An entry program for adults returning to college.

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AN ENTRY PROGRAM FOR ADULTS RETURNING TO COLLEGE

A Dissertation Presented
By
ANN CREMIN BYRNE

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

An Entry Program for Adults Returning to College
February 1980

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Adults whose schooling has been interrupted are returning to college in increasing numbers. Several studies indicate these adults, largely part-time students, have a hard time learning the ropes--acquiring the skills, behaviors and values necessary to successfully continue formal education. This study was designed to assess the effectiveness, as determined by student perceptions, of a program planned to help adults make the transition to the role of students.

The theory behind this re-entry program is that of adult socialization, which posits that learning one's way in a new institution is most easily accomplished when the following circumstances are present. 1) Recruits are carefully screened for maximum suitability; 2) institutional goals are clear and supported by all members including the recruits; 3) the formal and informal institutional structures also support the goals; 4) recruits enter and go through the institutional experience in a group; 5) recruits are separated from external forces and values; 6) the role to be attained is socially valued; 7) adequate role instruction, with opportunity for practice and feedback, is given to the recruits.
These guidelines are seldom met. Adult students are largely self-selected. They enter and go through colleges individually without easy access to a peer group since they are part-timers. The goals of institutions of higher education are not necessarily clear nor are the goals of a particular institution supported by all members or by the formal and informal structures of the institutions. Part-time adult returnees cannot be isolated from other pressures and values. Approval of the role of older student is not always given by friends and family who may feel deserted. Finally, role instruction is not typically given. Indeed most returning adult students are left to sink or swim.

To attempt relief of this situation, URI Extension offers an entry course called the Pro Seminar. This four-credit, twice weekly course provides a peer group for the entrants. Group solidarity is encouraged by faculty hired by the Dean of Extension. Each teacher designs his or her own course. However, in all courses, practice in college reading, writing, research, and oral presentation is given. Also, students must take the General College Level Examination Program to gain whatever credit is possible. Each student has a counseling session with the instructor at the end of the course.

The purpose of the evaluation was to discover if the Pro Seminar enhanced the returning adult's self-confidence as a learner, thus easing the entry to the college experience. The major tool used was a questionnaire which included both open-ended and Likert-type questions. The questionnaire was administered to all 40 students.
present at the final class meeting of each of the three sections of the Pro Seminar. For supplemental data, 15 entrants were interviewed by the researcher at the beginning of the course, and eleven students were interviewed after the course was completed.

The questionnaire results indicate that the Pro Seminar was perceived as a very valuable experience for at least 72% of the sample and as at least 'somewhat helpful' by another 15%. Questioned on course effectiveness on ten skills deemed important to success in college, 29 subjects responded that the course contributed a lot, 6 that it contributed a little, and 5 that it had no effect, on self-confidence. Three t-tests for significance of these ratings indicated that the impact of the Pro Seminar was felt directly through increased confidence in these ten specific skills. Responses to all questionnaire items showed a high degree of internal consistency and inter-item agreement, as did the interview responses. The conclusion drawn from this assessment was that the Pro Seminar format was successful in increasing the confidence of these returning adult students.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The U. S. Bureau of the Census released a report in March 1979 that older students have "increased the college population since 1970 more than has the increased number of traditional age students." The study reports that in 1977 about 36 percent of college students were 25 or older. Only 28 percent were that age in 1972. This five year span showed a 9 percent increase in the numbers of older students in higher education. In addition to the increase in numbers, another factor is noteworthy: the increase in part-time enrollees. About two-thirds of the older students in 1977 attended college part-time.

The Census report confirms a new phenomenon known to those in higher education: the increased presence of part-time matriculants who are beyond the usual age of college students. Until recently, little attention has been paid to what is clearly a growing group of a different kind of college student. They differ from the traditional college student in that their schooling has been interrupted, while they have acquired family and job responsibilities which are permanent and cannot be easily laid aside. It is customarily those significant responsibilities which necessitate the part-time-student status of so many older students reported by the Census Bureau.
Attempting the role of student in a part-time mode and after an interruption in the use of academic skills, the adult college entrant is reported to have a hard time learning the ropes (Houle 1974; Rosenmeier 1973). Difficulty with the adjustment process is experienced in the practical realm (finding time to study), in the realm of skills (discovering how to write a paper), and in the realm of morale ("Who am I to think I can do this?"). In general, the process of adjustment to a new institution or role is referred to by sociologists as "adult socialization" (Brim and Wheeler 1966). For these older students, the process of adult socialization--learning the behaviors, skills, and values required in a new role--has been anxiety-provoking and largely a matter of sink or swim.

What is needed is carefully designed programs to help returning adult students successfully make the transition to college work. This study describes such a program under two headings: first, the design and implementation of a systematic attempt to ease the re-entry of the adult who is returning after an interruption to formal education; second, an evaluation of the effectiveness of that treatment attempt in terms of increased entrant self-confidence. The treatment is an entry course called the Pro Seminar.

In this chapter reports of adult student difficulties in adapting to college are described for the purpose of clarifying the needs of this group, and the literature on the optimal conditions for adult socialization is reviewed in the light of the situation of the older college entrant. In Chapter II, bearing this delineation of the problem area in mind, the Pro Seminar, a particular solution offered at the University of Rhode Island, will be described. The methodology for the assessment procedure is
contained in Chapter III; the results of the assessment, designed to locate the perceived consequences of the Pro Seminar as well as to suggest improvements in the course, occupies Chapter IV, and, finally, the implications of the results of this assessment and suggestions for further research will be discussed in Chapter V.

Reports on the condition of older college entrants

In a study of successful continuing learners, Houle (1964) reported an unexpected finding, unexpected in that it was not specifically called for by his questions: many individuals recognized that they had "had to go through a marked period of adjustment before they could settle down to study" (229).

When asked the most important obstacles to learning they had encountered in this adjustment process, Houle's subjects cited the following problems:

... lack of time to study; can't get my time organized properly; too many distractions at home; fatigue and exhaustion; no adequate place to study; inadequate library facilities; special demands or problems of job; unhappy home life; lack of power to concentrate; difficult to direct my line of thought during initial period of study; having trouble retaining subject matter; have feeling my study habits are inadequate; have difficulty acquiring study habits; tendency to procrastinate; disturbed about examinations; takes too long to learn something; have difficulty with broad abstractions; inadequate background; feelings of apprehension and inadequacy; scorn, laughter and pressure from associates; having difficulty expressing myself (230).

Further, he said, "nowhere in any of the answers was there an indication that they had been aided by anyone else... they felt that they would have to discover the answer for themselves" (232). Houle's subjects were heavily white-collar. Of his 470 respondents, 49% classified them-
selves as professional or technical workers. Men accounted for 58% of the total. The majority were fairly new students; 45% had started their studies in the preceding year. The entire group was "among the more successful students in the [six] institutions concerned. They were still in active attendance and they had something to report" (231). What they reported was that the problems of personal adjustment to the learning process were a major obstacle to learning. Houle concluded from his research that "many adults do not know how to learn" (227).

From a study of a quite different population--low income inner-city women entering colleges in the Boston area--Rosenmeier (1973) summarized her findings about these women's experience of the entrance process as follows:

That first semester, that first year, usually proved a hard one: . . . the older student looks to find everything in the classroom itself. All her eggs are in one basket. If the classroom is overcrowded, if the language of the instructor is unfamiliar, if the opportunities for real questions are limited, if the instructor is unaccessible, she will find it hard to make of this "opportunity" anything like an opportunity. . . . failure was more often not failure at all but a decision to quit--not because a negative decision was made on their work. Students have given in, rather, to a personal sense of failure, a sense that they do not belong, that they will never learn how to say academically meaningful things, that in the college context at least they are somehow non-persons. . . . For many, that first semester at college in the Boston area has been a brief trip in on the way out. The first semester has worked like a revolving door (9).

The statement that those for whom the first semester had been a revolving door had "given in to a personal sense of failure, a sense that they do not belong" suggests that they had lost confidence; the totality of their entrance experience had had, in sociologists' terms, a negative socialization effect. Insecurity had been deepened not by poor grades,
but by the indifference of the institutions to their needs.

Profiling her subjects, Rosenmeier says:

... members felt that when they entered college they "knew" a great deal, but that what they knew didn't compute as "knowledge". They have lived and learned a great deal but that isn't what was meant by "learning". They have deeply held ideas about things but these ideas are not somehow comparable to the specialists' ideas about the same kinds of things. They were eager to know more but the forms that knowledge takes often baffled them (1).

In other words, knowledge and learning are differently defined, structured and verbalized in the academic world. Rosenmeier's conclusions can be added to Houle's to read: Many adults do not know how to learn, in the ways one learns in colleges. 

Brufee (1978) in a discussion of the instructional changes produced at CUNY by the open admissions policy of the late 60's gives a description analogous to the situation of the entering adult student. 

Some of us [faculty] decided to try to find out what it might be like for these new students to enter the alien ground of a college classroom. Several of us signed up for courses outside our specializations. One whose discipline is English, for example, took a graduate course in social group work, and another took elementary Chinese. In doing so, we, the teachers, became what amounted to remedial students in these alien fields. We felt again the anxiety, the embarrassment, and sometimes the dumb incapacity that, we began to realize, our students must feel. We felt the fear of being exposed by making mistakes, the terror in taking an exam, the chagrin of being graded (3).

One further study (Ekstrom 1972) utilizes a more general level of analysis of the situation of the adult college entrant. Ekstrom cites three categories, derived from a review of the literature, of barriers to post-secondary education for adult women. She classifies these barriers as a) situational, b) institutional, and c) dispositional. Situational barriers were such factors as excessive responsibilities, shortage of
money, family attitudes, or the sheer distance from a college; institutional barriers included a prohibition of part-time study or the absence of financial aid for older entrants; both types are seen as external to the adult. On the other hand the dispositional barriers—attitudes, motivation and personality—are viewed as internal, even though they may be partially the result of social forces. The danger in using this categorization is the possible result of "blaming the victim" by creating an image of passivity, timidity and conformism—an image, in other words, of permanent inadequacy rather than of people in a difficult situation with solvable problems. These categories of Ekstrom's may indeed (and certainly unintentionally) serve to camouflage the possibility that so-called dispositional barriers are being reinforced by institutional structures. Such a conclusion, in its turn, obscures the possibility that dispositional barriers might be ameliorated by institutional action. An example of such institutional amelioration is seen when the belief that mathematics is an unlearnable language is altered by experiencing the institutional offering of an effective clinic on math anxiety. (Tobias, 1977).

In Rosenmeier's description of older, low income, urban women entering college, the women who saw themselves as inadequate did not see the institutions and teachers as failing them; they saw themselves as deficient. When large classes did not permit questions, when questions were answered slightly, when the vocabulary of a course was strange but its understanding taken for granted, these situations produced by the institution were perceived as personal failures, although an outsider might well count them as institutional barriers.
And similarly with Houle's subjects who reported their considerable adjustment problems and "did not report that they had received help with these problems from anyone." (232) These men and women indicate that their stressful situation resulted from their own deficiencies; they blamed themselves. They believed this, perhaps, because their colleges and universities took no responsibility for training them in the skills they would need. Once again it seems apparent that institutional inattention raised an institutional barrier to the continuation of learning. That inattention, in its turn, may stem from an older, though still prevailing, attitude best summed up as "If you can't cut it, you don't belong here." Such an attitude may be keeping some faculty and institutions from taking the steps needed to help more people "cut it".

From these studies we can conclude that adult learners have a difficult adjustment to make, that help by the institution could make the transition easier and that both emotions and skills are involved and need attention. That the institutions attended by older part-time students should be the principal source of help is clear because socialization into a particular institution is best handled by that institution. More widespread recognition of these conclusions is needed among educators so that more effective action may be taken.

If the new environment of the returning older student is a stressful one, it becomes useful to ask what that environment consists of--what is the structure in which they have that experience? It is a question that can be answered with some accuracy in general terms because the majority of American colleges function in similar fashions.
To earn a bachelor's degree, students must complete the equivalent of four fill-time years of study, in the neighborhood of 120 to 130 semester hours of credit. These courses are to be chosen to fit into the college's requirements, and these requirements are of three kinds: courses for general education purposes; courses in a 'major' of the student's choice; and electives. For satisfactory completion, these courses generally require all or some of the following learned skills. They may require the capacity to write clearly and in an organized and objective fashion. They frequently require the capacity to successfully hunt for materials in a library. They may require the capacity to prepare for examinations, both of the objective and of the essay type, and the capacity to perform adequately on these examinations. Many courses also require the capacity to 'perform' in class, that is, to enter into the group discussion or to make an oral presentation.

The description above covers, in general, the bundle of skills that the student needs in order to survive, no matter what the student's age. It may be assumed that the college experience is not feasible or at the least is quite uncomfortable for those who lack these particular skills, or lack the self-confidence to persist until these skills can be acquired. Anxiety is, after all, a realistic response to entrance upon an unknown environment, since we cannot know at the beginning if we have what it will take to cope successfully with the new place. As adult college entrants begin to cope with their new place, they enter upon the process of adult socialization.
Adult Socialization: the concept

The acquiring by an adult of the skills, behaviors and values necessary to survive in a new role or environment is called "adult socialization" (Brim and Wheeler 1966). Geer (1972) has referred to the process as "learning the ropes" and, in conversation, as "situational adjustment". Becker (1969) called it "seasoning" (245). Socialization after childhood, or adult socialization, has occasionally been referred to simply as socialization, permitting the context of the particular work to indicate what kind of socialization is under discussion. This is the case for example in Bragg's The Socialization Process in Higher Education (1976).

But the term socialization as used initially by Mead (1964) and the researchers who followed him, described the total development of the infant into a social being. This usage encompasses the acquisition of speech, of ways of relating to others and of ways of responding to all aspects of experience. Furthermore, the socialization of infants is viewed as shaping them in ways they may carry with them for life. All socialization at whatever age is a process, and an interactive process, and is consequently tremendously complex (Goffman, 1959).

Adult socialization, however, is used to describe a phenomenon which can be partial and temporary (Brim 1966; Wheeler 1966). An example might be the complex and interactive process of learning how to write a dissertation, learning a set of skills, behaviors and values which may neither effect the total personality nor ever, in some cases, be used again: though the process is lengthy, the 'situational adjustment' may be partial and temporary.
In this paper, for the sake of precision, the problem and the process of the adult learning to be a student is called 'adult socialization'. The full phrase is more precise not only because the people who undergo the problems described earlier in this chapter are typically over 19 years of age, but also because the change they experience is added on; it is not total. Adult socialization is a complex and interactive process like the major process of socialization of which it may be regarded as a subset. But adult socialization may result in either learning a role (the role of student for example) or in the decision not to learn (to drop out) depending upon the person and the circumstance. The only way to drop out of the major human process of socialization itself, however, is to die.

The optimal conditions for adult socialization

The circumstances which enhance strong positive socialization of adults into a new role or environment have been listed by Brim (1966), Wheeler (1966) and Cogswell (1968). Brim and Wheeler's work contains all but one of Cogswell's criteria, and that one is the need for valuing the role within and without the institution. These optimal conditions identified by the three researchers will be described in the following pages and contrasted with what actually pertains in the situation of the adult college entrant.

Screening. As a first step to ensure positive socialization, an institution may screen applicants for suitability, thus increasing the chances that each person admitted will have skills needed to succeed. Admission to medical schools, law schools, and seminaries illustrates this process. Some businesses and industries use psychological and
achievement testing for the same purpose. Educators of adults tend to agree in practice that "ancient" high school records cannot serve as reliable indicators of capacity or motivation, and also that entrance examinations may screen out capable adults who are too nervous or simply too unfamiliar with testing. Some colleges use performance-based admission—letting an adult take several courses to demonstrate capacity for college work and then formally admitting him or her to degree candidacy. In any case, many of the post-secondary institutions attracting adults permit them to register for courses without any screening other than proof of high school graduation or an equivalency certificate. Though this allows more adults to enter school, it allows students with missing skills and experience to find themselves in what can be a difficult situation in school.

