promoting the course. Also, because this is a new course there seems to be a limited amount of resource materials available. We don't have a text book, and it is difficult to find materials in the library. Still, I believe it is a very good program, and I feel I will be ready in June to go out into the workforce and perform the skills which I have developed over the past few months. But unless Cabot gets these difficulties straightened out I will probably be taking another training program next year, hopefully in an area related to Human Services.

It's still a struggle. But with a less demanding workload at school and an understanding spouse at home (who by the way has been taking a short course herself) I have been able to cope much better. I have not been using the services of the school counsellors too much. However, sometimes when things start piling up, or if I am having a bad week, I find it extremely useful to stop by and talk to Annabel (one of the counsellors).

The biggest problem I think with this retraining is that nobody offered me an opportunity to explore the various programs. If I were permitted to spend a few weeks exploring the various courses I may have made a better

selection in the first place. But this decision was left entirely up to me, and because I was not given any help, I made the wrong choice. This could have been prevented. Another thing is that NCARP had all this money to throw at us, but didn't use any to ease our concerns and apprehensions. I may have benefited from a counselling program when I found out that I was losing my job. I can understand why some of my friends at the plant ended up committing suicide. And without even knowing the options that were available to us.

### **Barry Moore**

Barry Moore is 32 years old and is married with two small children. Mr. Moore completed high school, and immediately following went to work as a labourer in a fishplant. He is presently in his third year of a three year Electronics Engineering Technology Program.

### Narrative of Barry Moore

My mother worked at the fishplant and she could have got me a job there before I finished school. Although I was not allowed to quit school, knowing what I was going to do influenced what direction I would take in high

school. You see there were two programs of study offered to high school students in back then: Matriculation, for those planning to go to college, and General Studies, for people like me who just wanted to finish. So knowing that I would work at the fishplant after school I took General Studies. This meant that I didn't do any sciences such as physics, algebra, trigonometry or any of the subjects I would need to pursue a technical career. I did the minimum requirements that would give me a high school diploma, then went right to work in the fishplant.

This was a good job back in the 70s and early 80s. I made good money and felt somewhat secure. Still, as I matured I began to think that I would like to go to college. I even enrolled in some short introductory electronic night courses at Cabot College. But I was married with a mortgage and a couple of little girls by the mid 80s. Besides, I was making a good living. Things were quite satisfactory for several years and I settled into my job as a fishplant worker.

Then in the late 80s, I think it was 1989, working conditions started to deteriorate. There were indications that the fishery may be in trouble. After several months of uncertainty our fish plant closed. All the workers were told the shutdown was temporary. I didn't worry too much because my wife was

working in another industry, and my unemployment insurance would keep me going until the plant reopened. After about six months of unemployment insurance we were told that the plant was to be refitted for operation as a shrimp processing plant, and only workers with several years seniority would be kept on. Because of my several years of seniority, I still was not worried and was confident that I would soon be back to work. However, several months went by and still the plant did not reopen. Eventually our unemployment insurance ran out, and the government gave us a "make-work" project. This gave us enough stamps for another year of unemployment insurance.

During this time I seriously considered starting my own business. There was an organization called the South Side Development Corporation that would lend you money to start a business. But after several months, I finally became swamped with bureaucratic red tape, and gave up on the ideal.

I didn't know what I was going to do now. The option was there for me to go back to school. CEIC would extend our unemployment insurance if we were to take certain one year programs, like carpentry, plumbing, brick laying and so on. This apparently was available from the beginning of the shutdown, but was never stressed or recommended. There was a counsellor

from CEIC who came to talk to workers about these options, but as I said previously, at that time I was confident the plant would re-open. Besides, taking a 10 month trade course didn't appeal to me because I knew several people who had taken these courses and they couldn't find work either.

In the summer of 1992, with my U.I. about to run out I enrolled in the College Orientation Program at Cabot College. Although I was genuinely interested in furthering my education, I was also being practical. I had a mortgage and the usual family expenses to deal with. This was an eight-week program developed especially for displaced fishery workers.

In the months before I enrolled in the orientation program there were rumours that our plant may not reopen, and these rumours were confirmed before I completed the program. The blow was eased somewhat by the fact that we would qualify for assistance under the NCARP program.

The orientation program involved basic math, communication, and career exploration. From attending this program I realized that although I had a grade 11 general studies certificate, I was not prepared academically to enter any technology programs. I could probably get in as a mature student, but I knew that my science and math skills were deficient. The only science I took in high school was geology, and I had virtually no math background at all.

My wife's brother had taken the Electronics Technology program back in the early 80s, and he is doing quite well as an electronics technician. I always thought that I would like to work in the electronics field, and the few basic night courses in electronics that I took some years ago had given me an understanding of what was involved. However, I knew I did not have an adequate academic background to be successful in the three year Electronics Engineering program at Cabot College.

Still, I was determined. After getting approval from NCARP, I got accepted for the Electronics Engineering Technology program as a mature student in September 1992. This meant that although I did not meet the academic requirements for the program, I would be given an opportunity to take the course based on my self education. But I knew I would need more.

Several fishery workers who had not completed high school were enrolled in the Adult Basic Education program at the Parade Street campus. I thought that this program would also help me. Unfortunately, because I had completed high school, I was not eligible to take the upgrading courses. This is when I started to use the services of the counsellors who were hired by Cabot especially to help older students, and in particular NCARP-sponsored students. With the counsellors' help, I decided that I would not do any of my

electronics courses in my first year. Instead I would do the ABE program at Parade Street concurrently with my related subjects within my electronics program. This practice was highly unusual and could not have been arranged were it not for the tremendous effort of one of the counsellors.

It was necessary for me to commute between two different campuses of Cabot and involved up to 8 hours of classes a day. To make matters worse, during this semester my mother passed away. It was extremely stressful, but somehow, with the help of the counsellors, I managed to pass all my courses. If I had chosen to go right into the regular technology program, I know I could not have managed. I am extremely grateful to the counsellors who helped me.

I spent a full year as a technology student but studied only the related subjects. This allowed me to upgrade my math and science skills before emerging completely into my technical studies. This worked out quite well. When classes started in September 1993, I had my related subjects completed, and this allowed more time for electronic courses. Presently, I am coping with the program very well.

Now that I am established as an electronic student there is one strong criticism I have of the electronics program and that is the common first year.

The common first year was implemented in September of 1993 and involves, as the name implies, a common course of study for all technology students, including Civil Engineering, Architectural Engineering, and so on. I am required to waste a full year studying things that I feel have no relevancy to the electronic field (chemistry for instance). I seriously believe that I will leave here after three years with less electronic knowledge than these students who completed the old two year program without the common first year.

Another small criticism involves the college. The counsellors that helped me, and numerous other adult learners, were hired especially to help older learners. It is my understanding that funding for these positions came from NCARP. However, last year Cabot laid off these people, and I think this was a big mistake. These counsellors became our friends and even if I was troubled by a personal problem I felt comfortable in discussing it with them. I feel that without their help, the chances of an older student like myself getting through the first semester are minimum at best. Even with them some people may not make it. So I feel Cabot College should make this type of counselling services available to all adult learners.

Right now I am doing OK but things are still very difficult. My wife has to spend more time with our kids and do more work around the house.

And of course she is still working full time. Going to school is not like working. The difference is that even when I am home I have to continue my school work. My family has been very supportive.

I would like to stress that the only help I received was from within the college. Neither CEIC nor NCARP helped me in any way except for the funding. I think I could have chosen any course for any reason and NCARP would not have questioned it. I guess I was fortunate in that I was sure of the program that I wanted to take. I know of others who have no idea of what course to take. Some of these people had enrolled in a course, only to find out after several months of efforts that they were not suited for it. I feel fortunate right now, in that I am comfortable with Electronic Engineering Technology, and I am confident that I will succeed.

**Clyde Richards**

Clyde Richards is 37 years old, and had worked as a supervisor in a fishplant for about 10 years. After being laid off, Clyde enrolled in the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program to upgrade his academic skills, having dropped out of high school while in the 10th grade. He then enrolled in the three year Architectural Engineering Technology Program, but was forced to

withdraw after three semesters. Clyde is married with 2 small children.