Value agreement. A second element of an optimal situation for adult socialization exists when the goals of the institution are clear and are supported by all members of all subsystems within the institution, including the recruits. One example of this optimal situation might be a volunteer army. If protecting one's country, or conquering an empire, is the clear goal of the institution and is supported by all members, the recruits who share this goal will be given clear and uniform encouragement to learn what they must know in order to assist in achieving that goal. There is, however, a striking contrast between the condition of an army with singleness of purpose and the more mixed situation of higher education characterized by multi-purposes. There have been and are some colleges—St. John's of Annapolis for instance—with clear and fairly detailed agreement on institutional goals. This agreement produces an
image of the institution, visible both without and within. Recruits are attracted to the institution because they know and support the image. Such an optimal situation, note well, is merely optimal; it does not guarantee that all recruits will fit in and learn competence, but only that many distractions to the adult socialization process are removed.

While we do have institutions of higher education with a clear goal, Cohen and March (1974) describe most American colleges and universities as "organized anarchies." In their typology, an organized anarchy exhibits these characteristics:

1) Problematic goals--The organization appears to operate on a variety of inconsistent and ill-defined preferences. . . . It discovers preferences through action more often than it acts on the basis of preference.

2) Unclear technology--. . . [the organization] operates on the basis of a simple set of trial-and-error procedures. . .

3) Fluid participation--the participants in the organization vary among themselves in the amount of time and effort they devote to the organization. . . standard theories of power and choice seem to be inadequate (3).

An organization with problematic goals does not meet the optimal socialization criterion stated above, and the consequence for the recruits--in this case recruits are new students of whatever age--is that they encounter a maze of inconsistent expectations. There are no clear organizational goals to which all subscribe. The new student who expects clear direction from a college or university with problematic goals and questionable allegiance to them, is out of luck.

Structural and goal consistency. Another element of the optimal socialization situation exists when the formal and informal structures of the institution consistently support the stated institutional goals. (Clearly, a lack of overarching powerful goals makes this element difficult
of achievement.) The stated goal of a 'community of scholars' may be undercut by a rewards system that impels students to harsh competitiveness, or by office hour scheduling that makes faculty inaccessible to evening students. Another example of structures contravening institutional goals occurs, as Becker (1972) has pointed out, as a result of the common role-interaction prescription which places all students in a fully subordinate position with the consent of all parties. The consequence is:

Instructors reward performance with grades, according to the terms of a varying explicitly contract which however is established unilaterally... This relation works against the stated faculty goal of the students learning intellectual freedom and self direction and does so as a matter of structural logic rather than as a matter of human frailty (Becker et al., 1968: 90).

All students, regardless of age, live under that unequal contract Becker speaks of. But for the older student the socialization situation is made even more stressful. Neugarten (1963) states that the central goal of the mature is control, control of one's life, decisions, resources and relationships. Entering the classroom, the mature student must relinquish much of that control to people and forces yet unknown. This is a situation which produces stress and enhances anxiety.

The three conditions for optimal adult socialization described above might, in any college, be met in a better or worse manner for all the students enrolled, whether they were of the traditional age or were older entrants. The adult entrant may not be at a significant disadvantage because of the quality of these conditions.

The remaining four conditions however would seem to work more powerfully upon the adult entrant. These are listed below with a clarification of the differences which almost inevitably exist for the adult.
Group entrance. The structure of the institution should ensure recruits or entrants entering in groups and proceeding through the institutional experience together. This is linked with a need for a high interaction rate among all members of the institution. College freshmen of the more usual age--18 or 19 years old--enter as a class and proceed together through the college at much the same pace. Although this is considered essential for efficient socialization, it also permits the recruits some collective control of what happens to them (Becker et al., 1961). The social composition of their experience is collective and serial (Wheeler 1962) and this ensures that information about procedures and values, and examples of appropriate behaviors, are freely available. Not all full time college students enjoy a fully efficient socialization experience; the larger the college and its freshman class, the farther the communications system must be stretched and, as in stretching a sheet of rubber too far, holes will develop.

But for the adult entrant a major problem results from the structural fact that the socialization that does take place will occur in what Wheeler calls "individual-disjunctive" form (1966). That is to say the new setting will be faced alone, not in the company of others; in addition, the adult recruit is not likely to be consistently in touch with others who have already been through the process and who can teach him or her about the setting (Becker 1964; Cogswell 1966, 1968a).

Indeed, the adult attempting college and constrained to a very part-time student life may perceive that life as if it were a solo flight without a trainer. There is no accessible body of similar newcomers who could help one to deal with the new situation; there is no visible way to
identify and contact the group who have been around a while who might teach one about the setting. The time and structure constraints, therefore cut down on the rate of interaction among adult students and also between these students and the institution's staff. The adult students' chances for developing cohesiveness and a subculture of their own are not good. A subculture is based upon a consciousness of common experience (Becker, et al. 1961); these adult students are scattered and do not quickly arrive at a common experience within the college. They are left to fend for themselves in isolation.

**Separation.** Ideally, the setting would be separated from other influences. Ideally, the entrant would be in the setting all the time, as is the traditional-age student who lives in a dormitory. Other pressures or responsibilities would seldom intrude; nor would other forces perhaps antagonistic to the values of the institution act upon the entrant. Such an ideal to be sure is seldom even approximated in the quotidian world.

The adult college entrant is in a situation particularly remote from this ideal. To be a part-time student is to be within the setting only for a few hours once or twice a week. Job and family responsibilities make the role of student a poor third, liable to lose out under any increase in pressure from the more important commitments. The student role is customarily less important to the adult and the institution has less time in which to have an effect upon the student. The student is less likely to find out about formal procedures and regulations or to find out informal standards or codes. Operating on rules or norms from family or job may not be appropriate or helpful.
Social approval. The role to be acquired would be valued within the institution and also by the external society (Cogswell 1968). Becoming a lawyer or a doctor or a certified public accountant are examples of processes in which the role acquired is valued both inside and outside the training institution. For the adult entering college, it has been pointed out, the external society cannot be temporarily excluded. One message from the society may be that the role of adult student is not viewed as a difficult, necessary and worthwhile one: family and friends may disapprove, feel threatened or rejected, or merely fail to understand the pressure of the student responsibilities. In any case, the role has an ambivalent tone. The adult feels out of place, deviant from a societal norm: "College is for the young; I am older; I don't belong here, I have other commitments." Not only a neophyte, but also an atypical neophyte, the returning adult student must deal with this pressure.

Role instruction. In an optimal situation, whatever skills are necessary for a role are taught to newcomers. An effective formal or informal process should exist for transmitting values and for explaining unfamiliar aspects of the institution as well as for training in the specific skills needed. This is not the case for adult college entrants. The absence of planned socialization procedures means those skills and values are not taught. Perhaps it is expected that the adult students will somehow pick them up, or ought already to know them. But if no one has ever told you the shape a 'paper' should have, let alone that different professors prefer different shapes, you may struggle a long time before finding out. Learning to read for content and method takes guided practice; learning to write papers takes guided practice. As in all
learning of skills, support, guidance, regular practice, feedback and 'doing it over' are essential (McKeachie 1969; Miller 1964). Nor are the skills alone sufficient. Information is needed as well. Colleges have special languages: "Do you want a catalog or a time schedule? Do you wish to register or matriculate? What is your major? We don't have a major in that, just courses. Are you looking for credit or non-credit?" "Course" and "class" are sometimes interchangeable terms and sometimes not. Degree requirements are usually in a code to which the older entrant has no key: "45 hours of Divisions A, B, C and optionally D are required, and of course 15 hours of 300-level or higher." Semester hour or quarter hour, GPA, QPA, CUM, SAT, CLEP--these are all truly foreign idioms outside of the halls of academe, although the insiders believe that their language is very nearly self-explanatory.

The insiders are of course the putative agents of adult socialization but, not recognizing that they have a special vocabulary, special skills, and special procedures, all of which the newcomers need to know, they do not normally come to the further recognition that they ought to routinely teach these matters. Therefore, neither formal nor informal training mechanisms exist for the adult college entrant.

In summary, then, adults entering colleges are not entering a situation in which the optimal conditions for adult socialization exist. These adults are self-selected and part time students; they enter and go through the college experience individually without easy access to a peer group; the values of the institution they attend may be unclear or inconsistent; no formal training mechanism is available to them. In a sink or swim situation such as this, those who adapt successfully may have
been already trained, or they may have received help through chance circumstance, or they may have had a special self-confidence to persist in spite of it all. The complaints of the adult students reported by Houle and Rosenmeier are explained by the poor adult socialization situation they are in.

Much of this situation cannot be easily changed: most adults can only attend college part time; to separate adults from the other pressures of their lives is not feasible; to change all the procedures and policies of a college is a long-range project, dubious of success. But some change is possible; adult college entrants can be clustered in groups, and they can be given intelligent training in the skills and particular procedures of the academic world.

Clearly colleges which admit adults to part time study are providing a service to those adults. To help ensure that adults will gain the maximum benefit from this service, attention must be paid to the need for a structured, deliberate, process for adult socialization that will ease the entry process.

One such planned aid to adaptation is the Pro Seminar, an entry course offered for adults at the University of Rhode Island, a course which attempts to respond to the needs of adult socialization.

This chapter has provided background by describing the problems of the adult college entrant and the light shed on those problems by the concept of adult socialization. The remainder of this study will describe the development and format of the Pro Seminar and report on an assessment of this experimental solution of the problem of the adult college entrant.
CHAPTER II

THE PRO SEMINAR

The adult who starts upon college work is entering an unfamiliar institution under circumstances which do not ease the process of adult socialization, the process of 'learning the ropes'. Neither formal nor informal systems exist in that institution to help the adult entrant acquire the skills, behaviors and values needed to survive as a student.

Some of these circumstances cannot easily be changed: the part-time nature of study, the internal dissonances of the institution, the lack of consistency in goals, and means towards those goals, of a heterogeneous faculty. But a new structure may be added to the institution in order to meet as well as possible the needs of the adult college entrant. Such is the goal of the course called the Pro Seminar. In essence, the Pro Seminar is a 'training program' that 1) handles entrants in groups, 2) is of sufficient duration of time (15 weeks) to have an impact on those entrants, 3) provides practice in skills necessary for school, and 4) is taught by people who understand the situation of the entrants and have a contagious belief in the value of education. What follows is a description of the Pro Seminar as it presently exists--its origins, special features, students, and faculty.
The Pro Seminar was originally conceived and authorized by Dean George Dillavou at the College of Continuing Education, Roosevelt University of Chicago. Before it was first offered, the course was perceived as a skills-refresher course, on the assumption that entrants would profit from a brush-up course that included some speed-reading training, perhaps 'how to outline', and certainly a review and practice of guidelines on 'how to study'. However as soon as the faculty, recruited from several disciplines to teach sections of the Pro Seminar, and the first groups of students encountered each other in the classroom, the Pro Seminar began to evolve towards greater complexity. The Pro Seminar evolved through an accumulation of ideas and experiences, trials, successes, and failures, all shared among the dozen or so people who taught the course. As is often the case with growth and change, neither the stages in its evolution nor any final, closed, perception of the course we shaped, were recorded except in our minds and memories. The researcher, as a faculty member of the Pro Seminar from its inception at Roosevelt, brought to her employment at the University of Rhode Island a conception shaped and re-shaped by many teachers and students at Roosevelt.

The Pro Seminar originated as the entry course to Roosevelt University's only degree program for adults, the Bachelor of General Studies. At Rhode Island (URI), the course is also presently the entry course for another Bachelor of General Studies degree program; however
URI offers degrees through its Extension Division in thirteen areas, and the Pro Seminar is accepted for credit in any of those programs. It is recommended therefore to entrants whose education has been interrupted, and would serve its 'training program' function even if the General Studies degree program were to disappear.

The Idea of the Pro Seminar

The concept of the Pro Seminar includes five special features which distinguish it from other academic courses offered at Rhode Island.

First, the course has three explicit goals: to improve its students' academic skills in a context of substantive learning; to improve their self-confidence in the role of students through the acquisition of improved skills and familiarization with the institution they attend; to help an assortment of individuals entering the course to become a group of supportive colleagues by the end of the course.

Second, the subject matter of the course—the syllabus on which the entrants will begin to learn the academic skills—is chosen by the individual teacher, and therefore differs from section to section.

Third, the population of the course, the student body, consists almost entirely of adults entering college after a considerable absence from schooling.

Fourth, the course meets twice a week for the entire semester. Most other courses at URI's Extension meet once a week.

Fifth, all Pro Seminar students are expected to take the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) General Examinations during the semester in which they are taking the Pro Seminar. The University grants
up to 21 credits for this national testing program; the credits gained are
applied to the University's general education requirements.

The Format and Content of the Pro Seminar

The Pro Seminar is a four credit course, meeting for two hours
twice a week. It is offered both in day and evening hours and runs for
the full fifteen weeks of the semester.

Class size may range from seven to twenty students. Classes
which enroll less than seven students are cancelled, because our experience
suggests that the entrants need a larger group, a critical mass perhaps,
in order to feel comfortable and to produce a group that functions well
as a class. If a section were to be cancelled for under-enrollment, its
registrants would be urged to register in another section. Classes over
twenty are split into two sections, if this is possible.

For purposes of the University's General Education distribution
requirements, which divide all lower level courses into Humanities (A),
Natural Science (B), Social Science (C) and Communication (D), the Pro-
Seminar is classified as Communication, a Division D course. It is
graded, uniquely in the University, as a Pass/No credit course. The
student may fail to get credit for it, but cannot fail the course.

Uniform Elements of the Pro Seminar.

Although each instructor designs the syllabus of his or her
section, the following events take place in all sections of the Pro Seminar.

First experience. The instructor ensures on the first day of class
that the students begin to become acquainted with each other. Further,
the instructor explains the course goals, what the syllabus consists of, what the tone of the class will be. Information on where to get books or advising or financial aid or career planning is also shared. The instructor does some class work with the group on distributed materials and gives the first assignment. The class meets for the full time period.

**Testing.** In order to enable the entrants to gain whatever credit by examination is possible, two testing programs are utilized: the nationally administered College Level Examination Program, and the university's own Writing Test. To assist entrants in facing what is to them a terrible ordeal, we send a professional from the University's Office of Psychological Testing (a Rhode Island center for a number of national testing programs) to the class to talk with the entering students. He gives them experience with taking objective tests by administering the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and answering all and any questions the students may have. This representative from Psychological Testing then returns a week later, discusses with the students the formal errors they may have committed on the SAT, again responds fully to their queries, and handles the process of registering them for the CLEP examinations. These CLEP tests take a full day and are given about two weeks after the psychologist's visit to the classes. His work with the entrants occupies two class sessions. Through CLEP, these students may earn up to 21 credits towards the Bachelor's degree.

The University's Division of Writing administers a Writing Sample Test by which students may earn 3 credits for a course in English Composition. This test is administered to the students by the Pro Seminar instructor, and occupies a full class meeting. Since the CLEP exams and the
Writing Sample are meant to locate the adult's level of knowledge and competence at the time of entrance, their teachers offer reassurance, but do not attempt training for these tests.

Both the Writing Test and the CLEP examinations take place by the middle of the term so that the results will be back before the end of the term and may be utilized in advising the student on what courses to take the next term.

**Advising Sessions.** The last few class sessions are set aside for individual advising sessions between teacher and student. Each advising session runs between 30 and 60 minutes, and the number of class periods used for advising depends upon the number of students in the class. A teacher with a larger class may choose to schedule extra sessions for the advising meetings rather than cut down on the full group's class sessions.

**The Changeable Content of the Pro Seminar**

Although it is not possible to give a full picture of what goes on in a course, some of the materials used by faculty do give a sense of what the experience is like for the students. Therefore, the syllabi used by the faculty who were teaching the Pro Seminar during Fall 1978 are reproduced here. In addition, some handouts are reproduced as partial illustration of the teaching tone. Finally, interviews with these faculty are reproduced to illustrate the attitude and approach to teaching of these teachers. See Appendices A, B, and C. As these syllabi show, the adult college entrants are immediately placed in the role of students--book lists, instructions, and assignments in hand. These syllabi have
been quoted in full to demonstrate the way in which the instructor's chosen theme is worked in with skills-practice, and also to show how faculty from different disciplines have implemented the goals of the Pro Seminar while exposing entrants to a wide range of materials. As further indication of what actually happens in a Pro Seminar section, three assignments used in the Fall 1978 Pro Seminar are reproduced (Appendix B). The library assignment followed an evening in the Extension Library during which the Library Director explained many of the library resources. This assignment is clearly designed to assist novices in developing familiarity with a library; the other two assignments—the essay exam and the field work exercise—may seem to be quite standard (if exceptionally clear) exercises for any freshman class. But a careful reading of the exercises shows that in fact they are all designed to help the student get in touch with his or her present ideas and knowledge and also to help the student present the results of his or her thinking in correct academic forms.

So far, the examples given from the work of the Pro Seminar faculty have illustrated intellectual work and skill development. In addition to these aspects of the course, all Pro Seminar students are encouraged to contact each other—telephone numbers are exchanged—and class discussion is encouraged. Typically, each instructor places his or her home phone number at the top of the course syllabus as an indication that student calls are welcome. One teacher's approach to the task of developing a cooperating group from the assemblage of individuals is illustrated by a group exercise reproduced in Appendix B.
It may be said in summary that the contents of each Pro Seminar are intended to stimulate students' minds, to give skills training, to develop a sense of common experience and goals, and, not least, to give in a sheltered environment the experience of the real tasks of being a student in a college, and to provide enough structure to encourage success.

The Students in the Pro Seminar

How they find it. About one month before the beginning of each semester, the Sunday papers of Rhode Island carry a supplement listing all degrees and the 300-odd courses offered the next term through the Extension Division of the University. As people respond by mail or phone to this advertisement, they are urged to make an appointment with an advisor to discuss the programs and courses they are interested in. Not all applicants do this; Extension policy permits walk-in and mail registration; in consequence, some newcomers register for the course of their choice without prior consultation.

When a new student sees an advisor, the Pro Seminar is customarily recommended as a sensible way to start college. Adults who have however been successfully and recently taking courses are usually advised to continue with 'regular' courses. In discussing the Pro Seminar with a would-be entrant, the following potential misconceptions are addressed: the course is not a preparation for the CLEP, it is not a writing course, it is not a math refresher course. it is not simply a course in how to study.

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1For registration in URI courses, only high school graduation or a high school equivalency certificate is required; for matriculation into a degree program the University has a policy of admission by performance for the Extension students—12 hours of 'C' or better work are needed for matriculation.
Entrants are told that the course will focus on topics chosen by the instructor, that there will be reading, discussion and writing of papers, that the CLEP exams are to be taken as part of the course, and that the course is intended to familiarize students with the program, the university and with the skills needed for academic work.

In addition, entrants are told that if possible they should take only the Pro-Seminar during their first term. The rationale for this limitation is that they are going to use the Pro Seminar to adjust to the demands of college and should not try to handle too much in that first semester.

Who the Pro Seminar students are. Since the Pro Seminar has been offered for two semesters prior to Fall 1978, some data is available on the students of the first year. An evaluation report prepared for the state's Board of Regents, describing the student population in the program's first year, states that 236 women and 99 men took the course. This first group ranged in age from 22 (2) to 73 (1); the most frequent ages were 31, 35, and 36. Providence and the four largest Rhode Island cities provided 60% of the entrants; twelve students came from Massachusetts and Connecticut. Two hundred eight reported being employed or self-employed; 25 reported themselves as housewives, two as unemployed and 100 gave no employment information.

Of the first year's students, 263 were high school graduates, 49 had earned high school equivalency certificates and 22 had not yet completed the information requested by the application. One hundred seventy four had done previous college work, usually just after high school. Of these, the previous credit earned ranged from 3 credits

2President's Report to the R.I. Board of Regents, July 1978.
each transferred in by 22 students to 60 credits earned by one student. Most had between 18 and 24 credits. The average length of interruption of formal schooling was 10 years.

The preceding student data pertains to the year from Spring 1977 to Spring 1978 and is given here as background information. Demographic data on the Pro Seminar students for the semester during which this study was carried out, Fall 1978, will be found in Chapter IV.

**The Pro Seminar Faculty**

Fundamental to the flexibility of the Pro Seminar is its administration by the Division of Extension rather than by any one academic department of the University. One important consequence of this is that the Pro Seminar is taught by invitation. The Dean of Extension is free to employ both full time University faculty and/or part-time instructors from outside the University; a committee of URI faculty elected by the Faculty Senate approves the credentials of the Pro Seminar faculty. Another consequence is that no one discipline 'owns' the course. Pro Seminar faculty have been hired from the disciplines of English, Child Development, Anthropology, Public Administration, Sociology.

Faculty are recruited for the Pro Seminar in an informal manner. Interest in teaching adults and strong teaching reputations are the major criteria for these positions. Customarily each faculty person teaches only one Pro Seminar a term. A core group of four have taught it since its inception, and others have served as faculty from time to time as their own schedules permitted.
Since no one department owns the Pro Seminar and also since faculty at an Extension Division have little contact with each other, a need existed for communication among the Pro Seminar faculty. To answer this need and strengthen the course, the faculty meet three times each semester: before the class starts, at mid-term and once just before the end of the term.

The usual agendas for these meetings indicate the concerns and actions of the faculty. At the first meeting, the group shares syllabi and schedules with each other, information on forthcoming plays at Trinity Theatre that might tie in to class work (one class read and also saw *Death of a Salesman*) and discuss scheduling films that might be used by more than one class. They discuss techniques to help the students become acquainted with each other. This session also helps orient new faculty.

The faculty's mid-term meeting concerns itself with particular student problems—a blind or deaf student, special financial problems in paying for CLEP, and reports to each other on projects or assignments that have worked very well or gone awry.

The final faculty meeting centers on the upcoming advising sessions for the individual students. Special advising problems are shared with other faculty. Any new University regulations or new courses that may affect or interest their students are discussed. Finally the group continues to share their successes and failures and, not least, makes recommendations to the administration on matters relating to the welfare of their students. They have recommended for example that the
University's Writing Sample be administered later in the term so that the entrants may have acquired greater familiarity with the objective style preferred in academic writing.

These faculty meetings provide an arena for discussing the art of teaching. Strongly held beliefs are manifested. One of these is a considerable respect for their students coupled with a strong desire to enhance the students' respect for themselves. Another shared belief is a commitment to alert these entrants to the institutional realities they will face: the possibility of fragmented learning, the possibility of poor teaching; the need to know the procedures of the place--how to drop a course, how to handle an incomplete or a missed exam, where to go with a complaint. A third force is the goal of exciting their students about the act of learning. As one instructor stated in the faculty interviews, "I try to teach my students what I wish someone had taught me when I was starting college."

In order to complete this description of the Pro Seminar from the point of view of the faculty and administrators concerned with it, the researcher interviewed, with tape recorder, the faculty who taught the three Providence sections in Fall 1978. No summary communicates as well as the interview itself how the Pro Seminar faculty person perceives the course. These faculty interviews reproduced as Appendix C, demonstrate the differences and similarities from teacher to teacher of this course. As will be seen, there is a shared perception of the needs of the students, although the theme of each section differs.

The three faculty members who taught these sections were experienced teachers: two had taught the Pro Seminar during the three
preceding semesters and the third had taught English to adult students in other courses at the Extension. This third teacher left at the end of the second week of classes for a full time job elsewhere; his replacement had also taught English to adults at Extension, though he had not taught the Pro Seminar. Of the two with previous experience in the Pro Seminar, one, a woman, was an English teacher; the other, a man, was an anthropologist.

The faculty of the Pro-Seminar are as significant an ingredient of the course as are its structure and goals. As will be seen in Chapter IV, the students spoke of their teachers with enthusiasm. The faculty interviews demonstrate intelligent observation and reflection on the problems of the older person entering college. A memo from one faculty member to this researcher illustrates some of the teacherly perceptions which have developed as a result of teaching this particular population. Speaking of the need for redundancy in teaching, she says:

Some of the folkways-of-the-university kind of information is passed on in the first meeting with the class. However, it's like going to the doctor's office, the flood of information coupled with anxiety seems to result in the student's "forgetting" or hearing only what they want to hear, etc. But most questions that are important keep coming up again during the semester.

But most important, she adds, these students need to be made aware that:

during the Pro Seminar they have practiced these [academic] skills. I invite guest speakers to discuss with the students [and] we scheduled our night at Trinity Theatre to take advantage of the panel discussion that followed. Some of our students were among the first to ask questions that were to the point. In fact, one of my most timid gave a summing up that was used in a positive way to end the discussion because she had gone right to the essence of what Miller's
play is about... she was overwhelmed and I was pleased as punch... the experience of speaking outside the classroom environment proved to be confidence building, much as it was with a guest speaker. And finally the research paper offers living proof that they have indeed learned to do something tangible... there it is--typed, footnoted, and in a plastic cover--the first college paper. The oral report, dreaded as an assignment on the syllabus, reinforces the students' need to know they have learned (or revived) practical skills.

Thus far, the Pro Seminar has been described as it exists in the eyes of its administrators and faculty. The following chapters focus upon the Pro Seminar as it is seen by a group of its students, through their responses to a questionnaire designed to assess the students' perceptions of the usefulness of this entry course. Chapter III describes the methodology used, and Chapter IV is a statement of the questionnaire's results; the concluding chapter discusses those results and some implications for both the Pro Seminar and for further research.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The last chapter described the Pro Seminar, a course designed to encourage positive socialization for adults entering college. Giving such adults a semester-long experience with a peer group, and training in academic skills with a supportive instructor, was intended to enhance the returning adult's self-confidence as a learner, thus easing the entry to the college experience. Did the Pro Seminar achieve these goals?

In order to assess the impact of the Pro Seminar on its adult students, answers to the following questions were needed: (1) How did these adults feel when they started the course? (2) How did they feel about college, and about themselves, when they completed it? (3) Did they perceive themselves as more confident of their skills, better oriented towards the college experience, as a result of this course? (4) Whatever the differences in self-confidence that they perceived at the end of the semester, did they attribute these to the Pro Seminar? (5) In their view, were there specific ways in which the Pro Seminar could be changed for the better?

In assessing the effectiveness of the Pro Seminar, that is, in soliciting answers to the questions above, two sources of data were used: a questionnaire administered once to each student at the last class meeting of the course; and interviews with selected students at the beginning and at the end of the course.
These formats were utilized in order to insure two somewhat independent sources of data. This was done to take advantage of certain desirable characteristics inherent in each of the two methods.

Interviews and questionnaires are both, of course, invaluable when the data needed by research concerns the experiences and feelings of subjects. As Gordon Allport said somewhere, "If we want to know how people feel. . . --why not ask them?"

In essence, questionnaires provide more rigorously comparable data and interviews provide more enriched data. The interview achieves its purpose through the flexibility which "helps to bring out the affective and value laden aspects of its subjects' responses. . . [these] responses are spontaneous rather than forced, are highly specific and concrete. . . self revealing and personal" (Selltiz 1959: 236). The interviewing situation, however is seldom uniform from interview to interview, if only because the interviewer is bound to vary somewhat from one interview to the next. Interviews, therefore may be less easily comparable with one another.

The questionnaire, with its "impersonal nature--its standardized wording, its standardized order of questions, its standardized instructions for recording responses--ensures some uniformity from one measurement situation to another" (Selltiz 1959: 239). Certainly a questionnaire (like an interview) has some disadvantages: it can be answered too casually or questions may be misunderstood. Further, the information gained is limited by the respondents' understanding of the questions and what they are willing to write down. With a questionnaire, there is no way to return for clarification or to pursue possibly significant leads. In the design of
this study, the limits of depth with a questionnaire have been accepted in exchange for the benefit of contact with a maximum number of the population experiencing the Pro Seminar; while depth--the human complexity behind the surface--has been sought by interviews with a sample of the Pro Seminar students.

While the use of separate pre- and post-measures on each subject for both the questionnaire and the interview would have been the procedure of choice for assessing change, such a design was not possible in this study. Entrants may walk in to register for the course at any time from a month before to a week after the course starts; this makes it difficult to identify and talk with entrants before the beginning of the course. Further, the faculty stated a strong preference that the opening sessions, already complicated by late registrations, should not be further disrupted by outside events or people.

Because the questionnaire was more structured, could be administered more easily and could reach more students, this approach constituted the primary data source used in this study. Pre- and post-interviews were used to supplement and validate this primary data source. Although the questionnaire was administered only once to each subject at the end of the course, the questions were carefully designed to assess approximately the same kind of changes as would have been measured in a repeated-measures design.

In brief, the design of the study incorporated the following steps. Fifteen students were selected to be interviewed at the beginning of the course. The thrust of this initial interview was to assess initial expectations, the level and nature of anxieties, and to provide direct
contact with students for the researcher. Next a questionnaire was administered to the 38 students who were present at the final meeting of the three sections of the course. A mailing to the absent students produced two more questionnaire responses. Finally, following the end of the course, a new sample of eleven students was interviewed, primarily to provide an independent approach to the same data that could be used to validate the primary source, the questionnaire, but also to supplement these data.

A detailed description of the two methods used in assessing the effectiveness of the Pro Seminar follows in sections on Subjects, Instruments and Procedure. In each section, the initial interview data, the questionnaire data, and the final interview will be discussed in that order.

Background. Three sections of the Pro Seminar are taught at the downtown URI Extension Building in Providence. In Fall 1978, one section met on Wednesdays and Fridays from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.; a second section met on Wednesdays and Fridays from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.; the third section met on Wednesdays and Fridays from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Thus the students met twice a week for two hours each session for a 15 week semester, a total of 60 hours in class. In the fall of 1978 when this study took place, 47 adults were registered for the three sections, 18 in the morning class; 15 in the early evening class; and 14 in the later evening class, according to the registrar's Final Roster. This represented a smaller total than usual and fewer subjects than were originally anticipated.
Subjects

There were 37 females and 10 males, whose ages ranked from 24 to 65. The mean age of the total group was 39 years. All 47 were part-time students; all but two were only taking the Pro Seminar, and these two each took one other course.

As the course description in Chapter II explains, the CLEP exams are required, by the University's regulations, to be taken by all Pro Seminar students; the students are also required to take a Writing Sample test designed by the English Department at URI. Pro Seminar students who have already earned credit for the general education requirements of the University could earn no further credit through CLEP and therefore do not need to take those examinations. In Fall 1978, 33 of the Pro Seminar students registered in Providence sections took the CLEP examinations. Their scores on these tests earned them from 0 to 21 credits. Twenty-one credits, the maximum number available, is credit for seven courses. As a group, these 33 gained a total of 309 credits, or credit for 103 courses. The average earned was 11 credits or three and two thirds courses per student. On the Writing Sample Test, the other opportunity to gain credit by examination, 12 of the 47 students who took the test earned credit for an English Composition course. See Table 1 for a description of the S's in all parts of the study.

Initial interviews. From this initial roster of 47 students, 15 were selected for the initial interviews. The process of selection was as follows: as adults registered for the course during the week preceding the start of classes, each was asked if he or she could give half an hour for an
interview, part of a study of the course. Those who accepted and arrived for an interview comprise this group. After the interviews it was noted that this group included 6 enrolled in the morning class, 7 enrolled in the early evening class and 2 enrolled in the later evening class.

**Questionnaires.** At the time of the final class meeting of the semester under study, 38 of the 47 students enrolled in the class were present, and 9, though enrolled, were absent. Thus 38 students were available to fill out the questionnaire. Questionnaires were mailed immediately to the absent students, of whom two returned responses. Thus, a total of 40 questionnaires constitutes the sample for this part of the study.

These 40 students were 35 female and 5 male. Their age range was from 24 to 64 years. Their previous full time schooling ranged from one year of high school to two years of college. Twenty-five were high school graduates with no further schooling. Five had gained the GED (high school equivalency certificate). Ten had earned some college credits after high school. Their last formal, full time, schooling had occurred over a range of 5 to 44 years before entering the Pro Seminar. A total of 7 of these students had been taking part-time college courses just prior to the Pro Seminar.

All were part-time students during the Fall 1978 semester, and two were taking one other course besides the Pro Seminar. All 40 of the questionnaire respondents had applied for matriculation as degree candidates.
Post-course, or final, interviews. A new sample of students was selected for the post-course interviews. The students on each of the three class rosters were telephoned until at least three from each class had agreed to come in for an interview, and had in fact arrived and given an interview. This process resulted in three students from the morning class, four from the early evening class and four from the later evening class, or a total of eleven interviews completed.