The Narrative of Clyde Richards

I grew up in Port Aux Basques. I dropped out of school in the 10th grade and tried numerous labour jobs including the armed forces, but I didn't consider any of the jobs I had to be long term. In 1979 a friend put me on to a job at the fishplant at St. John's. I applied and got the position. So I moved to the city.

From the time I started work in the fish plant I enjoyed it. I started off as a general labourer, but I was given an opportunity to perform a variety of jobs, and I soon became a skilled fish trimmer.

After a few years I started to develop new and better ways to perform everyday tasks. I would find more efficient methods of doing routine tasks, or discover new ways to do old jobs. The company took notice of my ingenuity. They sent me on various training courses and taught me how to train other workers in the techniques that I used. That was how I became an instructor, in addition to some of my regular duties.

The company offered me 20 cents per hour extra while I was instructing. But that was less than I made while working on the floor because

I was able to exceed my quota. So in 1981 they promoted me to supervisor, a job I held until the plant closed in 1989. During that time I was making good money. I got married and started a family. I was able to borrow enough money for a down payment on a house, and my income was more than sufficient to make ends meet.

Then the plant closed in 1989. I thought the closure was temporary, so this did not concern me a great deal. Even though I was given a severance pay, I was confident the plant would reopen. I didn't go on U.I. immediately. My severance pay had disqualified me for three months, and after that I accepted a temporary job as an instructor at the Marine Institute. This job involved training fish plant workers and payed less than my supervisor job, but more than U.I. Thinking that I would soon be going back to my regular job, I thought that the lower U.I. stamps from the Marine Institute would not lower my benefits (U.I. benefits are based on the salary). However, the plant closure continued and when I finally opened my U.I. claim I was getting considerably less than I would have, had I not gone to work at the Marine Institute.

I was not on U.I. very long before I started to realize I needed to consider my options. One thing I considered was a service station near my

wife's home town on the Northern Peninsula. I went through an extensive marketing survey and unfortunately the survey indicated the service station would not make a profit. Another option was to go back to school. I had always enjoyed drawing and planning things. So I thought I would like to become a Architectural Technologist. My first step in becoming an Architectural Technologist was to upgrade my academic skills. So with the help of CEIC I enroled in the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program at Cabot.

This worked out quite well. My wife worked at night from 3 PM to 11 pm, and I finished school at about 3 PM. This meant that my neighbour had to look after our two children (ages 6 and 8 at the time) for only about 30 minutes. And the program was self-paced, so I didn't feel any great amount of pressure from going back to school.

Remember that up to this time there was still hope the plant would reopen, and I was one of the first of the plant workers to elect training. I had taken this big step on my own, and was sort of setting an example for other plant workers. When the news came the plant would not reopen, I had already applied for the three year Architectural Technology program.

With the permanent closure of the fishery came the funding for each worker from NCARP; this would give me some financial stability for a little

longer. Of course, financially I still found it difficult. The mortgage and my loan payments were all set up based on my supervisor's pay. It was and still is a struggle to get by. Still I managed.

In my first semester of the Architectural Technology program I got a rude awakening. Although there is some drawing by hand involved, the majority of the work is done by computers. Studying computers and CAD (Computer Aided Design) and other software was not what I expected or even wanted. During my ABE program I participated in the Career Exploratory Program (four days) which involved monitoring (attending) various classes. But this was a farce. We spent more time doing nothing or attending math or science classes than learning what architectural technology was about. Also, the ABE program did not prepare me for the fast and furious pace of the technology program. The ABE program was self-paced, and I was under no pressure to get a subject or topic completed. I worked at my own pace and when something needed attention at home, then I could handle it. But with the technology program I was required to take 7 courses in the first semester. This was extremely demanding given my duties at home and my somewhat weak academic background. The stress that I went through was tremendous.

The longer and more stringent time schedule of the new program

presented a problem at home. As I mentioned before, my wife works night shift beginning at 3 P.M. This was two or three hours before I could make it home. I could no longer expect my neighbours to look after my children until I came home. To solve this problem I thought I would kill two birds with one stone. I started a study group with four other students from my class and we all agreed to meet at my house at 5 P.M. daily.

Looking back now I think the study group did me more harm than good. Especially with respect to my studies. When there was a problem we would work on it together but it never really got solved. Also, when there were assignments or projects to do, it seems that one person did a portion, while the others just simply copied what they had done. This technique would catch up to us at exam time where each individual was on their own with only knowledge of the part of the assignment which they worked on.

On top of these difficulties, I was finding that I had almost no time for my family. My little boys needed help with homework, or I had to attend a school meeting, or a number of other responsibilities. I rarely spent any time with my wife.

One positive thing about that semester was the counsellors at the college who were hired specifically to serve adult learners. They were

fabulous and I got to know them quite well. So well in fact that I would often drop by just for a chat and a pep talk. They also helped with other things like arranging for tutors, speaking to instructors for extensions on assignments, and tracking down paycheques that didn't come. Without Bertha (one of the counsellors) I think I would have quit within the first two months.

But I didn't quit. I made it through the first semester, though just barely. My grade point average was the minimum required to allow me to continue. I think I failed physics and got 50 on math. This put added pressure on me during the second semester because now in addition to the regular course work I was forced to do some makeup work in these subjects. Again with the help of the counsellors I made it through the second semester, but with some deficiencies.

In the third semester I was starting to bend under the strain and stress of trying to keep up. About half way through I started to develop medical problems. After seeing a doctor, who confirmed that the stress was having a deteriorating effect on my health, I dropped out.

Immediately on dropping out I felt depressed. Because I felt that I had let down my family, and other adult learners who had followed me into the program and used me as an example. And, of course, I let myself down.

Again the counsellors were extremely helpful to me during that period.

Looking back on my experience I think the biggest barrier to my success was the overwhelming workload. Seven different courses coupled with my weak academic background made it extremely difficult to cope. Then these factors were compounded by my home life. I had family and financial responsibilities that had to be attended to.

I guess I'll go back to school again. The NCARP funding program is changing soon and that may be one of the requirements for maintaining my financial assistance. I would not mind going back and continuing with architectural technology, but as I said I don't think I would enjoy what is involved enough to put such an effort into getting it. I may consider carpentry or some other trade where I can work with my hands.

#### **Donna Viney**

Donna Viney is single and 35 years old. After completing high school Ms. Viney enrolled in a 10 month typing/shorthand pre-employment program. This led to employment in the office of a fishplant where she worked for several years before being laid-off. Donna graduated in June, 1994 with a diploma in Business Administration.

The Narrative of Donna Viney

I was not a great student in high school, just average I suppose. I was hoping to go on to university when I finished, but my marks were not quite good enough. And believe me, I did not receive much encouragement from my friends or family. After I graduated in 1976, I applied to Cabot College to take hair dressing. Thank God I didn't get accepted.

The following year I applied to the Seal Cove trade school for a short-hand/typing course and was accepted. The course lasted about 10 months and didn't present me with too much difficulty. During the course I was fortunate to get a 2 week workterm in the fishplant in my hometown. I did very well during my workterm, and the company offered me a temporary position as a secretary after graduation. When the woman I was replacing came back from sick leave after 3 months, I applied for a permanent position in the payroll department. That proved to be the end of my typing. I didn't mind, the pay was better, and besides I had no great fondness for typing anyways.

During the 13 years that I worked at the fishplant office I was able to take some courses during the winter months when the plant was shut down. I did a couple of computer courses from the Marine Institute. They were application courses, wordprocessing and spread sheets. I also did two

accounting courses from Cabot College. These courses I particularly enjoyed. I always wanted to do a more advanced business course but never had the opportunity because of my job.

By the late 1980s I was becoming somewhat disillusioned with my job, and the community as well I think. I was still single and there was nothing except my job tying me down. And we were starting to hear bad things about the future of the fishery. So after years of contemplation, in 1989 I finally applied for the three year Business Management Program at Cabot College. When we learned the plant was closing I decided not to resign, but instead applied for a leave of absence from work to attend school. As it happened I only needed a month because by that time the plant had closed.

That first semester was extremely difficult. I had trouble with my math, and needed help with some of my other subjects too. I was given credit for the two accounting courses that I had taken previously. This reduced my workload a little. Still, the amount of time I had to put into my studies was unreal. But I had a few things going for me. First of all, I am single so I had no outside interference from family members. Secondly, the counsellors that were hired for the adult learners made themselves known and available to me. They helped me in many ways. If I needed a tutor they would find one, or if I

was having trouble organizing my time, they would assist me. They would even talk to instructors on my behalf. They became real friends who I could talk to at any time about anything.

I remember during that first semester going to the counsellor's office in tears on more than one occasion. Always before leaving I would feel much better and somehow the problem, although not always solved, would seem a little more manageable. That was my worst semester. I made it through but marginally.

Also, in that first semester I found it somewhat difficult to associate or socialize with my classmates. Not that I had difficulty, just that I was not comfortable doing it. I was much older and somehow felt that I was out of place when I was around them. I guess it was more me rather than them; I had not yet adjusted properly.

In the second semester I did a little better, and finally settled into a routine. I had a great roommate who worked shift work, so I usually had my apartment to myself, it was a good place to study. With the help of a tutor from time to time, I managed to bring my GPA up from the first term.

The whole second year went great. I found that I didn't use the counsellors as much. Really, I had no time to even drop by and say hello.

Things had not been easier as far as the course material was concerned. It's just that I had adjusted to being a student, and knew how to cope better.

I'll be graduating in a few weeks, and I'm hoping to find employment here in St. John's. I have my own life here now and I don't think I want to go back home.

In thinking back to that first semester, I can't emphasize enough about how much help Mrs. Appleby (one of the counsellors) was to me. I remember going to her office on a Friday afternoon in the last few weeks of the first semester. I was in tears and feeling just a little too much pressure. I had a very important report due on Monday that I had been working on all week. Now that I had it completed, I didn't look forward to spending my whole weekend typing it. Mrs. Appleby listened to me ramble on about this and finally said "you are going to take the weekend off and go to a movie. You need to relax for a couple of days and that is exactly what you'll do." She called and arranged to have my report typed by a typist. It cost me \$15 dollars but I felt much better on Monday. She was fabulous.

Another thing that may have helped me adjust better to school life in that first semester would have been a support group consisting of persons who were going through some of the same anxieties that I was; people who were

closer to my age group and who were experiencing similar stress.

I think the school system is fine. I have no complaints at all about the program or how it is run. I probably could have received more help from my instructors, but that was my fault, in that I am sometimes not as assertive as I need be. Hopefully I have improved over the last 3 years.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **EXPERIENCING THE RETRAINING PROCESS**

In the previous chapter the narratives developed from the recorded interviews of each participant were presented. In this chapter these narratives are subjected to further analysis. Firstly, the narratives are analyzed in terms of the research questions as outlined in Chapter 1. Secondly, an alternate interpretation using Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure is developed.

#### **Problems Encountered During Retraining**

The interviews conducted with each participant were structured around three main issues: 1) difficulties and barriers; 2) counselling services; and 3) the participant's views of the retraining system as a whole. The narratives of each participant were studied to find specific answers to the research questions as outlined in Chapter 1.

#### Difficulties and Barriers

The narratives indicated that following difficulties were encountered: (a) problems with selecting an appropriate program of studies, (b) academic weakness and heavy workload, and (c) responsibilities external to the training

institute. These difficulties may have created perceived or real barriers to the successful completion of their individual programs.

Selection of an Appropriate Program

None of the four participants were offered help in selecting an appropriate program of studies before enrolling in college. Fortunately, two of the participants were able to make sound decisions without external counselling, but the remaining two were apparently misinformed and were unable to make appropriate decisions.

When Abe Johnson realized his lay-off from the fishplant was permanent, and that he was eligible for funding under NCARP, he decided to go back to college. This decision was made only after considering all other options. Once this decision was made he faced the problem of choosing a suitable program of studies. He described how he came to decide on the three year Business Management program:

There was a lot for me to consider. It was not just a matter of selecting an area that interested me, or that I may enjoy. I also had to consider that my financial assistance would last for the whole time of my retraining. So I thought that I should select a

three year course. This would ensure financial stability and allow me to make my mortgage payments, and provide food and clothing for my children for at least three more years. So I decided on Business Management. I had worked with the union a fair bit, and enjoyed helping people with their taxes. So without really exploring what the program was all about I enrolled in Business Management, mainly because it was a three year program.

Nobody gave me any help with this decision, or even questioned it. Once I decided that I was going to take Business Management, the only criteria was that I had to get accepted to the program. Although I didn't meet the academic requirements for the program I was accepted as a mature student. I had no reason to believe that I would have any difficulties. Besides, I did quite well in the seven-week course that I took prior to starting the business program.

Clearly, he feels he selected the Business Management program for the wrong reason, because it would insure three years of financial security, and wrongly assumed that his academic background was adequate.

Clyde Richards had similar difficulties. He had an interest in drawing and drafting, and "thought" that this would make an interesting career. But like Abe Johnson, he indicates he may have made an inappropriate choice:

In my first semester of the Architectural Technology program I got a rude awakening. Although there is some drawing by hand involved, the majority of the work is done by computers. Studying computers and CAD (Computer Aided Design) and other software was not what I expected or even wanted. During my ABE program I participated in the Career Exploratory Program (four days) which involved monitoring (attending) various classes. But this was a farce. We spent more time doing nothing or attending math or science classes then learning what architectural technology was about.

Although Mr. Richards indicated that a career exploration program was included in the Adult Basic Education program, he felt that it was not useful in helping him make an appropriate program selection.

Indications are that neither Abe Johnson nor Clyde Richards were given sufficient information to enable them to make appropriate program selections. This implies that displaced workers may require counselling when considering

retraining for a new occupation.

Conversely, Barry Moore and Donna Viney selected appropriate occupations because of their individual backgrounds and previous experience. Barry Moore, for example, credits " the few basic night courses in electronics that I took some years ago" with helping him to understand the electronics field and thus make the decision to apply for Electronics Technology program. Similarly, Donna Viney had taken part time computer and accounting courses prior to being laid-off, and had a good understanding of the program she was enrolled in:

During the 13 years that I worked at the fishplant office I was able to take some courses during the winter months when the plant was shut down. I did a couple of computer courses from the Marine Institute. They were application courses, wordprocessing and spread sheets. I also did two accounting courses from Cabot College. These course I particularly enjoyed. I always wanted to do a more advanced business course but never had the opportunity because of my job.

Clearly Barry Moore and Donna Viney were able to make satisfactory program choices because of their previous experience.

Thus, two of the four participants in this study experienced difficulties in selecting a program of studies, while the others made choices that appear appropriate. However, none of the participants received adequate counselling or assistance from the system with respect to program selection.

Academic Weakness and the Heavy Workloads

All four participants felt they were unprepared academically for post-secondary studies. This was a significant contributing factor in both Abe Johnson's and Clyde Richards' decision to withdraw from the institute before graduating. Barry Moore was able to continue only after arranging for concurrent upgrading in some subjects, while Donna Viney attributes her success in the first semester to her reduced workload. All felt that the first semester workload was extremely heavy, and the pace of the various courses was too fast.

Abe Johnson quit high school after completing grade 10. He knew that he did not have an adequate background for post-secondary studies. However, the fact that he was accepted into the program as a mature student led him to believe he would not face insurmountable academic difficulties. As he said " I had no reason to believe that I would have any difficulties." But of course he

did, and this resulted in him having to spend an excessive amount of time with his studies. This, combined with his perception that he was not making progress, appears to have had a devastating effect on his enthusiasm for the course. This was indicated by his suggestion that after a few weeks he felt that "even if I were not having difficulties with my studies, I still would not enjoy it". Consequently, he withdrew from the program before the end of the first semester.