This group of final interviewees consisted of 8 females and 3 males. Their ages ranged from 29 to 60.

Generalized picture of subjects. As can be seen from the information given, a preponderance of the subjects in this study were females (78%). All were between the ages of 24 and 65, averaged about 12 years of previous schooling, and had been out of school, on the average for 20 years. Table 1 tabulates the information on age and previous education for the interview and questionnaire subjects.
TABLE 1
Mean Age, Mean Level of Education, Mean Time since Full-Time Schooling for Pre-interview, Questionnaire, and Post-interview Subjects by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Age</th>
<th>Mean Level of Education (by total years)</th>
<th>Mean Years since Last Schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Interview</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Females (12)</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males (3)</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (15)</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questionnaire</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (35)</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males (5)</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>11.2</td>
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<td>Total (40)</td>
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<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Interviews</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (8)</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males (3)</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (11)</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instruments

Initial Interviews. The purposes of the initial interview were to assess initial expectations, to locate the level and nature of student anxieties and in general, give the researcher initial contact with some of the adults about to enter the Pro Seminar.

A list of basic questions designed to elicit this information were as follows. Each question and supplementary questions were asked of each subject, in interviews lasting about 30 minutes.

What brought you here?
How do you feel about starting college?
What sort of an experience was your previous schooling?
Why college now rather than earlier in your life?
What do you want from the college experience?

The interview format permitted spontaneous following of leads given by the subjects. While these questions were successful in achieving the main goals of the interview, this format lacks the uniformity of a more standardized procedure.

Questionnaire. Questionnaires, as opposed to open-ended interviews, ensure some uniformity from one measurement situation to another. Further, respondents may have greater confidence in the anonymity of the form and therefore respond more candidly.

The questionnaire constructed for the present study consisted of 17 questions printed on three sheets of 8-1/2" x 11" paper. (See Appendix E) The instructions printed at the beginning of the question-naire were as follows:
TO: Pro Seminar Students, Fall 1978

We are interested in learning more about the effects of the Pro Seminar. You are the only source of this information and your help, through this questionnaire, is very much appreciated. Please feel free to be candid and to use all the paper you need. Your comments will be read and used in our planning to serve future students. Please do not sign this questionnaire.

During the Fall 1978 term, the questionnaire was field tested by administering it to ten students who had taken a Pro Seminar course a year earlier. These ten were told the purpose of their cooperation in answering the questionnaire was to improve the questionnaire. They were asked to fill in their own answers and also to note any ambiguous wording, as well as to suggest other questions. After filling out the questionnaire, each was queried about the design of the instrument. Items that might have caused confusion were re-written following the suggestions of these students. Two experienced Pro Seminar teachers also reviewed the questionnaire at this point.

Of the questionnaire's 17 items, the first eight were designed to elicit demographic data pertaining to age, sex, number of years of formal full-time schooling and length of time since last formal full-time schooling, as well as any part-time schooling taken since then. Seven questions were open-ended and as the instructions reproduced above show, students were encouraged to answer at length. These latter questions were designed to elicit the students' feelings about the college experience before and after the Pro Seminar as well as about the Pro Seminar itself.
The two remaining questions, 12 and 16, asked the students to rate themselves on a Likert-type 4 point scale from "much more confident" to "no change" and "less confident" with respect to ten skills useful in academic life, and to rate the Pro Seminar itself on a 4 point scale from "contributed a lot" to "no effect."

To facilitate comprehension, the entire questionnaire is reproduced here as Figure 1. As noted above, Questions 1 through 9 request relevant information about the respondent and the respondent's academic history. Questions 9 through 17 (excepting 12 and 16), are open-ended in form so as to encourage the fullest response; questions 12 and 16 are in a rating form.
FIGURE 1

Pro Seminar Questionnaire

For questions 1-8 please circle answers or fill in the blanks.

1. Sex: Male__________ Female__________

2. Age: ______________

3. What was the last year of formal, full time, schooling you completed? (circle one)
   High School: 1 2 3 4
   College: 1 2 3 4

4. When was that? (Give the year) ________________

5. If you graduated from high school, give the year. ________________

6. If you earned a High School Equivalency (GED), give the year. ________________

7. Before starting this Pro-Seminar, how long had it been since you last took a course of any kind? ________________

8. If you have taken courses in anything since you stopped being a full-time student, what kinds of courses did you take? ________________

9. As you begin the Pro-Seminar, what were your feelings about starting college?

10. Now that you have finished your Pro-Seminar, what are your feelings about continuing with a college program? Why?

11. What is the most important thing that happened to you as a result of the Pro-Seminar?
12. Now that you have completed the Pro-Seminar please indicate your self-confidence about the following list of items in comparison with your confidence when you entered the course. For each item, check the one rating that best reflects the difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Much more confident</th>
<th>Somewhat more confident</th>
<th>Less confident</th>
<th>No Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Your ability to join in a class discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Your ability to write a paper.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Your ability to get a reading assignment completed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Your ability to initiate contact with instructors.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Your ability to learn whatever you choose to learn.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Your ability to initiate contact with fellow students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Your ability to decide on what it is you want to learn.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Your ability to find what you need in a library.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Your ability to understand new information or ideas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Your ability to complete a degree program if you decide to do so.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Was there any part of the Pro-Seminar experience that was a particular help to you in feeling comfortable and confident about being in college? Explain.

14. Overall, to what extent do you feel the Pro-Seminar contributed to your feeling of confidence about yourself as a student? Circle one answer.

Contributed a lot  Contributed a little  Interfered  No effect
16. Please explain your rating in Question 15.

17. Did anything other than the Pro-Seminar contribute to or affect your confidence as a learner? Explain.
Post-Course Interviews. The purpose of the final interviews was to supply more information on the effectiveness of the Pro Seminar, by using the broader scope of the interview format. In this sense, it would serve as a separate data source to provide a validity check on the questionnaire findings, picking up information that might not have surfaced there. Further, it would serve as a separate source to assess the perceived impact of the Pro Seminar and to look for ways to improve that course. As with the initial interview a set of basic questions were asked but room was left to pursue leads offered by the respondents. These interviews lasted approximately 35 minutes each and contained the following list of basic questions:

- How do you feel about the Pro Seminar?
- How do you feel about going on to other courses?
- What kinds of work did the class do?
- What was the theme of the course?
- Was the course a help to you? Do you think it helped the other students?
- What, if anything, do you think should be changed in the Pro Seminar?

These questions were intended to spring from the underlying thrust of the questionnaire but to move into further examination of the experience of the respondent, rather than to replicate the information requested by the questionnaire. As will be seen, the responses to the interviews expanded the information gained from the questionnaires, both by providing greater precision of detail (a short written response such as "The teacher is great" was added to by a clear description of the teacher's techniques and tone) and also by the exploration of areas not discussed in the questionnaire, such as the kinds of reading and writing the student had done.
Procedures

Initial interview. All the initial interviews were conducted by the researcher, in a small office, otherwise unoccupied, in the Extension Building. The interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the subjects and were therefore held at whatever time—8 in the morning to 9 in the evening—and on whatever day—Monday through Saturday—suited the students. The length of the initial interviews ranged from 25 minutes to 75 minutes but averaged 30 minutes. All initial interviews occurred during the week before and the week after classes started. The subject sat in a chair beside the desk at which the researcher was seated, with a small tape recorder between them. The researcher's experience with interviewing consists of twelve years of intake interviews as well as frequent academic advising of adult students.

The subjects were welcomed to the URI Extension, and told that their help in this study of the Pro Seminar was most valuable. The tone was informal, friendly, and empathetic. Though all questions on the list given above under Instruments were asked, any leads given by the subjects were followed. Finally, the subjects were thanked for their assistance.

Questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher during the final class meeting, with the permission of the faculty. At the end of the class session, the researcher read the instructions at the beginning of the questionnaire (which explain that this questionnaire is in aid of a study of the Pro Seminar), distributed the questionnaires
and received them back from the students as they finished writing and brought them up to the desk. The same procedure was followed in the morning and the evening classes, except that the two evening sections which met in the same room one after another were handled simultaneously—that is, the questionnaire was administered at the end of the early section and the beginning of the later section. Following this administration, questionnaires with stamped addressed envelopes enclosed were mailed to the seven absent students, of whom two responded.

Final interview. The final interviews were also conducted by the researcher, again in an otherwise unoccupied office in the Extension Building, with the subject in a chair beside the desk, with a small tape recorder between interviewer and subject. The interviews were again scheduled at days and times convenient to the subjects. These interviews ranged from 20 to 55 minutes, with an average length of 35 minutes. The final interviews were held during the three weeks after the Pro Seminar had ended, a period which overlapped the beginning of a new term. The tone was informal and friendly. All questions on the list given under Instruments were asked, and responsive leads were probed. The respondents were uniformly more at ease.

In summary, this section has reviewed the purposes, subjects, instruments and procedures of the initial interview, questionnaire, and final interview used to assess the impact of the Pro Seminar on its adult students. The results of the data collected by these means will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The first section of this chapter covers the purpose of the study, hypothesis and method used, independent and dependent variables, data sources, and finally questions asked and answered.

Overview

The purpose of the study was to: a) design and implement a systematic attempt to ease the re-entry of the adult who is returning to formal education after a number of years; and b) to evaluate the effectiveness of that treatment attempt. The "treatment" was a course entitled "Pro Seminar", which has been extensively described in Chapter II. Effectiveness is here defined as a subjectively perceived increase in self-confidence in regard to educational skills and goals and a bolstering of the student's determination to pursue these goals.

Substantial previous work suggests that the adult entering upon higher education after a considerable time lapse since previous schooling is often confronted with strongly ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, the returning student is often enthusiastic, excited and tremulously determined in the face of new goals; on the other hand, this same student is as often beset with apprehension, self-doubt, and insecurity. It was hypothesized that providing the new student with a structured experience in formal learning explicitly designed to teach specific skills, promote contact with other students,
in the same situation, and encourage maximum supportive teacher-
student interaction, would result in an increase in the self-confidence
necessary to carry out the adult's newly formed educational goals.
Thus the independent variable, or treatment effect, in this study was
the Pro Seminar itself. The dependent variables, or outcomes of this
treatment, were perceived increases in self confidence and, in
particular, increased self-confidence in relation to continuing in a
degree program.

Two principal data sources were utilized to obtain measures
of outcome: interviews and a questionnaire format. Two types of
interviews were carried out. A representative sample of students
registered into the Pro Seminar were interviewed either prior to or
during the first week of the course. This "pre" interview was
designed to provide an in-depth description of these students in
terms of sex, age, previous education, years since last formal
schooling, occupation, present goals, etc. More substantively, this
pre-interview specifically focussed on the returning student's global
feelings in regard to attending college. An attempt was made to
elicit and to assess not only overt anxieties, worries and doubts, but
underlying and more vague apprehensions as well.

In phase two of the assessment procedure, forty students were
asked to complete a 17-question survey evaluating the usefulness to
them of the Pro-Seminar experience. This questionnaire focussed on
changes in the student's feelings as a result of the course. In
particular, the student was asked to rate ten specific skills (e.g.,
ability to write a paper; ability to complete a degree program).
in terms of perceived changes in self-confidence (from "less confident" to "much more confident"). Also the student was asked to rate the degree to which the Pro Seminar contributed to such changes in confidence and, in addition, to comment on both negative and positive aspects of the course. In terms of assessment of outcome, this was, of course, the crucial measure.

Finally, a sample (which, it developed, was representative) of questionnaire respondents were interviewed in depth following the completion of the course. This "post" interview had two aims. First, it was used as an independent data source to provide a validity check on the questionnaire findings. Second, because the interview format permits a more flexible and open-ended exploration, it was used as a method in its own right to assess the perceived impact the Pro Seminar had on enrolled students and to probe for suggested future changes to be made in the course format. Thus the post-interviews, in addition to covering the same ground as the questionnaires from a somewhat different and fresh approach, also specifically added the questions: "Did the Pro Seminar meet your needs?" "Did you feel it helped the others?" and "What changes would you make in the course to make it more responsive to the needs of entering students?"

In the sections which follow, the results of the Pre-Interviews, Questionnaires, and Post Interviews will be detailed sequentially. The results of the pre interviews, questionnaires and post interviews are organized and presented in terms of the most salient features that presented themselves upon analysis of the received data. Finally, the major overall findings and conclusions from all the data sources will be compared, contrasted and analyzed.
Detailed Results

In this section the results to be given from the pre-interviews includes a description of the entering student, demographic data, student hopes, goals and concerns. From the questionnaire data come the effects of the Pro Seminar: student feelings about a college attempt before and after the Pro Seminar, perceived effects of the Pro Seminar on self-confidence in ten areas of competence relating to academic skills, student ratings of the course, and positive and negative remarks about the course. The results given for the post-interviews concern a more detailed examination of the effects of the Pro Seminar, the extent to which post-interview data corroborates and supports questionnaire data, the extent to which the Pro Seminar met the needs/expectations of the student, and suggestions for modifications of the course. The focal points of this analysis of the interview responses were chosen after assaying the transcripts of the interviews for their most striking common features.

Pre-Interview Data: the entering students.

Fifteen students were interviewed prior to or during the first week of the course. The reader is referred to Table I in the Methodology Section (Chapter III) for a description of these subjects. As is shown there, these three males and twelve females ranged in age from 24 to 60 years of age, with a mean age of 40.7 years. Nine subjects had completed high school; three had previously attended or completed junior college; and two subjects had completed one to three
years of high school and subsequently had obtained the High School Equivalency certificate. Ten subjects were married. Of these, four subjects had no children, and six subjects had between one and four children, most frequently, one child. One subject was separated; one subject was divorced; one subject reported herself as remarried; and two subjects were single. These subjects had been out of school from ten to more than twenty years, although about half had taken some courses in the intervening years. Nine subjects were employed full-time in paid occupations that included a deputy sheriff, a co-owner and manager of a restaurant, and a factory supervisor. Most subjects who worked could be classified as "white-collar" workers: secretaries, sales representatives, clerks, key-punch supervisor, etc. Two subjects did extensive volunteer work. Four subjects were either currently unemployed or homemakers working in the home.

Thus the picture of the preponderance of entering students that emerges from this data is of a white female between 31 and 40 years of age, a high school graduate who was married and had one or two children. This student had, on the average been out of school from 13 to 22 years and was as likely as not to have taken a few courses "here and there" in the intervening years. These data are in substantial agreement with previous findings on adults entering general coeducational undergraduate degree programs (Medsker, et al 1975).

At this point in the middle years of the typical entering student's life, the decision was made to start or to return to college. The question that naturally arises, then, is why? What reasons
did the returning student give for wanting to pursue a major change in life by taking on a new commitment of time, energy and money at this stage? The questions asked in the pre-interview (What brought you here? How do you feel about starting college? What sort of experience was your previous schooling? Why college now rather than earlier? What do you want from college?) evoked a range of responses to the general question of why college now.

Basically three major reasons emerge from these data, although there are, of course, many individual shades and variations of these three themes from subject to subject. The reasons are best exemplified by using the words of the subjects themselves.

A married woman who had graduated from high school 20 years before and was now an assistant to the administrator of an insurance company, stated that when she took job-related courses at the University Extensions,

I realized that all the people in the class were college graduates and that I was somewhat out of my depth as far as the other people in the class went... Everybody seemed to be so bright. I felt like the oldest and the dumbest in the class.

Another subject who echoed these sentiments was a fifty-five year old married woman who works with emotionally handicapped children and who had completed only one year of high school more than twenty years ago. In her words:

I've hired and trained people with much more education than I have, and I just never let on. They think that I've had college (sic), I suppose...

Finally, a 35-year old married woman with one child who had left a job she was dissatisfied with a year before and was now at
home, summed up her reasons for returning to school:

I'd felt very inadequate at times over many years about my education and I'd wanted to further my education and it was never possible before--children, money. . . . As a hairdresser, talking to all kinds of people. . . . I hadn't been exposed to enough education. Talking to people--things they knew, just a general level of education, things I'd never heard about. . . education is where it is!

These three quotes illustrate one major reason expressed by several subjects for wanting to return to school, a reason that might aptly be termed 'social comparison'. For these subjects it was a feeling of inferiority and inadequacy when comparing themselves to others in their reference group that provided the spur that sent them to the doors of the University.

Two other major reasons can be discerned from the interview responses: personal advancement, and personal growth and development. The former reason is cited by subjects who have practical reasons for wanting a college degree, e.g., job advancement or an upward change in status or career. The latter reason, frequently stated in more nebulous terms, is given by subjects who are interested in learning for its own sake, or who feel the need to fill a void in their lives with a definite and more directed goal that fills their need for personal growth.

Typical of the subjects who cited personal advancement as a reason was a 28 year old married male, a typesetter whose job was eliminated when the publishing company for which he worked automated the printing presses. He was now working in the field of human services, reported that this was the field of his choice and he loved
the work but felt that "a degree helps in this field." This reason was even more clearly stated by a 39 year old married male who was a sales representative for a large manufacturing corporation. He had come to the University Extension because he had read about the program and was attracted by the Bachelor of General Studies program. "Some programs require courses that aren't any use to me in my work. I want to be in a better position and the degree is necessary."

Finally, there were subjects who expressed a more personal need for growth and development, either in terms of learning for its own sake, or to fill a void. "I've always believed I was intelligent... Awareness is very important to me", one subject reported. Another subject who typified this reason said, "I expect it will give another dimension. It's important to have something... I needed something." And a 48-year old mother of four teen-aged children summed up her reason as, "I spent years on other people's needs; it's time for mine."

In interviewing these subjects, it became obvious that for most, if not all, of them, returning to school represented a major commitment. In some cases, it was a decision that had been years in the making. As one subject stated: "... I always knew I would do it, college. Now I'm 31 and I need to get started." Another subject, asked by the interviewer why she had decided to come to school, replied, "I wanted to do it for a long time and finally I just ran out of excuses." In many other cases, it was a decision that had been thrust upon the subject by an external event. One subject
said, "My last employment was ended in February. They said "'You're bright and intelligent, if you had your degree we could do something for you'." Regardless of whether the returning student was under the pressure of internal or external motivating factors, or both, for almost all of them the decision to return obviously represented a substantial commitment of time, money, energy, and most particularly, "ego strength". A considerable degree of anxiety and apprehension would attend a life decision requiring a new commitment of time, energy and money.

The second substantive area treated in the pre-interview was, therefore, the degree to which students expressed anxieties and apprehension about returning to school, either overtly or in more subtle ways. A superficial examination of the pre-interview data did not, at first glance, support the expectation that these subjects were overwhelmed with anxieties about returning to school. In fact, only three subjects explicitly expressed global fears. As one of these said, "I know I'm not dumb but... everything's fearful until you're in it. [I'm fearful that] I'm not good enough to be there. Who am I to put myself out there and think I could get into that course? Can I do the work then?" Another stated, "Kind of fears? Just by being away from school so long that you don't want to fail. I made all these excuses for so long. Suppose I'd found out I didn't want it after saying I wanted it for 14 years." And a third subject echoed this: "I'm anxious about coming back because I've been out so long... I have the biggest problem with a whole group of people. I don't have the confidence."
The remaining seven subjects who responded to this question tended, however, to deny any fears at all or to focus on very specific worries. Remarks typical of these subjects were: "I have no particular worries;" "the program looks good;" "Any anxieties? None." Subjects who expressed specific fears said things like: "Anxieties? Mine are about mundane things. Books, how do I get the ones I'll need, where's the classroom going to be, where do I go the first night"; or, "I've no anxieties or fears about school. The institution won't fail me... the only worry is the money to pay for it. I took out an education loan, that worries me," or, "I dread oral presentations."

A deeper examination of replies to this question in the context of the total interview data strongly suggests, however, that many of the subjects were probably utilizing defense mechanisms such as denial and displacement in order to handle covert but very real anxiety. While it is always possible that subjects who reported no fears or worries did not, in fact, experience any, it was found that such statements were often an outright contradiction of remarks made elsewhere in the interview. Denial that the subject felt any particular apprehension was also often contradicted by facial expressions, tone of voice, and general tenor of the remarks. For example, the subject who stated that she had "no particular worries" was also the same subject who earlier confessed, "I felt like the oldest and the dumbest in the class."

One subject rather clearly seemed to be utilizing displacement of fears onto "others" and rationalizations as defenses against her
anxiety which, in spite of a rather too vehement denial, became obvious:

Any anxieties? None. Some of the others said they were really scared. I'm doing this for myself. I'm going because I want to, I'm not going to get upset by it. I've spent years telling my little boy when he's bothered about not doing everything right, 'that's how you learn'. Now I have to act on that. I was a little apprehensive the day I came to register but I told myself I'm a big girl, I have a voice, I can take care of myself. We're not little kids anymore. Some people still feel the same inadequacies they did as children." [Emphasis added]

This elaborate denial of "any anxieties" becomes even more poignant in light of a remark, previously quoted in this paper, by the same student: "For years I'd felt inadequate about my [lack of] education."

In sum, the pre-interview data rather clearly depicts the returning student as an adult in the middle years of life who has invested in a major and costly transition fraught with what is apparently considerable, though often unstated, anxiety and self-doubt. Perhaps the hopes and fears implicit in all of these data are most aptly captured by the simple question: "Will I make it?"

Questionnaire Data: Effectiveness of the Pro Seminar

For many of these adults, the Pro Seminar was the first formal learning experience after years out of the classroom. It thus served both as a testing ground and as the gateway into higher education. It was hypothesized that most of these students undoubtedly possessed the basic ability to earn a college degree but in many cases were hindered by a lack of self-confidence. The Pro Seminar was meant as an initiation for these adults—a supportive atmosphere that exposed
students to a caring instructor, to students much like themselves and to the practice of academic skills. This environmental structure was intended to increase students' self-confidence.

The critical outcomes are therefore measured by the effects the course had on changes in self-confidence and on the ambition to continue towards a degree. The Pro Seminar, in short, would answer for many students the question, "Am I convinced by my experience in this course that I might be able to survive the experience of more other, courses? Or, Am I good enough?" For an overwhelming majority of students the data leave no doubt that the answer to this question is a resounding "Yes!" Further, for these same students, it is clear from their responses that it was the Pro Seminar itself, and not outside factors, that the students perceived as being the direct cause of increases in self-confidence.

Of the 40 students surveyed, 29 or 72% stated the course "contributed a lot" and 6 students or 15% felt that the course "contributed a little." Fully 87% of the total sample perceived the course as being anywhere from somewhat to quite definitely effective. Only 5 students or 12% of the total reported that the course had "no effect", and 0% reported that the course "interfered", that is, had a negative effect. These responses were obtained in answer to a questionnaire item (#15) which asked the student:

Overall, to what extent do you feel the Pro Seminar contributed to your feelings of confidence about yourself as a student? Circle one answer:
Contributed a lot; contributed a little; interfered; no effect.
As has been pointed out, subjects who responded to this item fell into three categories, since no one responded that the course had "interfered". Table III summarizes some of the demographic data on questionnaire respondents as a function of which of the three response categories—"a lot," "a little," or "no effect"—they chose.

**TABLE 2**

**Age, Sex and Number of Years Since Last Schooling of Questionnaire Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Contributed:</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>No Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N =</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of females</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of males</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\overline{X}$ age total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\overline{X}$ age females</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\overline{X}$ age males</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\overline{X}$ number of years since last school</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While there are no patently significant differences in the mean ages of females who differed on their rating of the Pro Seminar course, it was noticed that males who found that the course "contributed a lot" were apparently somewhat older, on the average, than males who found that the course only contributed "a little". A t-test demonstrated, however, that this was a statistically non-significant difference. In any case, little importance should be attributed to mean age differences in the two sexes since males were drastically under-represented in the sample.

The only other finding of potential significance and interest involving the five subjects who felt that the Pro Seminar had "no effect" relates to the previous academic history of these subjects. Although it is obviously hazardous to make any inferences to a general population based on such a tiny sample (n=5), these 5 subjects were clearly distributed bi-modally. Two of the respondents had been out of school for 10 or more years and had had no previous college-level courses, whereas the remaining three subjects had taken 3 or more college courses and all 3 had taken them as recently as the immediately preceding semester. The two subjects who had no prior college experience and had been out of school for 10 or more years both gave highly similar explanations of why, for them, the Pro Seminar had "no effect". One of these subjects commented that though she had enjoyed the course "it had nothing to build confidence and until I can take a regular college course and pass I won't have any confidence in myself as a student". The other subject commented similarly that she would need to compare the Pro Seminar with other
courses before deciding whether it helped or not.

The three students, on the other hand, who were actively pursuing college studies at the time of their enrollment in the Pro Seminar and who subsequently rated the course as having had "no effect" made comments which can be summed up in the words of one: "It's not meaningful because I'm already in college and know I can do it."

It seems quite legitimate to conclude that these three subjects did not initially belong to the target population at which the Pro Seminar is aimed. Their rating of the course is thus seen as added evidence for the validity of the assessment procedure but not a valid criticism of the Pro Seminar itself. If these three subjects are dropped from the sample of respondents on the grounds that they were in no way representative of the target population of the Pro Seminar, we are left with only two subjects who should have benefitted from the course but reported that they did not. This means that out of 37 subjects who could justifiably expect the course to increase self-confidence, 35 or 95% reported that the Pro Seminar did just that. Given the recognized problems of self-report measures, this is still a rather dramatic result.

Inspecting the data for further corroborating evidence that the Pro Seminar had its impact by increasing self-confidence in the capacity to perform adequately in an academic setting, we turn now to item 12 of the questionnaire. This item is, again, a critical measure of the impact of the Pro Seminar and of the hypothesis that supervised practice with specific academic skills should increase self-
confidence. This item asked respondents to rate themselves on ten specific skills using a Likert-type scale which ranged from a rating of "4—much more confident" to a rating of "1—less confident". If the overall rating of the course given in item 15 was both reliable and valid we would expect to find mean differences in the skills ratings across these three categories of "course contributed a lot", "a little" or "no effect". Table III summarizes the mean ratings for each of the three groups.

**TABLE III**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Contributed</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>No Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Rating</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Average of Each Subject's Total Ratings of the Ten Skills)</td>
<td>(n-29)</td>
<td>(n=6)</td>
<td>(n=5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three t-tests for the significance of these mean differences were performed. The t-test for the difference in mean skills ratings by subjects who rated the course as contributing a "lot" versus "a little" resulted in a \( t = 2.35; \) d.f. = 33; \( p < 0.25 \). The t-test for the difference in mean skills ratings by subjects who rated the course as contributing "a little" versus "no effect" resulted in a \( t = 3.56; \) d.f. 9; \( p < .01 \). (Obviously there was a highly significant difference between the mean ratings on the ten skills of those who rated the course as contributing "a lot" versus "no effect". This
These results leave little doubt that the impact of the Pro Seminar was felt directly through increased confidence in at least these ten specific skills, thus increasing overall confidence.

Since it might be of interest to look at the respondents' ratings of specific skills, this entire item is reproduced in Table IV, along with the results, tabulated for the total sample.

Perhaps more interestingly, when the total number of respondents are once again divided into categories according to how they rated the overall effectiveness of the course, and their responses to these items are examined, two items emerge on top for those who say the course contributed "a lot".

Items E and J emerge as the top items for those who feel the course contributed "a lot". In other words, those people who got the most out of the Pro Seminar report the greatest changes in self-confidence on item E, "ability to learn whatever you choose" and item J, "ability to complete a degree program". Since these are probably the two most crucial areas of change in terms of the overall purposes of the Pro Seminar, this finding would seem to demonstrate that the Pro Seminar achieved its most important aim of convincing the adult student that he or she "can make it" in a college program. This finding is of even greater interest when one examines the rank order of the skills by those who say the course did not have any effect. For these people, item J has the lowest ranking (not a single respondent in this category rated this item either "4" or "3" and one of the respondents rated it "1" (less confident). For respondents
TABLE IV
Respondents' Ratings of the Ten Skills

Item 12 asked: Now that you have completed the Pro Seminar, please indicate your self confidence about the following list of items in comparison with your confidence when you entered the course. For each item check the one rating that best reflects the difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item:</th>
<th>Mean Rating and Number of Respondents Who Chose Each Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Your ability to join in a class discussion</td>
<td>Mean Rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Your ability to write a paper</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Your ability to get a reading completed</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Your ability to initiate contact with instructors</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Your ability to learn whatever you choose to learn</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Your ability to initiate contact with other students</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Your ability to decide on what you want to learn</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Your ability to find what you need in a library</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Your ability to understand new information or ideas</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Your ability to complete a degree if you choose to</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
who rate the course as producing "no effect, the item which emerges on top is item B, ability to write a paper. Apparently, what little improvement was perceived by subjects in this category was in a much less global and much more specific skill area.

It is of passing interest to note that across all respondents, item G--your ability to decide on what you want to learn--has the lowest rank. Only 22% of the total sample gave this item a "4" and with a mean rank of 3.07 it stands out at a considerable distance from the other items, at the bottom of the list. This result is, of course, expected, since individual career counseling or clarification of specific academic goals was certainly not a priority aim of the Pro Seminar.

In completing analysis of the results of the questionnaire data, there remain only those few open-ended items which allowed respondents to use their own words in answering questions such as "what were your feelings about starting a college program before and then, after, the Pro Seminar?" And, "what was it about the Pro Seminar that helped/did not help you in feeling more confident?"

As in all of the results discussed so far, the responses to these items reveal a very high degree of internal consistency and inter-item agreement.

Subjects who reported that the course helped "a lot" showed substantial positive changes in their feelings in response to items 9 and 10 (feelings about college before and after Pro Seminar). A few quotes from the protocols themselves illustrate this. One subject
reported that before the Pro Seminar she felt "scared" but now felt "I have gained confidence". A second subject reported that prior to the Pro Seminar, she was "timid of my placement in the college structure", but after, reported "I can do it!" Finally, a third subject said that, before, "I was extremely nervous and lacked self-confidence. I knew I wanted to come back but I was afraid I wouldn't be able to succeed". But after completing the Pro Seminar this subject reported a shift in her feelings: "I would like to continue and I feel confident that I will succeed. I have gained a great deal of self-confidence." Similar shifts in feelings were reported over and over again. Rather striking also, was the unsolicited use of the word "confidence". In describing their feelings in response to open-ended questions, subjects used this word over and over again.

Finally, the questionnaire sought to pin down exactly what it was about the Pro Seminar, in the subjects' own words, that helped (or did not help). Nineteen of the 29 Ss who reported that the course helped "a lot" and two of the six subjects who said it helped "a little" specifically mentioned increased confidence through the learning of specific skills. An impressive number of respondents also mentioned the positive benefits of "being in the same situation with other adults." Both these conditions--going through the apprenticeship stage with other novices, and having supervised practice in the skills needed for the trade--are, of course elements of the optimal conditions for adult socialization described in Chapter I. Finally, quite a few respondents specifically mentioned the patience, skill and encouragement of their instructors.
Students who found the course had "no effect" cited two types of reasons. Either they stated that they had had previous courses and did not need the orientation provided by the Pro Seminar (hence they complained the course was "boring") or they said that the Pro Seminar was "not a real course" and thus they were no surer now than before that they could "make it" in the "real" college world. Those who claimed they did not need the orientation were not, of course, the target population of the Pro Seminar. One possible interpretation of those who felt the Pro Seminar "was not a real course" is that they expect college courses to be painfully difficult and impersonal. Since some courses will be of that sort, there is a fractional realism in their pessimistic outlook. "Real" may also mean "letter grades".

In this section, the results of the 17 item questionnaire data were analyzed and presented. Forty subjects responded to this in-depth inquiry at the final meeting of the semester-long Pro Seminar course. The questionnaire aimed at measuring the perceived effectiveness of the course in terms of increases in self-confidence, in certain specific skills and in determination to continue in a college degree program. If one accepts the results of the data at face value, they strongly indicate that the Pro Seminar was perceived as a very valuable experience for at least 72% of the sample and as somewhat helpful by another 15%. These same subjects perceived a considerable increase in confidence in their skills in the named areas of academic ability. They also reported large shifts in a positive
direction in their overall confidence in regard to pursuit of a college degree as a direct result of the Pro Seminar experience. Both qualitatively and quantitatively, all of the items in the questionnaire buttress and support these findings for these students. There is a high degree of inter-item reliability indicated in these data. With very few exceptions, students who rated the course as "very effective" had been out of school for a number of years and had taken two or fewer courses in the intervening years, often of a non-academic nature. Of the five students who said the course had no effect, three of these were atypical of the sample, in that all three had taken at least three college level courses and had been enrolled in such courses only a semester before. As was pointed out previously if these three students are removed from the sample, 35 of the remaining 37 subjects reported that the Pro Seminar contributed either "a lot" (29) or "a little" (6). Of this more representative sample, then, 95% felt the course increased their confidence.