Clyde Richards was also admitted to Cabot College as a mature student. Although he had completed 6 months of upgrading, the Adult Basic Education program is not recognized by Cabot College for admission purposes. But, because he was relatively successful in completing the upgrading program, he believed he was academically prepared to complete the three year Architectural Technology program. He soon learned that he was not academically prepared:

The ABE program was self-paced, and I was under no pressure to get a subject or topic completed. I worked at my own pace and when something needed attention at home, then I could handle it. But with the technology program I was required to take seven courses in the first semester. This was extremely

demanding, given my duties at home and my somewhat weak academic background. The stress that I went through was tremendous.

With help from the support unit at Cabot College, Mr. Richards was able to make it though the first two semesters. However, during the third semester he withdrew from the program.

Barry Moore was able to recognize his weaknesses before starting his program of studies:

The orientation program involved basic math, communication, and career exploration. From attending this program I realized that although I had a grade 11 general studies certificate, I was not qualified to enter any technology programs. I could probably get in as a mature student, but I knew that my science and math skills were deficient. The only science I took in high school was geology, and I had virtually no math background at all.

With the help of the support unit, Mr. Moore arranged his first year studies to include upgrading courses for his academic subjects. Essentially he completed his first year as a post secondary student by taking only related academic

subjects. This selection not only allowed him to have a reduced workload in his third semester, but also gave him a better academic foundation for his electronic studies. The fact that his program would take 4 years instead of 3 was not of concern.

Donna Viney also felt she was weak academically, even though she had completed high school. Despite having a reduced workload due to the credits awarded on the basis of the accounting courses she had completed previously, she described the first semester of her program as being extremely difficult:

I had trouble with my math, and needed help with some of my other subjects too. The amount of time I had to put into my studies was unreal.

She indicated that her ability to cope was not hampered by external responsibilities, and she often used the services of a tutor.

Thus, none of the participants felt they were fully prepared academically for post-secondary studies. Three of the participants were admitted to their respective programs as mature students because they did not meet the academic requirements for post-secondary programs. The fourth participant met the admission requirements of the college, but still felt she was not properly prepared.

External Responsibilities

Three of the four participants were married with children and thought that family responsibilities negatively affected their ability to cope with their studies. Also, one of the participants was encountering financial difficulties and he felt this distracted him from his school work.

Still, it is the opinion of this researcher that these external responsibilities were mitigating factors that did not significantly affect the participants decision to withdraw from college. This notion is supported by Abe Johnson's description of the sequence of events leading to his decision to withdraw:

So about two months or so into the course, my youngest son became sick and was hospitalized for a week. I found it impossible to attend classes during this time and fell behind in my work. In fact, I think I was pleased that I had a valid reason for not going to school. When I did return to class, I found that I was too far behind to catch up. The counsellor at Cabot recommended that I find a tutor to assist me, but I knew this was not what I wanted to do. So I dropped out.

No doubt family responsibilities, especially his son's sickness, were a

distraction for Mr. Johnson, but clearly these did not contribute significantly to his decision to withdraw.

External forces may have played a more significant role in the case of Clyde Richards. Mr. Richard's wife was working night shift, and he was left with the responsibility of babysitting his two children. He felt this not only made it difficult for him to devote adequate time to his studies, but also added to his stress:

The stress that I went through was tremendous. On top of school related difficulties, I was finding that I had almost no time for my family. My little boys needed help with homework, or I had to attend a school meeting, or a number of other responsibilities. I rarely spent any time with my wife. In the third semester I was starting to bend under the strain and stress of trying to keep up. About half way through I started to develop medical problems. After seeing a doctor, who confirmed that the stress was having a deteriorating effect on my health, I dropped out.

Obviously, these external factors created difficulties for Mr. Richards.

However, they were probably not insurmountable were it not for the academic

problems he was encountering.

Barry Moore also had family matters to deal with that distracted him from his studies. For example, during his first semester his mother passed away. He described this as being "extremely stressful." However, he was obviously able to successfully limit the negative effect these external factors had on his progress, as was indicated by his satisfactory academic performance.

Although external responsibilities were identified by the participants as presenting difficulties, it appears these difficulties were not serious enough in themselves to lead to a decision to withdraw.

#### Counselling Used by the Participants

The counselling services used by the four participants included: (a) direct counselling from the support unit of Cabot College; (b) counselling from the funding agencies; and (c) professional tutors peer groups. All participants expressed praise for the support unit of Cabot College and suggested that without this service they would not have been able to get past the first week of classes.

**Support Unit of the College**

The data indicates that the counsellors at Cabot College made a point of becoming a part of students' lives. So much so that all four participants considered the counsellors as friends. They became totally involved with all aspects of the participant's college life. They arranged for tutoring when needed, met with instructors on the participant's behalf, took care of related funding business such as tracking down late cheques, and offered moral support.

The counsellors appear to have been committed to helping students succeed. For example, when Barry Moore decided he should upgrade his academic qualifications before starting the Electronics Engineering Technology program, he found he was not eligible to participate in the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program because he had already completed high school.

With the counsellors' help, I decided that I would not do any of my electronics courses in my first year. Instead I would do the ABE program at Parade Street concurrently with my related subjects within my electronics program. This practice was highly unusual and could not have been arranged were it not for the tremendous effort of one of the counsellors.

Thus, he was able to register in the technology program, but took the first year of his studies to complete the related academic subjects, and to upgrade. In this manner, he was able to devote more time to his technical subjects during his third semester.

Clyde Richards experienced difficulties from the beginning of his Architectural Technology program, and found the services of the support unit invaluable.

One positive thing about that semester was the counsellors at the college who were hired specifically to serve adult learners. They were fabulous and I got to know them quite well. So well in fact that I would often drop by just for a chat and a pep talk. They also helped with other things like arranging for tutors, speaking to instructors for extensions on assignments, and tracking down pay cheques that didn't come. Without Bertha (one of the counsellors) I think I would have quit within the first two months.

Mr. Richards was also experiencing some difficulties at home. Along with his wife's working schedule and the resulting babysitting problems, he was encountering financial difficulties as well. Mr. Richards said he was always

comfortable about discussing these matters with the counsellors, and this often helped.

There are indications that counsellors often became personally involved in the participant's day-to-day routine, and often worked to relieve some of the pressures felt by the participants as a result of trying to keep up with the rigors of college life. Donna Viney related the following story to illustrate this point:

In thinking back to that first semester, I can't emphasize enough about how much help Mrs. Appleby (one of the counsellors) was to me. I remember going to her office on a Friday afternoon in the last few weeks of the first semester. I was in tears and feeling just a little too much pressure. I had a very important report due on Monday that I had been working on all week. Now that I had it completed, I didn't look forward to spending my whole weekend typing it. Mrs. Appleby listened to me ramble on about this and finally said "you are going to take the weekend off and go to a movie. You need to relax for a couple of days and that is exactly what you'll do." She called and arranged to have my report typed by a typist. It cost me 15 dollars but I felt much better on Monday. She was fabulous.

This clearly illustrates the impact the support unit counsellors had on the daily life of the participants.

It is worthy of note that even when two of the participants withdrew from their respective programs, the only counsellors who contacted them were from the college support unit.

#### Counselling from the Funding Agencies

Participants acknowledge that the funding agencies did have counsellors to assist workers in selecting retraining programs. But indications are that this was not a proactive service. For example, Barry Moore mentions that a counsellor from the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) came to talk to a group of workers shortly after their plant closed. The counsellor informed the workers of the services available through the CEIC offices, but few workers pursued this option. He suggested that the only help he received was from the counsellors at the training institute:

Neither CEIC nor NCARP helped me in any way except for the funding. I think I could have chosen any course for any reason and NCARP would not have questioned it. I guess I was fortunate in that I was sure of the program that I wanted to take.

I know of others who had no idea of what course to take. Some of these people had enrolled in a course, only to find out after several months of efforts that they were not suited for it.