In a final attempt to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Pro Seminar and to provide validity for the questionnaire data, a small sample of subjects from among these 40 respondents were interviewed following the end of the course. In the next section, the results of the Post-Interview data are presented.

Post-Interviews: Effects of the Pro Seminar--A Further Inquiry

The Post-Interview data were obtained from eleven subjects, 9 females and 2 males. This sample is roughly representative of the 40 questionnaire subjects in terms of sex. (87.5% of the questionnaire
sample were females, 82% of the Post-Interview subjects were female.)
The Post-Interviews were less structured than the questionnaire data. The author interviewed all eleven subjects herself. The procedure followed is detailed in a previous section. Basically, the interviewer asked all respondents two key questions: "Did the Pro Seminar meet your needs?" And "What changes would you make in the Pro Seminar?" Due to the built-in flexibility of the interview format, the interviewer often followed up certain remarks or leads by asking further questions, but these two basic questions were asked and answered by all respondents.

Although analysis of the interview data could not be as straightforward and clear-cut as the far more standardized questionnaire data, an attempt was made to assess the overall tone of the remarks about the Pro Seminar in terms of "positive", "negative", and "mixed". Using this admittedly somewhat rough procedure, it appears that eight of the eleven respondents clearly had positive feelings. Four spontaneously characterized the course as "fantastic". Two subjects, both males, appeared to have somewhat negative feelings and a third subject, "mixed" feelings. These are discussed at a later point in this chapter. When pressed to answer specifically if the Pro Seminar met their needs, the subjects spontaneously mentioned specific skills, such as learning how to do library research, how to prepare a research paper, how to make an outline, often discussing these at length. This is interesting in light of the rather general question, and would seem to indicate a fair degree of honest enthusiasm about the course. Though subjects could easily have responded with a
simple "yes" or "no" or other short answer to this probe, most of them discussed in much greater detail exactly what the Pro Seminar had done for them. Although, as has already been pointed out, the Interview was far less standardized a format than the questionnaire, the answers to the question, "Did the Pro Seminar meet your needs" have been classified and tabulated in Table V. All of the interviews were read over and answers to this question were classified into response categories. The number of subjects who gave a response in each of these categories was then tabulated. In order to provide a check on this, a second independent observer also read, classified, and tabulated these data. There was nearly perfect agreement between the two judges. (It should be noted that all of the subjects spontaneously changed this question from "Did the Pro Seminar meet your needs?" to "How did the course meet your needs?" by discussing the specific skills they learned in the course.) These response categories, and the number of subjects who cited each reason, are listed in rank order in Table V, from the most frequently cited reasons to the least frequently cited. They are also grouped into "positive" and "negative" remarks.

The second question asked of all respondents in the post interview was "What changes, if any, would you make in the Pro Seminar?"

It is interesting that in response to a question that invited respondents to criticize the course and to suggest concrete changes, six of the eleven subjects interviewed expressed the feeling that the
### TABLE V

Specific Gains from Pro Seminar Cited by Post Interview Subjects

**Response Category:**

Positive Gains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Citations by respondents</th>
<th>Positive Gains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1. Pro Sem. gave a lot of practice in writing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2. Group experience was valuable—friendliness, contact with others, sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3. Pro Sem. gave experience and encouragement in speaking out in class, oral presentations, freedom to ask questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4. Reading. Especially reading in a wide variety of areas and exposure to new ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5. Instructor (or course) generally increased self-confidence; was &quot;therapy&quot; for anxieties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6. Films, debates, other audiovisual aids and presentations were interesting, helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7. Learning how to use library was helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8. Learning how to take exams, CLEP etc., were helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9. Wide range of subjects covered in Pro Sem. increased student's awareness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negative statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Citations by respondents</th>
<th>Negative statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10. Exams, tests, and especially scores on CLEP were harmful, reduced confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11. Pro Sem. was not like a real course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12. Pro Sem. should grade people to increase motivation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
course was "great" as is. For example, a woman said "Changes in
the Pro Sem? For my part, I didn't find anything lacking. What I
needed was covered. The Pro Seminar gave me a comfortable getting-
back-into the feeling of going to school. . . that's one of the things
that's held me off for years and years. . . this adjustment. I was
very comfortable in the situation. They handled CLEP in a comfortable
way. Things were explained clearly; I absorb slowly. . . I was
comfortable inquiring when I wasn't sure. . . very beneficial and
happy experience." Another subject said, "I thought it was fantastic.
Probably because the teacher [the books she picked] . . . made you
think. And I think that's what I needed. I've been out of school
since 1963-64. . . it was just exactly what I needed to read to make
me realize that I had like missed what was going on for fifteen years
[while] at home making peanut butter sandwiches. The work [the
instructor] required of us. . . was a big help, because, to me,
that will be like a sample for any other I have to do."

For subjects who did suggest changes in the course, the most
frequently mentioned suggestion was "making the Pro Seminar more
like a real course". Four respondents mentioned this as the principle
change they would make and several other respondents mentioned it
in passing. One subject summarized this point of view very well by
saying: "Pro Seminars should be more like a real course. There
should be more studying to do, exams to take." Other students who
cited this, mentioned that Pro Seminars needed "more structure".
Other changes suggested were: having the Pro Seminar meet more
often; changes in the way the CLEP was handled; smaller classes;
more (or less) writing; different kinds of readings; shorter (or
longer) assignments; clearer explanation of the course's purpose.

What emerges in the suggestions for change, however, are
basically two problem areas: the feeling on the part of some students
that the Pro Seminar was a good experience but not enough like a
"real course" to be representative of what they would face in the
future pursuit of a degree; and problems centering around the way
CLEP was integrated and handled in the Pro Seminar. While the
number of students offering this statement is small, one might suspect
that the thought occurred to others as well. By definition, the Pro
Seminar is a real course that is different than other real courses.
It is a real course because it is in the catalog, because it is credit-
bearing, because it has a teacher, a syllabus, assignments and not
least because it is graded, even though the grading is Satisfactory/
No Credit. It is unlike the other real courses students will take
because it is not in a given department and because students are
evaluated more on their own progress rather than against a norm for
learning a particular body of knowledge. Since the main function of
the Pro Seminar is to assist in the socialization to academic values,
skills and behaviors, it is different than other courses, and perhaps
"different than" is a more accurate description than "not real". What
"not real" may also indicate is a recognition on the part of the
returning student that not all teachers will be as encouraging and
helpful as the Pro Seminar teacher. Further, future classes may not
encourage students to become acquainted with and supportive to one
another.
The second set of suggestions for change center around the CLEP exams which all Pro Seminar students must take. (Exceptions to this rule occur when the entrant has taken the CLEP during the preceding year, and does not choose to re-take the exam or when an entrant has transfer credit for the kinds and levels of courses for which CLEP credit might be gained.) These problems seemed, in the interviews, to have two bases: first, the undeniable trauma of taking a day-long examination, and second, the belief that preparation for the content of the examinations might have been possible. Since the purpose of the CLEP General Examinations is to enable people to gain credit for learning acquired through non-traditional means, preparation for the content would gainsay that purpose. In any case, preparation for the content of CLEP is not possible, since the test materials are drawn from the wide range of knowledge presumed to be gained in the freshman year of college. In fact, the experience of the CLEP examinations and the resultant gain, or failure to gain, useful course credits is a fairly strong dose of reality for the adult college entrant.

In summary, the post-interview data, although assessing the course from a quite different angle and with a less structured format than the questionnaire, provided essentially the same findings. Overall, respondents were anywhere from satisfied to highly pleased with the course. Many respondents mentioned that the Pro Seminar was exactly the kind of transition experience they needed to bridge the gap between years out of school and the initial college attempt. Most subjects expressed a definite increase in self confidence, and almost all subjects spontaneously gave detailed answers to how the Pro
Seminar had improved specific academic skills such as planning a paper, or doing library research. The only subjects (two in number) who expressed more or less negative feelings about the course had both had an atypical experience in that their particular section of the Pro Seminar had had an unexpected change of instructor, necessitating for the students a second adjustment to a new leader. However, two other respondents were also in that section and responded positively to their experience with the course. Outside of the feelings expressed by several subjects that the Pro Seminar was a special course which was not representative enough of a "real college course", and feelings about the CLEP examinations, almost all suggestions for modification of the course were minor and mentioned by only one or two subjects. Examples of this latter category of suggested changes were size of class, number of meeting times, reading selections, etc. In short, the findings generated by these post-interview subjects provide a very good validity check on the questionnaire data. There is a substantial degree of agreement across the two data sources.

Major Findings Summarized

The assessment of the Pro Seminar was done in three stages. A pre-interview with fifteen subjects provided a picture of the majority of the entering students with particular emphasis on any anxieties, doubts, etc., that those students had with respect to re-entry into the academic world. It was found that the preponderance of entering students in this sample were middle aged female high school graduates, out of school for a number of years, with perhaps one or two courses
taken in the years since high school. Most of the subjects were
married with one or two children. Subjects were returning to school
for basically one of three reasons: a feeling of inadequacy in
comparison to peers, or for personal advancement or personal growth.
Although these subjects, as a whole, did not express many overt
global anxieties about the attempted return to school, it was
hypothesized that the overall tone of the pre-interviews belied this
denial and that many subjects were defensively suppressing or
repressing their anxiety. It is noteworthy that after the Pro Seminar
experience, both in the questionnaire and in the post interview, this
hypothesis was confirmed. Having gained the confidence given by
successful completion of a college-level course, these same subjects
spontaneously revealed that prior to the course they had felt
considerable anxiety about returning to school.

The Pro Seminar was a carefully designed and structured
experience aimed at increasing general self-confidence in the returning
student's ability to pursue a college program. The course aimed to
increase self-confidence by creating an atmosphere of maximum
encouragement, teaching specific academic skills and promoting inter-
action with an empathic instructor and not least, with other students
in the same situation.

Assessment of the extent to which these aims were met was
undertaken in the second and third phases: questionnaires
administered to 40 Pro Seminar students at the final meeting of the
class; and post-interviews with eleven of these 40 students. As has
been shown in the preceding sections, there is a very high degree of
agreement in the data from both these sources that the aims of the Pro Seminar were carried out to a dramatically successful degree. Depending on how it is measured, at least 87.5% and possibly as many as 95% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that the course had contributed to increases in their self-confidence and to their feeling that they could pursue a college program successfully. These increases were substantial. In one measure of change, subjects were asked to rate 10 skill areas in terms of how much their confidence in these areas had increased. Subjects were asked to rate each skill on a four point scale, where 4 = "much more confident", that is, a substantial change from the condition prior to the Pro Seminar; 3 = "somewhat more confident"—a moderate change; 2 = "no change"; and 1 = "less confident". When each subject's rating of all ten items was averaged, the mean rating for each of the 40 subjects was obtained. When these mean ratings for all 40 subjects were, in turn, averaged, the overall mean rating obtained was \( \bar{X} \) rating total = 3.33 across all 40 questionnaire respondents.

This indicates that as a group, subjects perceived moderate to substantial increases in self-confidence. Of particular interest is the specific area which receives the highest mean rating, "learning whatever you choose to learn". This "skill" was rated over all 40 respondents as 3.50. A second very highly rated item was "ability to earn a degree". Thus the questionnaire data leaves little doubt that the Pro Seminar was seen as an extremely helpful experience for most students. Open-ended questions which allowed respondents to answer in their own words, and at length, provide qualitative
results in extremely high agreement with the qualitative data.

Finally, the post-interviews corroborate the findings from the questionnaire data and support the overall finding that the Pro Seminar was perceived as an experience which, without question, substantially increased the student's confidence in his/her ability to handle college level work.

There can be little question that the Pro Seminar was perceived as the direct cause of this change. In response to the last item of the questionnaire, "did anything other than the Pro Seminar contribute to or effect your confidence as a learner?" the vast majority of respondents cited the Pro Seminar itself as not only the major but the only source of change.

When students were asked to elaborate in detail how the Pro Seminar helped, most of them cited the teaching of specific skills, the supportive atmosphere of the course, the empathy and encouragement of the instructor, and the experience of sharing the same problems and anxieties in comradeship with other returning adults.

Two negative themes were expressed by a decidedly smaller number of students: the feeling that the Pro Seminar was not enough like a "real college course" to be representative of what lay ahead; and problems centering around taking the CLEPs as part of the course. For students who did not do well on CLEPs this last often represented a rather serious stumbling block to growth in self-confidence and sometimes affected their overall perception of the course. Nevertheless this problem, although significant, in no way overrides the major finding: the Pro Seminar was indeed highly
successful in carrying out its goals, at least in the eyes of this sample.

In short, the overriding concern of students that emerges from the pre-interview is the question: "Can I make it?" The overwhelming response of students who successfully completed the Pro Seminar appears from questionnaire and post-interview data to be, in the words of one subject, "Yes I can. I know now I can make it!"
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY AND
FURTHER RESEARCH TOPICS

The adult who decides to try college and who is constrained by circumstance to a part-time college life is, as Chapter I described it, customarily entering a foreign situation without either the language or the level of skills needed to "make it" in this new role of student. Further that adult will not customarily encounter either formal or informal training processes that might assist in the adjustment to the new role. Nor will that adult, customarily, be entering a situation that provides a peer group. Alone, lacking a training program, and with realistic anxieties about this new experience, adults returning to college are in need of a deliberate adult socialization program to increase their self confidence by exposing them to skill usage and by providing a supportive group of companions in this venture.

The Pro Seminar was designed to attempt to meet the needs of adult college entrants. While it does not seem possible to produce a fully optimal adult socialization situation, the Pro Seminar does alter several conditions for the better. First, it provides a semester-long chance to get to know the ways of this college; second, it provides a competent and supportive instructor whose aim is to ease the entrance period and improve the academic skills of these new students; third, the Pro Seminar gives entrants their own group with which to share information.
and support; fourth, practice and feedback on critical college skills (e.g., writing, speaking, library use).

The overall goal of the Pro Seminar is to increase the self-confidence of adult entrants in a realistic manner by acquainting them with what it is to be in a college course and what it is to do college work—studying, writing, taking examinations. The self-report assessment procedure of a questionnaire and supplementary interviews described in Chapter III sought to discover if the self-confidence of a group of entering adult students had in fact been enhanced by the Pro Seminar and whether they felt, specifically, better prepared for college work.

Self-report measures of change are of course verbal and subjective as opposed to 'harder' behavioral and objective measures. But the aim of this assessment procedure was to discover subjectively perceived increase in self-esteem, both in the sense of general confidence about the college situation and in the sense of a realistically based perception of improved skills. Self-reporting is the most appropriate and direct way to measure change in self-perception.

The results of the assessment were clear. For a majority of students in the Fall 1978 classes, the Pro Seminar was indeed successful. The answer to the question "Will I make it?" as phrased by several students was indeed "I think I can!"; the reasons given for this increase in self-confidence, as predicted, were the perception of improved skills and the access to a group of similarly situated comrades.

Another goal of the assessment procedure was the discovery of ways in which the Pro Seminar might be improved. Although the
majority of the students did not see a need for any change, and indeed the few recommendations received tended to contradict each other (e.g., longer/shorter papers), one area of concern and two useful recommendations did surface. The recommendations came from a student who was discovered (in a final interview) to have spent his first class session in a class that was cancelled for underenrollment; he then transferred to another section whose instructor left in two weeks and was replaced by what was for this student a third teacher. His experience permitted him to make suggestions which are now being implemented. He recommended an even greater effort to make clear to all students what the purpose of the course is; further he recommended that each instructor have a list of information (from the location of the restrooms to the manner of addressing a teacher to what to do when failing a course) to serve as a checklist so that all Pro Seminar students would be exposed to a maximum of useful advice. This list of folkways and mores of the University is being presently compiled by the Pro Seminar faculty and will be expanded regularly.