Although the participants were required to discuss their program selection with a counsellor from NCARP, there is no evidence to indicate the participant's suitability for his or her choice of program was scrutinized in any way. Abe Johnson had this to say about the lack of external counselling:

The biggest problem I think with this retraining is that nobody offered me an opportunity to explore the various programs. If I were permitted to spend a few weeks exploring the various courses I may have made a better selection in the first place. But this decision was left entirely up to me, and because I was not given any help, I made the wrong choice. This could have been prevented. Another thing is that NCARP had all this money to throw at us, but didn't use any to ease our concerns and apprehensions. I may have benefited from a counselling program when I found out that I was losing my job.

These comments tend to support the need for a counselling service similar in structure to the Holistic Model described in Chapter 2.

Professional Tutors and Peer Groups

All four participants found it necessary to use the services of a tutor occasionally. Abe Johnson also received help from classmates. Clyde Richards formed a study group which met in his home each afternoon.

With respect to the tutoring, all participants concluded that this service was extremely helpful. Tutoring was arranged by the support unit and took place after hours. Abe Johnson and Clyde Richards admitted that with such a heavy workload, and because they were having difficulties in more than one subject, it was often impossible to find the time to attend tutoring sessions.

Clyde Richards thought the study group which he formed was not particularly helpful:

Looking back now I think the study group did me more harm than good. Especially with respect to my studies. When there was a problem we would work on it together but it never really got solved. Also, when there was assignments or projects to do, it seems that one person did a portion, while the others just

simply copied what they had done. This technique would catch up to us at exam time where each individual was on their own with only knowledge of the part of the assignment which they worked on.

Although he felt the study group was not helpful, he admitted that the reasons for forming the group may have been more social than academic.

#### Participant's Views of System and Suggestions for Improvements

Participants had some criticisms of the system, particularly those concerning the funding agencies. These included concerns over the counselling services external to the training institute, as well as within the college, including some minor problems with the training programs themselves. Suggestions for improvement of the system concerned the counselling services of both the funding agencies and the training institute.

#### Counselling Services External to Training Institute

None of the four participants received help in selecting an appropriate training program. Nobody from CEIC nor NCARP questioned the choices of the participants. Programs were chosen and the appropriate persons at

NCARP were informed. Approval for funding was essentially automatic. As Abe Johnson said "nobody gave me any help with this decision, or even questioned it". Participants were not able to make informed decisions, and thus selected programs that may not have suited their abilities, interests, or backgrounds. This was certainly true for Abe Johnson and Clyde Richards. Barry Moore and Donna Viney were able to make appropriate decisions only because of their previous knowledge and background.

#### Counselling Services Within The Training Institute

The counselling services within Cabot College were held in high regard by all participants. As explained in Chapter 4, this unit was created specifically to help the NCARP recipients, and was only funded for the first two years. Consequently, the participants of this study were able to take advantage of their services. However, this funding is no longer available and the regular school counsellors, who are responsible for the whole student body, have no time to become involved in every student's daily activities. Barry Moore summed up his feelings towards the support unit in this manner:

These counsellors became our friends and even if I was troubled by a personal problem I felt comfortable in discussing it with

them. I feel that without their help, the chances of an older student like myself getting through the first semester are minimum at best. Even with them some people may not make it. So I feel Cabot College should make this type of counselling services available to all adult learners.

The other participants expressed similar feelings and all agreed that the support unit should become permanent.

#### Participant's Thoughts on the Training System

All four participants were generally satisfied with the college system, attributing most of their difficulties to their weak academic backgrounds. However, there are indications that the school did not have adequate remedial provisions in place to accommodate students with weak backgrounds. This was highlighted by Barry Moore's difficulty in trying to arrange for upgrading prior to starting his technical studies. This was also demonstrated by the fact that Clyde Richards struggled through two semesters of studies and nobody identified his need for further upgrading.

There were some other minor criticisms of the college. Abe Johnson, for example, expressed concern about the Human Services Program in which

he is currently enrolled. Apparently this is a new program and is experiencing some problems associated with its first year of operation. Also, Barry Moore expressed concern about the college's decision to have all technology students complete a common first year. Mr. Moore feels that some of the courses he is required to complete during his first year are unnecessary.

#### Improving the System

The following suggestions were expressed by the participants as a means of improving the institutional environment and conditions for the retraining of displaced workers:

- (a) The introduction of a counselling service that would help displaced workers select an appropriate program of studies.
- (b) Maintain the special support unit for all displaced workers who are retraining for new occupations.
- (c) Make the programs more flexible. Thus older students would not be forced to take a full course load in their first semester. This would allow them to work at a slower pace.
- (d) Establish peer support groups. This would be especially helpful in the first semester, whereby students could meet and associate

with people who are experiencing similar stress.

These suggestions are incorporated into the final recommendations of this report.

### **Alternate Interpretation of the Findings**

In this section, the findings discussed above are re-examined to derive meaning in terms of perspectives, themes, and conclusions. The analysis is divided into two parts: (1) the personal characteristics of the participants prior to beginning the retraining program; and (2) the institutional experiences of the participants. In each part, arguments are developed to support the conclusions that, with respect to the four displaced workers who participated in this study, the system failed to give adequate counselling before entrance into college and, was not equipped or prepared to address the participant's academic deficiencies. Previous research findings as described in Chapter 2 are used to provide a reference for this analysis.

#### **Pre-entry Attributes**

The personal characteristics of the participants prior to beginning the retraining program refer to the attributes with which the individual enter

college. These include: 1) how well the student is prepared academically for post-secondary studies; and 2) the individual's personal commitment to the attainment of his or her educational goals (Tinto, 1987).

### Academic Preparedness

As discussed above, all participants felt they were academically unprepared for post-secondary studies. Careful examination of each narrative confirms that academic weakness was the most significant barrier to their success. (Also, they may not have had sufficient aptitudes for their chosen fields, but there is insufficient data to determine this.)

Abe Johnson and Clyde Richards were unable to overcome their weak academic backgrounds and, consequently were forced to withdraw from their respective programs. Although heavy workloads were also cited as a barrier, these appear to have been directly related to weak academic backgrounds. Likewise, external forces may have contributed to their failure, but difficulties resulting from external forces would not have been led to withdrawal had it not been for the academic difficulties the students encountered.

Barry Moore and Donna Viney both experienced academic difficulties despite having completed high school and some basic courses in their chosen

fields. Barry Moore was able to cope with his studies mainly because he delayed his study of electronics for one year to upgrade his academic skills. Donna Viney had exemptions for some of her courses which reduced her workload and allowed her more time to concentrate on difficult courses. Even with these concessions she described her workload as being "unreal."

Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure assumes that students who are accepted into a post-secondary programs have the required skills and abilities to succeed. This does not necessarily imply that these students meet all the recommended academic pre-requisites, as is the case with three of the participants in this study. However, the model suggests that if students are found to have academic deficiencies, then the institute should take the responsibility of addressing these deficiencies.

In reviewing the experiences of the four participants, it is clear that (a) neither the funding agency nor the educational institute made efforts to determine if these students had sufficient skills, abilities and backgrounds to succeed in the programs they chose, and (b) the institute failed to properly address the deficiencies when they became apparent. Abe Johnson's decision to withdraw before the end of the first semester was probably a good one. His background, skills, abilities, and interests were obviously not compatible with

the program of studies he had selected. This may also be true for Clyde Richards. However, in Mr. Richards case, he suffered through almost three full semesters. Only after he experienced medical problems as a result of school related stress did he finally withdraw from his program.

Intentions and Commitments to Goals (T.)

The intentions and the degree of commitment with which the participants in this study entered college varied. Donna Viney and Barry Moore selected programs based on their previous experience, and thus, their intentions were to become qualified workers in their chosen fields. Both appear to have been committed to achieving specific educational goals.

Conversely, Abe Johnson and Clyde Richards chose programs about which they knew very little. Their commitment seems to have been to attending college in general, and not to the program of studies they had chosen. Their intentions were to stay in college for up to three years.