The most demanding aspect of the Pro Seminar, for most of its students, is the taking of the CLEP examinations. These examinations (see Chapter II) are required of the students in the Pro Seminar because it is clear that not all would take them otherwise; the students save themselves considerable amounts of time and tuition by earning as much credit as they can in this fashion. Pro Seminar students have earned an average of 11 to 16 credits apiece each semester since the course was initiated. In order to lessen the anxiety involved with
taking CLEPs—a full day's worth of objective examinations—a testing expert comes to each class, answers all questions, and administers the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) as a practice run. This expert then returns and discusses the kinds of exam-taking errors that have occurred. Nevertheless the experience is painfully difficult for most students, and even more so for those who earn little or no credit. The examinations determine what courses a student need not take, and having this information before the next registration period prevents taking unnecessary courses. The usefulness of this requirement may need even more explanation; however at the moment it is not likely to be eliminated. The CLEP examinations must, perhaps, serve as another tussle with the reality of the academic world.

The theory of adult socialization strongly suggests that better results are obtained if a group of entrants go through the stages of an institution together. While this is not possible for Pro Seminar students as a whole (since after the entry course they register for different courses), it is feasible to develop a small group of special courses to which students may return both for the group experience and for further learning. Such courses might cut across program lines (for example a survey course in the Humanities or the Social Sciences) so as to serve the cause of general education.

Parenthetically, it may have occurred to the reader that the usefulness of the theory of adult socialization is hardly restricted to the situation of adults entering college. The concept is undoubtedly relevant at the entry point of any institution—businesses, agencies,
and schools. Orientation days at camps and schools, training programs for employees in industry or retail businesses are examples of attempted socialization programs. Professional socialization is served by graduate schools, and such institutionalized modes as supervised internships in counselling, medicine and social work. It was the need of such a program for adult college entrants that shaped the Pro Seminar with which this study has been concerned.

To turn from the possible consequences of this study to a consideration of the means used, the primary question would seem to be the possibility of a "Hawthorne" effect; would these students have felt an equal increase in self-confidence had they experienced some other kind of treatment upon entrance? Examples of alternative programs might be an individual counselling program, or group therapy sessions focussed upon exploring the anxieties and insecurities of entrants. It seems plausible that adult entrants might well report improved self-confidence as a result of either of these treatments, but it does not seem likely that they would, in the first instance have developed the support of a peer group, or in either instance that they would have grounds for having increased confidence in their academic skill, nor, most obviously, would they have felt they had evidence that they could make it in 'regular' college courses.

Another alternative treatment might be to utilize a required English composition course as a deliberate socialization program on the grounds that training entrants to write academic papers supplies them with a major essential skill, and successful completion of such a course
would enhance their self-confidence about further academic work. This alternative would meet the same three conditions for adult socialization as the Pro Seminar does—a formal training program, of sufficient length to have an impact, which also provides an informal support group for all entrants. The difference between the Pro Seminar and an English Composition course in serving as an entry program for part-time adult college entrants lies in the more explicit aim of the Pro Seminar to prepare its students for the variety of higher education. This explicit aim opens the course to teachers from many disciplines and, perhaps more importantly, keeps both faculty and students conscious of not only the purpose of the skills training, but also the need for sharing the folkways and mores of higher education and of the specific institution being attended.

The research procedures used in this study could be improved by several changes. Were this study to be repeated, two alterations would be made in the questionnaire's form and administration: first, students should be given the option of signing the questionnaire, and second, each class's questionnaires would be administered separately. The students' signatures would permit cross-checking student response with faculty perceptions of individual growth. Further, student response may rest to an unrealized extent on the number of credits earned through the CLEP examinations, and being able to identify 'who earned what' may be crucial to more precise results. The value of keeping questionnaires separated by class is obvious: one of the three classes studied here had had a change of instructors in their third week; had the responses been identifiable by class, we could have
data on the effect of that change. The faculty of the Pro Seminar would also gain information on the results of each one's materials and teaching styles if the responses could have been grouped by class.

The initial interviews often produced a flow of life stories, useful in giving the researcher a feel for the socio-economic background and the motivation and goals of the adults entering the Pro Seminar. This approach still seems the most useful for entrants at that stage since they need more than anything else to be set at ease. Not only were they on the verge of what was for many the first college course, but they had been called in to assist in a study—possibly a first-time experience also—and there was some probability that they would feel that they themselves were being evaluated. A more formal standardized interview format might not have produced as much or as varied information and might also have increased anxieties.

However, the final interviews, in which the respondents were uniformly more at ease might produce greater detail concerning both self-confidence and perceived change in skills if this interview were designed with a longer list of standardized questions and more rigorous probing.

A different design, based on pre-course and post-course questionnaires, with pre-course and post-course interviews as well, might produce better documentation of change in self confidence. A quite different study, tackling both self-perception of confidence and an external measure of skill improvement, would, by adding tests of academic skills before and after the course, be a further measure of the effect of this program. Of considerable interest too might be
a study of these entrants after they had completed a term or even a year of academic work beyond the Pro Seminar.

**Further Research Topics**

This study has been of necessity a preliminary one, dealing as it has with a program only a year old. The long-range utility of the Pro Seminar deserves research too. While assessment of the Pro Seminar will be on-going, it can also be made more thorough. Pro Seminar completors can be surveyed annually for comments and suggestions; certainly any who drop out of degree programs should be interviewed to see if remediable problems in the institution might have caused such action. There are also other questions which arise. How long does the Pro Seminar 'effect' last? Is it eliminated by subsequent stress experience, or even failure, in other courses? Do adult entrants who have had the Pro Seminar and who continue in college do better, worse than or the same as adult entrants who did not have this experience?

Another area for research is the actual acquisition of substantive skills by Pro Seminar students. Do they write better, read better, perform better in school than those who have not had the Pro Seminar? Testing academic skills across a large population of adult college entrants at the beginning and end of their college careers might not only provide an answer to this question but would also supply a base for further studies over a span of years on the kinds and levels of competencies among these students. As a part-time degree program succeeds and grows, it may attract an increasing
number of entrants who have a lower level of skills and self-education. If this is the case, standard programmatic changes can be instituted, such as routine remedial 'loops' to bring entrants' skills up to a comfortable and effective level. Data on possible changes in the entrance population would be most useful to institutions of adult higher education.

Finally, a longitudinal study would provide part of the answer to a serious question: Does the Pro Seminar experience cut down on the attrition rate of adult college entrants? Reliable national data on the attrition rate of older part-time students is hard to locate but observation suggests that the drop-out rate is higher for them than it is for students of a more traditional age.

The subject of studies that might compare those with and without the Pro Seminar experience raises an ethical problem, since there can be no justification for denying one group of adult entrants the real assistance that is given to another group. Permitting voluntary enrollment in the Pro Seminar, which would produce a naturally occurring control/experimental group, suggests the problems of the self-selected sample, since more highly anxious subjects, or perhaps more alert subjects, might choose to enroll in the entry course.

**Conclusion**

Since American adults are certainly starting college in increasing numbers, it becomes apparent that a data bank on adult students might become useful. An institution serving these students could, within the guidelines of confidentiality, begin to acquire and
conserve information on academic profiles, vocational testing results, psychological/personality measures, and socio-demographic data.

The real possibility exists (and should be encouraged) that other institutions would cooperate in forming a data bank on adult students. The benefits in improved service to those students that could result from such a data bank include the possibility of colleges and universities (always slow to alter their way) becoming moved by a national awareness, based on good research, of the needs of those who wish further formal learning. As it presently is, these adult college entrants are often obliged to fit the sometimes Procrustean bed of academic programs largely designed to meet faculty goals and interests and life styles of younger students.

Further, many academic programs socialize undergraduates into becoming graduate students who in turn will be socialized into becoming college faculty themselves. Since the oversupply of doctoral degrees in relation to teaching jobs is predicted to be catastrophic ("by 1982 the surplus of supply to demand may be more than 16% of supply; for 1986, this figure may be over 36 percent". Shulman: 1979) the need for colleges and universities to begin to turn the socialization process in higher education away from largely academic career training is evident. Where to turn it, is a question that might be more intelligently answered, both from the point of view of our society and of the higher education institutions, by developing increasingly flexible learning programs based on the needs, desires and interests of the multitudes of adult students.
The zest, enthusiasm and high motivation of mature students is a byword among those who work with them. For these students, the act of learning provides a deep involvement and satisfaction. The institutions to which adults turn for formal learning would do well to demonstrate their belief in the value of education and the eternal possibility of human growth and change by ensuring a good experience at the crucial entry period through such planned socialization programs as the Pro Seminar. Surely a society which responds through its institutions to the human desire to learn would only benefit from the resultant sharpened curiosity and more informed awareness of its citizens.
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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

PRO SEMINAR SYLLABI: FALL 1978
(Sections P1, P2, C1)
The purpose of this course is to acquaint students with the quality of university level ideas as well as with the specific processes required to benefit from them. Students should complete this course with a clearer notion of their own academic strengths and weaknesses. They should also come to an understanding of the details of the BGS program itself.

Course Structure.

This is a four credit-hour course and it is assumed that you are taking no other courses this semester. The work load may seem a bit heavy at first, but there is much for us to accomplish in fifteen weeks.

We will read five books and several periodical articles. Through these we will raise a number of major questions about human nature and society. Although we will cover specific material, never forget that the major goals of this course involve the way that we think, read, and write about this kind of material.

There will be several writing assignments including short papers, outlines, an essay exam, and finally a term paper. The emphasis in all of these assignments will be upon the orderly presentation of ideas. Students should also become familiar with such academic conventions as the proper citation of sources.

Through an introductory lecture, short assignments and the term paper students will become familiar with the use of a university library. Enrolled students have use of the both the Extension library and the main campus library at Kingston.

Several other academic skills will receive attention including note-taking, scheduling, and oral presentation of ideas. Each student will make an oral report on their term paper at the end of the course.

Grading and Student Obligations.

This course is graded on a pass-no credit basis. In order to pass students are expected to fulfill the following obligations:

1) Attendance: The major benefits of this course are to be derived from the class sessions. It is understood that everyone must miss some class sessions due to illness or emergencies (these, strangely enough, usually occur on Friday evenings), but anyone missing more than four sessions will have difficulty passing the course.

Assignments.

Students are expected to do all written assignments and readings as well as to participate in classroom discussions.
Others.

All students must apply to the BGS program and see to it that high school and college course transcripts are sent to BGS staff. All students should take the CLEP exams during the first semester.

BGS 100, Section P2 Wed, Fri. 5:30-7:30 p.m.
URI Extension, Semester I 1978-79
D. G. 861-3251

Readings for the Course (Available at the URI Extension Bookstore):

Castaneda, Carlos, Tales of Power.

Liebow, Elliot, Tally's Corner.

Schumacher, E. F. Small is Beautiful.

Turnbull, Colina, The Mountain People.

Zablocki, Benjamin, The Joyful Community.

Tentative Schedule of Class Meetings:

1) Sept. 13 Introduction; Exercise.
   Assignment: Read Turnbull 1, 2

2) Sept. 15 Discuss Exercise; Note-taking
   Assignment: Write page on Exercise; Turnbull 3-9.

3) Sept. 20 Turnbull Discussion
   Assignment: Read Turnbull; Book Review assignment

4) Sept. 22 CLEP Writing Sample
   Assignment: Castaneda Part 1

5) Sept. 27 Final Turnbull discussion
   Assignment: Castaneda Part 2

6) Sept. 29 Castaneda discussion
   Assignment: Finish Castaneda

7) Oct. 4. SCAT?

8) Oct. 6 Castaneda discussion; Film: Pomo or To Find Our Life.
   Assignment: Film written exercise; begin Schumacher

9) Oct. 11 Library orientation
   Assignment: Library catalogue research; read Schumacher
10) Oct. 13 Schumacher discussion: Term paper topic choice * and outlining
   Assignment: read Schumacher

11) Oct. 18 CLEP orientation?
   Assignment: finish Schumacher

12) Oct. 20 Schumacher discussion; Quiz
   Assignment: Term paper topics with preliminary list of sources; Begin Liebow.

13) Oct. 25 Term Papers
    Assignment: read Liebow

14) Oct. 27 Liebow discussion; Film: Superfluous People or The Tenement
    Assignment: read Liebow

15) Nov. 1 Liebow discussion
    Assignment: finish Liebow.

16) Nov. 3 Essay Exam Outlining
    Assignment: Begin Zablocki

17) Nov. 8 Term paper progress reports; discussion of problems
    Assignment: read Zablocki

18) Nov. 10 Zablocki discussion
    Assignment: read Zablocki.

19) Nov. 15 Zablocki discussion: Film: The Hutterites
    Assignment: prepare essay exam

20) Nov. 17 Essay exam
    Assignment: Work on term papers

21) Nov. 22 HOLIDAY

22) Nov. 24 HOLIDAY

23) Nov. 29 Oral Presentation of Term Paper

24) Dec. 1 Oral Presentation of Term Paper

25) Dec. 6 Oral Presentation of Term Paper

26) Dec. 8 Oral Presentation of Term Paper; Review: PAPERS DUE

27) Dec. 13 Student Conferences
28) Dec. 15  Student Conferences
29) Dec. 20  Student Conferences
30) Party
Syllabus: Section P2

Tentative Syllabus

BGS 100 Pro Seminar
Section P2 Wed. Fri., 7:30-9:30 p.m.
H. G.

Oct. 25 Nuclear power debate. Hand out Moral Equiv. of War
Oct. 27 Discussion, Moral Equivalent of War.
Nov. 1 Prof. Sealey, Lecture.
Nov. 3 Mr. Keenan, lecture. Hand out The Power Elite.
Nov. 8 Discussion, The Power Elite
Nov. 10 Lecture on theater
Nov. 14** Trinity; Uncle Tom's Cabin.
Nov. 15 Discussion of Uncle Tom's Cabin.
Nov. 17 No Class.
Nov. 22 Thanksgiving holiday.
Nov. 24 Thanksgiving holiday.
Nov. 29 Discussion, Lord Jim.
Dec. 1 Discussion, Lord Jim.
Dec. 6 Essay examination
Dec. 8 TBA
Dec. 15 Oral book reports.
Dec. 20 Oral book reports; written reports due.
BGS 100: Pro Seminar
Section P1: Tuesday and Friday, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

J. E. S.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The purpose of the Pro Seminar is to help students gain a clearer picture of the world of ideas and learning of their own academic strengths and interests, and of the BGS Program itself. Focusing on a relevant theme (in this class Approaches to the Future) students will read, discuss and write. Besides clarifying the kinds of knowledge that college study offers this course serves to sharpen the skills needed for college learning which may have, for many adults, gotten rusty.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: To encourage students to read critically, to think independently, to write clearly, and to engage good naturedly in the controversies of our time.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Regular attendance, completion of reading and writing assignments, 15 minutes oral report (based on research topic). A 6-8 page (typewritten, double spaced) research paper on subject of student's choice.

READING LIST:
*Mimeographed Handout
  *Mary Shelley, Frankenstein
  Alvin Toffler, Future Shock
  B. F. Skinner Walden Two
  *Plato, excerpt from The Republic
  Kesey, One Flew Over the Cookoo's Nest
  Aldous Huxley, Brave New World
  Plath, The Bell Jar

WRITING TEXT: MLA Handbook.