Tinto believes that having weak goals and commitments at the beginning of college life is not serious. However, it may be a contributing factor to a student's inability to integrate both socially and academically into the college community. Individual commitment is expressed in the student's

motivation, drive and effort. Both Abe Johnson and Clyde Richards discovered early in their studies that they were not suited to the occupations for which they were being trained. This tends to suggest that the participants lacked adequate counselling in selecting an appropriate program before entrance into college. Their weak academic performance may also have contributed to this situation. Thus, both began their college experience with weak intentions and commitments.

#### Institutional Experiences

Given the individual attributes at entry, the subsequent experiences within the institute are seen to either strengthen or weaken the student's commitment to the attainment of his or her educational goals (Tinto, 1987). Thus, interactive experiences which promote the student's social and intellectual integration into the college community are seen by Tinto to increase the likelihood of graduation. However, negative experiences which tend "to separate the individual from the social and intellectual communities of the college" (Tinto, 1987: 116), are likely to influence a student's decision to withdraw from college. In this section, the institutional experiences of the participants are examined in terms of the academic and social systems of the

institute, and conclusions are made as to the impact of these experiences on the participant's goals and commitments.

### Academic System

The interactions of the participants within the academic system of the college consisted of classroom interactions and consultations with the support unit counsellors. The participants found that the instructors generally did not have time to provide extra help. Thus, interactions with instructors were limited to the classroom.

The positive contribution of the support unit counsellors was emphasized by all participants. As discussed above, counsellors actively assisted participants to adjust to college life, and helped with the academic difficulties they encountered. Any sense of isolation or feelings of "not fitting in" were addressed by the daily interactions with the counsellors. Barry Moore expressed the feelings of all participants towards the counsellors when he talked about his concerns over the college's decision to lay off its counsellors:

The counsellors that helped me, and numerous other adult learners, were hired especially to help older learners. It is my

understanding that funding for these positions came from NCARP. However, last year Cabot laid off these people, and I think this was a big mistake. These counsellors became our friends and even if I were troubled by a personal problem I felt comfortable in discussing it with them. I feel that without their help, the chances of an older student like myself getting through the first semester are minimum at best. Even with them some people may not make it. So I feel Cabot College should make this type of counselling services available to all adult learners.

This supports the notion that the support unit counsellors had a tremendous impact on all four participants. Indications are that were it not for the services of the support unit counsellors, progress towards academic integration could not have been achieved by any of the participants.

Still, counsellors appeared unable to deal effectively with the academic difficulties experienced by the participants. Tinto refers to this as "incongruence", or a mismatch between the student's abilities and skills, and those necessary for academic success. Counsellors could assist the students in a number of ways such as arranging for the services of a tutor, or talking to an instructor on behalf of the student to plead for extensions for assignments. But

neither the counsellors nor the college were equipped to address the academic deficiencies of the students directly. This would seem to be an important point in light of the fact that the two participants who are persisting and will likely graduate, Barry Moore and Donna Viney, were able to find alternate means of addressing their weaknesses on their own.

### The Social System

Tinto believes that in order for students to integrate fully into the college community, they must be allowed to socialize and interact with both their peers and faculty. The participants of this study found this very difficult to do because of the heavy workloads and their external responsibilities. Except for the interactions with the counsellors, contact with faculty members was restricted to the classroom. Occasionally, participants interacted with their peers, but this was more for tutoring rather than social purposes.

It seems that none of the participants achieved what Tinto refers to as full personal/normative integration within the first year. Of course, Tinto does not argue that full integration in the academic and social systems of the college is necessary for student success. He points out that integration into one system can compensate for non-integration in the other. However, he does imply that

the absence of some form of social and intellectual integration into the college community establishes a condition for students to drop out.

From this perspective, more understanding is gained of the precarious positions of both Abe Johnson and Clyde Richards prior to their decision to withdraw. While it can be argued that the most serious problems they encountered were academic, their situations were negatively affected by the fact they could not devote any time to social interactions within the institute.

Cabot College, along with most other major educational institutes, recognizes the importance of social integration for the student. Social activities, either organized or sanctioned by the college, occur regularly throughout the school year. Unfortunately, according to the participants, these activities are only available to those who have time to become involved.

#### Intentions and Commitments to Goals (T<sub>2</sub>)

From the previous discussion, it was suggested by Tinto's model that social and academic integration into the college communities tends to reduce the likelihood of withdrawal. This is accomplished through the effect that integrative experiences have on the individual's goals and commitments.

Positive integration serves to raise one's goals and strengthens one's commitments both to those goals and to the institution within which they may be attained. Negative experiences, that is, those which either are malintegrative in character (those that separate the individual from the social and intellectual communities of the college) or do not lead to sufficient integration in those communities, may lead to departure. They may do so either by lowering one's goals and/or by weakening one's commitment, especially to the institution (Tinto, 1987: 116)

The lives of older students are sometimes dominated by external forces, such as family and social responsibilities. But the effects of these are manifested in the effect they have on the student's goals and commitments (Tinto, 1987).

As discussed above, none of the participants in this study achieved either full academic or social integration in the first year of studies. Abe Johnson's negative academic experiences precluded any chance of social integration and led directly to his withdrawing from the college. While the others achieved a certain amount of academic integration by maintaining a minimum grade point average (GPA), none were able to integrate socially.

Although Clyde Richards formed a study group with some classmates, this did not appear to have significantly contributed to his socialization. And Donna Viney stated explicitly that she found it difficult to interact with her peers:

In that first semester I found it somewhat difficult to associate or socialize with my classmates. Not that I had difficulty, just that I was not comfortable doing it. I was much older and somehow felt that I was out of place when I was around them. I guess it was more me rather than them; I had not yet adjusted properly.

Thus, the two participants who entered college with strong goals and commitments survived the rigors of college life, and managed a certain degree of academic integration if not social integration. They both showed signs that their individual goals and commitments had indeed strengthened.

This tends to emphasize the importance of the counselling process in selecting not only appropriate programs for older workers, but also selecting older workers for retraining.

### **Experiencing the Retraining Process: A Summary**

Specific answers to the research questions posed in Chapter 1 are

summarized in Table 5.1. These represent the views of the participants and emerged as a direct result of the data analysis. A further analysis of the data led to the conclusions that: (a) the system (NCARP in particular) did not provide participants with adequate counselling prior to college entrance; and (b) the college did not fully address the participant's academic weaknesses. These conditions appear to have created a significant barrier to the successful completion of retraining.

Table 5-1

Specific answers to research questions

1. What are the difficulties experienced by displaced workers as they prepare for training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inadequate counselling service pertaining to assisting workers in making informed and appropriate career decisions.</li> <li>- Weak academic background, tied mainly to lack of formal preparation, but also to the length of time out of school.</li> </ul>
2. What are the difficulties experienced by displaced workers as they commence training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The stress of making the transition from worker to student.</li> <li>- Family and financial responsibilities often conflict with study time.</li> <li>- A feeling of an overwhelming workload.</li> <li>- A feeling of not fitting into the social atmosphere of the institute.</li> <li>- Inadequate assistance from instructors who say they have no time to tutor weak students.</li> <li>- Although counsellors were able to identify the participant's academic weaknesses, they were unable to fully address them.</li> </ul>
3. What are some of the perceived barriers to successful completion of retraining as influenced by societal characteristics?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial and family responsibilities sometimes have a negative influence.</li> </ul>

<p>4. What are some of the perceived barriers to successful completion of retraining as influenced by institutional/organizational characteristics?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Heavy workloads.</li> <li>-- Instructional staff not willing or don't have time to provide extra help.</li> <li>-- The pace of the programs seems to be too fast.</li> </ul>
<p>5. What are some of the perceived barriers to successful completion of retraining as influenced by personal characteristics?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Some students take course for the wrong reasons. (e.g. NCARP funding).</li> </ul>
<p>6. To what extent do displaced workers "consult" with people other than professional counsellors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Students often seek help from other students.</li> <li>-- Some students form study groups.</li> </ul>
<p>7. To what extent do displaced workers "consult" with professional counsellors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- The counsellors at Cabot College obviously made a point of becoming a part of students' lives. So much so that the four participants considered the counsellors as friends. They did not consult with instructors or other staff as often.</li> </ul>
<p>8. What professional counselling do trainees find most useful?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Tutors.</li> <li>-- Support unit counsellors.</li> </ul>
<p>9. What are displaced worker's view of the present training system?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Generally positive.</li> <li>-- Some negative comments about the common first year, the fast pace of the programs, and the workload.</li> </ul>
<p>10. What suggestions do trainees have for improving the present training system?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Support groups made up of older students who are experiencing similar stress.</li> <li>-- Better counselling on behalf of the funding agencies in helping workers decide on an appropriate course of study.</li> <li>-- Maintain the counselling support unit for adult students.</li> <li>-- Programs should be made more flexible such that older students can stretch programs out over an extra semester.</li> </ul>

Table 5-1 cont'd

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This study examined the experiences of four displaced workers as they prepared for, and progressed through, a retraining program. The study's purpose was to identify the difficulties and barriers encountered by displaced workers during retraining, and to offer a better understanding of the college experience from the student's viewpoint.

The recent collapse of the fishing industry in Newfoundland has resulted in over 25,000 workers being permanently laid off. As a consequence, the provincial community colleges are faced with the major task of upgrading and retraining several thousand adult learners who must acquire new skills in order to re-enter the job market. Wojcicki and Kaufman (1990) suggested a need for vocational-technical professionals to identify and evaluate the educational problems associated with displaced workers. This study has attempted to address this need.

#### **Literature Review**

The literature search for this study focused on related qualitative studies pertaining to: (a) the displaced worker in terms of being an adult learner; and

(b) persistence-withdrawal behaviour of post-secondary students. Findings from both areas assisted the researcher in organizing the study and in the analysis of the data.

Despite indications that cognitive functioning appears to decline with age, research shows that older adults are capable of being trained for new concepts and skills, and often make positive contributions to college classroom activities. This fact tends to confirm the feasibility of retraining older displaced workers for new occupations. However, researchers suggest a need for counselling systems that help displaced workers select appropriate retraining programs, and assist them in coping with the social and academic challenges of college life. Wojcicki and Kaufman (1990) developed what they called the Holistic Counselling Model. The purpose of the model was to first identify the displaced worker's specific needs, then fill those needs by guiding the worker through the entire process. It was intended that the client play a key role in determining his or her vocational future, and that the counsellors would provide support services, technical advice, and guidance. It was intended that a support system be in place through to the completion of the retraining program.

Persistence-withdrawal behaviour research in post-secondary college

students also offered some understanding into the difficulties faced by adult learners. Although students withdraw from college for a variety of reasons, many are forced to withdraw because of the various difficulties they encounter. In the past, persistence-withdrawal research focused on the pre-enrolment characteristics of the student, and identified such characteristics as academic preparedness, individual abilities, goal commitment, personality, and social economic status (SES) as reliable predictors of who would drop out of programs before completion (Summerskill, 1962; Marks, 1967). In recent years research has taken the form of complex multivariate designs involving both pre-enrolment and post-enrolment factors (Munroe, 1981). Post-enrolment factors include social and academic integration within the institution, student's goals and commitments to the institution, and the effects of forces and responsibilities external to the institute. Generally, researchers agree that most students withdraw from college before graduation because of a combination of both pre-enrolment and post-enrolment factors.

Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure attempts to identify the wide range of problems which may cause college students to withdraw before graduation. The model suggests that, if appropriate pre-requisite requirements are met, post-enrolment experiences within the college community may have

the greatest influence on a student's decision to withdraw before graduation. It is Tinto's position that when students are accepted into a program, the institution must take responsibility for assisting weaker students to integrate into the college community through remedial intervention.

### **Methodology**

Because of the exploratory and emergent nature of the study, qualitative methods were chosen. The case-study method employing extensive interviews with the subjects was used. The interviews were structured, but conducted in a conversational manner. This created a relaxed atmosphere and allowed the participants to express themselves freely.

Each interview was audio-taped. The initial stage of the analysis involved producing from each audio tape a first-person narrative. Each narrative was then further analyzed in terms of the research questions. Finally, an alternate analysis of the narratives was conducted using Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure as a guideline.

### **Summary of Findings**

The experiences of displaced workers as they prepared for and

progressed through a retraining program were examined in terms of difficulties and barriers, counselling services, and the participant's views of the retraining system as a whole.

The participants indicated that following difficulties were encountered: (a) problems with selecting an appropriate program of studies; (b) academic weakness and heavy workload; and (c) responsibilities external to the training institute. These difficulties may have created perceived or real barriers to the successful completion of their individual programs.

The counselling services used by the four participants included: (a) direct counselling from the support unit of Cabot College; (b) counselling from the funding agencies; and (c) professional tutors and peer groups. The participants were unanimous in their praise for the support unit of Cabot College and suggested that without this service they would not have been able to complete the first few weeks of their programs.

Participants had some criticisms of the system, particularly those concerning the funding agencies. These included concerns over the lack of adequate career counselling services, and some minor problems with the training programs. Suggestions for improvement of the system focused on the counselling services of both the funding agencies and the training institute.

Participants felt strongly that the special support unit at the training institute be re-established.

Finally, an analysis of the data using Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure led to the conclusion that, with respect to the four displaced workers who participated in this study, the system failed to give adequate counselling before entrance into college, and was not equipped or prepared to address the participant's academic deficiencies after enrolment.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The main theme emerging from the findings is the importance of counselling. Displaced workers who decide to return to college for retraining require the services of counsellors both before and after enrolment. Two of the participants in this study decided to withdraw from their respective programs before graduation, mainly because their individual skills, abilities and interests were not matched to the programs they had chosen. This incongruence appears to have resulted directly from the lack of pre-enrolment counselling on the part of the sponsoring agency. The importance of counselling was also demonstrated by the positive impact the special support unit of Cabot College had on each of the participant's experiences. Without

the help of the support unit counsellors, the participants all felt they could not have coped with the stress of the first semester of studies.

Thus, based on the findings of this study and past theoretical research, the following recommendations are put forth for further review and research by the funding agencies and the training institutions:

**Recommendation 1:** Counselling services should be provided by the funding agency to ensure workers make informed and appropriate program selection. This may include career exploration, but also testing and evaluation to confirm that the student's abilities, skills, and interests match the requirements of the program that is chosen.

**Recommendation 2:** Training institutions should be more discriminating in their use of a Mature Student Admissions policy. Most colleges have in place a policy to waive educational

prerequisites for mature age students who can provide references attesting to the individual's potential ability to pursue a college program. Sometimes the institute may also assess the individual's potential to complete a chosen program through an examination or an interview. The Indication from this study is that some students are being admitted to programs from which they have little chance of graduating.

**Recommendation 3:**

Institutions should consider making programs flexible for older students, especially in the first year. This may include provisions to extend the total length of a program to allow students to upgrade their skills in foundation courses; or permit certain students to complete

programs at a slower pace by taking a reduced workload each semester.

**Recommendation 4:** All institutions involved with retraining displaced workers should establish special counselling services to assist individuals in their first year of studies. There are strong indications that older students benefit greatly from regularly scheduled counselling sessions which monitor the client's progress and address concerns or difficulties as they are encountered. Such a counselling service would provide insight and assistance in identifying appropriate supportive action.

**Recommendation 5:** Training institutions should stress the importance of the social integration of students, and promote the involvement of

all students in extra-curricular activities and events.

**Recommendation 6:** Institutions, through their faculty and counsellors, should promote the creation of peer groups amongst older students. This would promote both the academic and social integration of the student into the college communities.

Further research may include both qualitative and quantitative methods and involve follow-up studies to determine the success of retraining in terms of student job placements.

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**APPENDIX A: Letter of Permission**

Eric B. Lush  
12 Virginia Place  
St. John's, Nf  
A1A 3G6  
January 25, 1994

Dr. Edna Turpin-Downey  
President  
Cabot College of Applied Arts,  
Technology and Continuing Education

Dear Dr. Turpin-Downey,

In addition to being a faculty member at Cabot College, I am a part-time graduate student at Memorial University. As partial fulfilment for my Master of Education (Curriculum and Instruction) degree I have proposed to conduct a qualitative study into the difficulties faced by displaced workers during retraining. It is hoped the research findings will add to existing data concerning the adult learner and will provide information that will help Cabot College to better meet the needs of those individuals. Before starting my research, however, I am required to obtain Cabot College's consent to collect data from students.

It is proposed to use the case-study method to examine the experiences of four students who are being retrained for new occupations. Also supplementary data may be collected from conversations with instructors, counsellors, or other key individuals. All research will be conducted under the supervision of Memorial University and has been approved by the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Education.

Your co-operation would be greatly appreciated. If you would like more information concerning my research you may contact me at extension 507, or through the internal e-mail system.

Sincerely,

Eric B. Lush, CET, BVE

**APPENDIX B: Consent Form**

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I understand that the educational research in which I am participating is being conducted by Mr. Eric B. Lush, under the general supervision of Memorial University of Newfoundland, and the direct supervision of the following professors: Dr. George Hache', Dr Wilfred Martin and Dr. Denis Mulcahy. Also, the purpose of this research is to examine difficulties faced by the adult learner in order to assist educators in meeting the needs of the displaced worker during retraining. Furthermore, the following conditions and procedures have been outlined and discussed with me:

1. My participation will involve an individual interview with the researcher to discuss my personal experience relative to the research purpose. The interview may be audio-taped, and a transcript with all real names omitted or changed will be made available for my inspection. The tapes will be erased when the final written thesis has been submitted to Memorial University.
2. All information will be kept strictly confidential and no data will be used without my consent.
3. I will receive a copy of the final report of this research.
4. My participation is completely voluntary and I may withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time and/or refrain from answering whatever questions the researcher may ask.
5. The Research Project that I am participating in meets the ethical guidelines of Memorial University and the Faculty of Education.
6. I may inquire about the research at any time by contacting Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education at any convenient time.
7. The educational institute which I am attending has given it's consent for this research with regard to ethical approval of the study.

Thus I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the research study to examine the difficulties faced by displaced workers during retraining. I understand that additional information about me may be obtained from instructors, Cabot College, and other individuals. Furthermore, I understand that no individuals will be identified in any reports based on this research.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX C: Content Analysis of Data**

## Abe Johnson (Business Management)

Pre-Entry Attributes	-- Weak academic background for advanced business program. -- The 7 week orientation program did not adequately prepare him for Business Management. -- Did not receive adequate counselling from sponsoring agent, and thus made a poor career choice.
Goals and Commitments (T <sub>1</sub> )	-- Motivation up to this point was three more years of financial support. -- Did not enjoy course! -- Weak commitment, unsure of goals.
Institutional Experiences	-- Developed excellent rapport with counsellors. -- Experienced academic difficulties, and interaction with instructors was minimum. -- No time for extracurricular activities. -- Cabot Counsellors did not recognize academic deficiencies, and/or prescribe appropriate remediation. -- Difficulty managing time because of academic difficulties.
Personal\ Normative Integration	-- Failed to integrate.
Goals and Commitments (T <sub>2</sub> )	-- Goals and commitments were not reinforced because they were weak at entry. -- Outside forces were stated as a factor, but their affect was probably minimum.
Outcome	-- Withdrawal from program.

## Abe Johnson (Human Services Worker)

Pre-Entry Attributes	-- Adequate academic background for Human Services Program. -- Experience of attempting the business course may have helped. -- More appropriate career choice.
Goals and Commitments (T <sub>1</sub> )	-- Strong. Subject admitted that financial security for the duration of the course was no longer a source of motivation. Instead, providing for his family for the next 20 years and finding rewarding and enjoyable work was a main goal. -- Enjoyed course and looked forward to practising his new skills.
Institutional Experiences	-- Positive. Although he maintained a good rapport with the counsellors, after the first few weeks he rarely felt in need of their services. He maintained a good relationship with his instructors and classmates.
Personal\ Normative Integration	-- yes.
Goals and Commitments (T <sub>2</sub> )	-- Reinforced somewhat by the positive institutional experiences and the prospect of working at a correctional institute. -- Outside influences not a significant negative factor. -- Family very supportive, and finances under control.
Outcome	-- Graduate June, 1994.

## Barry Moore (Electronics Engineering Technology)

Pre-Entry Attributes	-- Weak academic background. -- Orientation course convinced him that he needed upgrading, despite being accepted into the program. -- Had taken introductory electronics courses in the past and was aware of what was involved.
Goals and Commitments (T <sub>1</sub> )	-- Strong. -- Knew of people who had succeeded in the electronics field, and was confident he would enjoy work.
Institutional Experiences	-- Transition to college life difficult with heavy workload. -- Through the help of counsellors, he arranged for technical upgrading before emerging himself into the electronics courses. -- Developed an excellent rapport with counsellors, and this gave him encouragement. -- Succeeded with upgrading efforts. -- Time restraints prevented involvement in extracurricular activities. -- Age difference not a real factor (32)in social relation with other students.
Personal\ Normative Integration	-- He is now into the second year and feels he is settled into the program.
Goals and Commitments (T <sub>2</sub> )	-- Strong. -- Receives positive influences from outside (family, and finances under control).
Outcome	-- Will probably graduate in June 1995.

## Clyde Richards (Architectural Engineering Technology)

Pre-Entry Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Weak academic background.</li> <li>-- Attended the ABE program for upgrading, but admitted that this program did not adequately prepare him for post-secondary programs.</li> <li>-- Worked previously as a supervisor and instructor.</li> <li>-- Was above average in skills and abilities pertaining to a fish plant worker.</li> <li>-- He was rarely in a subordinate role during his working career.</li> <li>-- Did not make a good career choice. He said he chose because he enjoyed drawing, but discovered that the program dealt mostly with computers.</li> <li>-- Orientation program was of little help, particularly the career exploration portion.</li> </ul>
Goals and Commitments (T <sub>1</sub> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Weak.</li> <li>-- He stated that the financial assistance of the sponsoring agent was his main motivation.</li> </ul>
Institutional Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Developed an excellent rapport with counsellors.</li> <li>-- Counsellors provided encouragement, and offered assistance even to the point of meeting with instructors on his behalf.</li> <li>-- Counsellors did not recognize and/or prescribe remediation for academic weakness.</li> <li>-- He felt that the workload was overwhelming, and had no time for anything else.</li> <li>-- Interaction with instructors was minimum.</li> <li>-- Formed a study group with peers, but to solve babysitting problem at home. Later, felt that this did not help academically.</li> <li>-- No time for extracurricular activities.</li> </ul>
Personal/ Normative Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- No.</li> </ul>
Goals and Commitments (T <sub>2</sub> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Were weak at the beginning; they didn't improve.</li> <li>-- Outside forces may have contributed negatively, in that he encountered family problems (e.g. babysitting, wife's work schedule, etc).</li> <li>-- Financial assistance from NCARP was proving to be inadequate.</li> </ul>
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Withdrawal from course after three semesters.</li> </ul>

## Donna Viney (Business Management)

Pre-Entry Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Weak to adequate academic background.</li> <li>-- Had taken related courses previously.</li> <li>-- Previous job was related to business.</li> </ul>
Goals and Commitments (T <sub>1</sub> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- High.</li> <li>-- Had contemplated and prepared for college before losing job.</li> <li>-- Knew what she wanted and was willing to pursue it relentlessly.</li> </ul>
Institutional Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Had difficulty socializing with peers.</li> <li>-- Contact with instructors was minimum.</li> <li>-- Developed excellent rapport with counsellors.</li> <li>-- Workload in first semester was "unreal". Little time for anything else.</li> <li>-- Credited counsellors with getting her through first couple of semesters.</li> </ul>
Personal Normative Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Yes, but only after several semesters.</li> </ul>
Goals and Commitments (T <sub>2</sub> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Reinforced and strengthened by college experience.</li> </ul>
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Graduate in June, 1994.</li> </ul>