IMPORTANT DATES:

Oct. 4 (Tuesday): SCAT Test
  11 (Tuesday): No Class Meeting, Columbus Day
  25 (Tuesday): CLEP Orientation

Nov. (Week of the 14th): CLEP Tests
Nov. 25 (Friday): Thanksgiving Recess

December 6, 8, 13, 16, 20: Oral Reports (as assigned)
  25, Jan. 2: Christmas Recess
  *20 (Tuesday): RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

Jan. 3 (Tuesday) Final Class Meeting
  6, 10, 13: Individual Conferences
Tentative Syllabus

Week 1: Sept. 20: Introduction
         23: Communication; Exercises

Week 2: Sept. 27: Mary Shelley: Frankenstein
         29: Alvin Toffler Future Shock: Intro & Part One

Week 3: Oct. 4: SCAT TEST
         7: Future Shock: Parts Three and Four

Week 4: Oct. 11: NO CLASS MEETING: COLUMBUS DAY
         14: B. F. Skinner: Walden Two

Week 5: Oct. 18: Walden Two
         21: Excerpt from Plato's The Republic

Week 6: Oct. 25: CLEP Orientation
         28: ESSAY EXAM

Week 7: Nov. 1: Writing a Research Paper
         Research Skills

Week 8: Nov. 8: Research Skills
         11: Kesey, One Flew Over the Cookoo's Nest

Week 9: Nov. 15: Progress Report on Research Papers
         18: Aldous Huxley, Brave New World

Week 10: Nov. 22: Brave New World
         25: THANKSGIVING RECESS

Week 11: Nov. 28: Trinity Theatre Production: Uncle Tom's Cabin
         Dec. 2: Uncle Tom's Cabin

Week 12: Dec. 6: Plath, The Bell Jar
         9: Oral Reports

Week 13: Dec. 13: Oral Reports
         16: Oral Reports

Week 14: Dec. 20: Oral Reports
         23: Merry Christmas to All

Week 15: Jan. 3: The Final Wrap up!!!
         6: Individual Conferences
         10: Conferences
         13: Conferences
APPENDIX B

EXEMPLARY MATERIALS USED IN PRO SEMINAR, FALL 1978
LIBRARY ASSIGNMENT

Following this evening's lecture on library resources, you are to locate at least ten sources on the following topic. These should include: 4 books, 3 periodical articles, 2 newspaper articles, and 1 unpublished scholarly thesis or dissertation.

Your topic is:

From the titles of the articles that you have located, and from the suggested other headings that you run across, list at least three sub-topics.
ESSAY EXAM OUTLINE

After reading the following question, "brainstorm" for a few minutes. Write down all the relevant words, phrases, and fragments that will help you answer the question. Then compose a rough outline of your answer.

In his book Small is Beautiful, Schumacher repeatedly urges the reader to closely examine the "assumptions" of individuals and systems.

a) Many economists encourage growth as a means to solving problems of world peace and social inequality. What are their assumptions?

b) What are Schumacher's own assumptions regarding the relationship between "scale" and human relationships?

Provide for the use of examples in your responses.
FIELD WORK EXERCISE

You are an anthropology graduate student. You have just arrived at your research site, a small town in the western U.S. The first person you meet invites you to accompany him to an event that he thinks you might find interesting. You stumble along behind him, trying to adjust to walking rapidly on dirt, looking around for recognizable landmarks which might allow you to find your way back in the future. You arrive at a structure and duck inside. Activities are already under way. The film will constitute what you see.

You want to make a report on what you have seen. In it you want to describe what you saw and you want to advance some ideas concerning what you think took place.

Consider the entire gamut of sensory data which was available to you. As the recording instrument of this event, how did the experience affect you? What predispositions and assumptions do you think that you brought to the experience?

Leslie What has defined science as a way of making experience intelligible. What tools, concepts, memories do you have for making what you have seen and experienced intelligible?

It is suggested that as soon as the event is over you should try to find an isolated place where you can make notes. Try your desk.

Write a brief description of what you think you witnessed. Explain as clearly as you can why you have come to this conclusion. You are answering two questions: What did you see? and What happened?

Try not to exceed one and a half typed pages. The assignment will be due on October 18.
SURVIVAL DECISIONS

Purpose: To let you experience the process of decision-making and to compare the differences between individual and group decision-making.

Procedure: Form into groups of from 5 to 7 persons. Read the story below and in the first column rank the ten courses of action in the order which you as an individual feel they should be completed. Please do not discuss it with anyone. Pretend that the members of your group are the survivors. Place the Number One (1) by the most important item, and so on through Number Ten, which would be the least important of the things to do.

After making the decisions as individuals, discuss the rankings with your group and arrive at a single group list which should be recorded in the second column.

You are on a raft attempting to cross the ocean to demonstrate a theory about the ability of ocean currents to transport prehistoric people from one continent to another. During a severe storm the raft is destroyed. All that is left is the dead body of the captain of the expedition, two loaded pistols and the members of your group. No one else survived and no supplies were saved. You are washed ashore on what appears to be a deserted island.

Your decision Group decision
________ ________
________ ________
________ ________
________ ________
________ ________
________ ________
________ ________
________ ________

* A time limit of twenty minutes should be set for the group decision.

Discussion: Could the group make a decision in the time alloted? What kinds of roles did the group members play? Did most people feel that group decision was better than individual decisions? Did you feel like defending your original decisions?
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEWS: FALL 1978 PRO-SEMINAR FACULTY
Interview 1, with J.S. teacher of Section CI

AB - How long have you been teaching the BGS Pro Seminar?

JS - Since it started in January, 1977. I started with two sections, one in the morning and one at night. I've only missed one term and that was last Spring.

AB - What are your teaching goals when doing the Pro Seminar?

JS I guess my first goal is to make the students feel very comfortable with one another, so that they don't look at other people in the class and wonder what he or she knows that they don't know and feel threatened by one another. So I try to establish in the beginning a feeling that they should feel free to sit with each other at coffee break, know one another and then cooperate. It is not a competitive situation. I like a cooperative class. From there I go on to trying to get them to have confidence in themselves as we go along and some feeling that they can manage the writing, reading and speaking up, not being afraid to ask questions, not worrying about whether they are stupid questions. Those are my primary goals.

AB What kinds of materials do you use?

JS I stick more or less with things that I call "future". Worrying about the future or futurism. Mostly changing values in a changing society. I use Walden Two each term. I've used that from the beginning, but all the other books change. Right now I'm doing Frankenstein, Walden Two, Brave New World, A Collection of Short Stories About Women at Work, and ending with Our Town. I try to move into how we feel threatened by the changing technological and scientific society and how it effects us as a group and then I try to get down to the individual. I think it's important to use the short stories on women in work. Finally, Our Town is just a chance selection, because that is what Trinity Square Playhouse is doing. I try to stay flexible because I never know what kind of a group I'm going to have and the problems and concerns are different with each group, so I don't really plan a stiff syllabus. I like things to happen in the class and then we work on whatever is happening. It seems to work because my students keep asking me if I'm psychic. I think with adults in particular I like to work with real concerns and immediate issues. That's why futurism lends itself so well because the future happened yesterday.
AB: Could you give me an example of changing your plan to meet the concerns of the group? How does that work?

JS: Last time we read Sylvia Plath's Bell Jar. At first I was worried about adding that. But it gave the women and the one man in the class, the opportunity to talk about marriage and personal relationships. By that time in the group they felt free to talk about concerns they had. I don't know if any of this has anything to do with teaching but some people made very important decisions. A couple of them came to me later and said that with all of the talking and support they had received from others in the class, they'd decided to go to a marriage counselor. We used Sylvia Plath to say that this is what's happening to a particular generation of women, so instead of feeling isolated with a personal problem, you recognize that it's symptomatic of the problems that we are all going through in a very complex world. I don't want to have a therapy group, where we are all trying to solve personal problems. I think that the safety valve is then to relate what is happening to me and that it is happening to a lot of other women and men and what does it say about what is happening to our society as a whole. I think it's important to move from personal experience to the larger issue.

AB: When I asked you about what materials you used, you hesitated and then said, "Oh, the readings?" You do a lot more than just readings?

JS: Yes, I use games, simulation games a lot; more so than I used to. I use the game Survival. Also, one that I use most of the time is called How Values Effect Decision Making. In this game you have a group on a raft and they are the survivors and you have to plan, what to do and there is a list of things to do; for example, build a shelter, explore the island, find food, water, destroy the pistols or give them to someone to take care of, elect a leader. I usually do this in the second session. I break the class into groups of 4 or 5 and as a group they make these decisions. They begin to open up and the feeling is that this is only a game, we're not being tested and they start arguing. One group got to the point where after it was over one woman said that if it had been real life, they would have shot the ones who didn't agree with them. The most important part, after the game, is the feedback. How did you feel when people did not agree with you or did not see the list the way you saw it. I think it's important to get this out in the open. I'm keeping a collection of games that work and those that don't. They also help to teach concepts. It works with adults very well, again because they have got to take the personal frame of reference or experience and learn to relate it to a larger issue. I've also picked up some case studies to use in examining values.
The case study is a real event and I really feel this kind of thing works. There was one game that I only used once on competition in groups and trying to get power. That really worked. The "have-nots" just gave up. They were the group that was losing. They didn't care. They felt the power group could do anything. Then the half-way group merged with the "have-nots", they'd do anything to get that power group out. The power group got nasty. Later when it was all over there were really some hostile feelings that I had to cope with. The people in the power group stated that once they started to win they did not want to stop, so they just kept going. That game got to be risky. In the first two weeks most of what I do is aimed at getting the students to loosen up and getting a rapport going before we move on. I can't teach if I feel the group is not that way.

AB What would be your minimum satisfaction? What's the least thing you're trying to do in class, aside from helping these entrants become more self-confident?

JS Self confidence and that's not enough. I think they have got to feel self confident about their skills, but I think it goes beyond that. I would say that would be my minimum, to establish the confidence in their skills. But far more important, I think, is self esteem. I think that has to be there because if they go on and are not sure of themselves or their ability to think, or the validity of an opinion, at the same time having some kind of flexibility, then I feel learning might become mechanical. Just being competent at writing or following the rules is not enough. It's different in the evening classes where most of the students, including the women, are working. They are all getting this degree so that they can be decision-makers on a management level. I think for these people it's very important to have this self-esteem.

AB What do you do about improving their writing skills and what other skills besides talking in class and reading are you aiming at?

JS With the Writing Sample, it's kind of a strange experience at this point because it's coming in the early weeks and everyone is completely strung out. In my second class meeting I talk about the essay, about being specific and give them an in-class writing, which I go over, telling them everything they did right and at the same time I give them a free form assignment. I wanted them to visualize that it was January 2004, 25 years from now. They could do whatever they wanted, write a poem, paint a picture, do a song, do a formal essay. The writing, of course, went way up because they were at home and did not feel restricted. We then talked about the two experiences, what
happens when you are in class and why your writing is so much better when you are not worrying about the form. They don't write every week and I don't do that many writing assignments, except for the research paper. The research papers have been of high quality and I think the fact that they choose a topic that they want to write about has a lot to do with that. By that time they have something to say and they seem determined to say it.

AB How did you teach them to do research?

JS I used to have Helen Kelly come in and talk about the Library, but that was mind boggling because there is too much material. Now I use the Library Handbook. I go over it with them, talk about their primary reference work. There are a couple of exercises I do. I ask them to find out what was happening on the day they were born, which is fun. Then write a short paper on something that happened on that day. But mostly the key is letting their interest in whatever they're going to write carry them through. I spend at least one full session, not all at one time, on footnotes, but mostly how to check out who is the authority, what kinds of material to use.

AB So one of the things that you are doing is helping those that are willing to be helped to discover directions of their own curiosity and ways to begin to dig and find some answers.

JS Yes, following your nose. I think this is important because I'm afraid with some they may come in looking for someone to give them a how to do it manual and tell them all of the right things to do and I worry, maybe this will never happen to them. I think in most courses they are going to have to do a lot of it on their own, follow their own instincts.

With reading, most of them are big readers, they've done a lot of reading (novels), so we start off with the novel and talk about the difference in reading for pleasure and how it's different than reading for a class. I compare styles and talk about why something is considered good literature. They do have a lot of reading and I would rather spend time on one section, going over it closely and sometimes I give them an exam, with no grade attached. I also tried giving objective tests on the reading.

AB Do you use the technique where the students interview each other and each one reports on what they have learned about each other?

JS Right, and then we use that to draw a profile of the class. What do we like as a group, what are the characteristics of the
group, what are the qualities? Then they are identifying with others, not just the instructor. We are courageous, somebody special. They are very proud. The things that come out are that a very special kind of person comes to school.

AB Did you see any difference in last semester's group, say between opening week and the final week?

JS Oh yes! By the end they are "together", but also very cocky. They've suddenly become very cocky about themselves and they are going out to lick the world, especially after getting their CLEP scores. And then when they do the oral report and they survive, they feel they can speak and write a lot better. They have a sense that they can evaluate; they know what they are doing wrong. They are more confident and they are excited about going on, that's the difference.

AB But I need to know whether you see an improvement.

JS I see improvement in people who come to class and are convinced that they are not reading the material properly because they are not getting the same thing out of it. People who are very dogmatic or don't want to talk about certain things are now much more open. But there are always a few that are not going to open up. They might say they feel a lot better or they still don't feel very comfortable. I do notice what I call cockiness at the end.

AB A woman in one of the classes said, "I don't know and can't estimate the worth of the Pro-Seminar because I won't know how I am going to do in college until I start next term in real courses." This is the first time I've ever heard anyone put it that way and that reminded me of something else which is what do you do to arm them for the real world, aside from their confidence?

JS We talked about that too. That usually comes up mid-way in the semester. They say that they are having such a good time, certainly that is not what college is all about. But I have something to fall back on because I went through it. So I say "you're right" but overall adult students do have a good time going back to school. Of course there were some courses, like finite math, where I had a horrible time. I tell them I didn't care if I pulled a "C" in a course I had to take. I talk about not getting too hung up on your grades. Put your effort where you feel it's most important. I think that the only way to arm them is to talk about what happened to me. And then I say don't forget that it's your responsibility to turn that class into what you want. If you are not happy, talk to the instructor and don't just go into a class and sit down and not talk to anyone around you.
Interview II, with DG, Teacher of Section P1

AB: What were the goals you had for the BGS Pro Seminar?

DG: The first time I taught it I went into the class and told them that my perception of the course was that they should get from me anything that I would have wanted to know before I started college and that I became aware of while I was involved in it. As it progressed I also felt that it was a chance for an instructor to be perfectly honest with students about what he expected from them which is not something that is part of the usual course structure. I have to say that teaching that course has changed how I interact with students in other courses because I realize that they have not gone through the BGS preparation and they should have, so that I very often give them some of that same information at the beginning of the course; before they are going to take an exam I will give them a little talk about the structure of academic writing because I don't think anyone has ever told them that. As I remember, the first time I taught BGS I spent a lot of time being very honest about things like "you can cheat your way through college if you really want to", "a lot of instructors don't know what they are talking about and you should become skilled at finding that out." I still do that to some extent but I probably don't put as much emphasis on that because I feel like a lot of that information is lost on them. They have to learn it from experience. Maybe they will remember it someday after they have had a crummy teacher but a lot of it is just too much to incorporate at that time. Now my emphasis is on making sure that they have certain specific skills and that I think I have developed--like showing them how to be clear in writing. I spell out certain steps that they should go through in an essay, any paper. There are a lot of other skills that I feel they should pick up. They have to show me that they know how to use the library, that they know how to do an oral presentation, know how to participate in classes in general, know how to read a book critically. I also try to get them into the habit of reading book reviews. Obviously the larger goal is making them feel comfortable with the experience and I think that comes with those skills, so I may start out seeming a bit hardnosed to them because I lay out the syllabus that I want them to learn these specific skills and I want them to do this paper and this essay exam and read these book reviews and to be there a certain number of times. But I think that once having gone all through this they come out with a certain confidence. I feel very positive about what the course does and I feel that it should be something that a wider population is exposed to than just the BGS students. I'm aghast at the lack of that kind of preparation of Brown
students. They are just expected to be able to start writing essays and research papers immediately and a lot of them have no exposure to it in high school.

AB  What do you do on your first day?

DG  I always do some kind of exercise that divides them into small groups and involves them in discussion. The last time I also asked them to list their feelings of what the greatest problem that is facing the world is and that sparked some discussion. I talk about the goals of the course and about what past classes had been like and I also talk a little bit about myself. Sometimes I give a little lecture about how they are entering the stage of life of activity that is going to cause a lot of changes for them. They are going to face a lack of understanding from their families because they are occupying a different role and they have all kinds of things to do and stresses that their family just cannot relate to. Also, as adults they have been used to being treated as competent people and they are presenting themselves here to be treated as kids and that there is no getting around it--when you come to school you are a kid and that is something they should be aware of.

I tell them that this is the one class they will have when they can ask anything and I gave them an example--like what to call the teacher. Is it professor, doctor? I tell them call me by my first name because most of you are older than me and I feel silly being called professor. But in a lot of cases that won't be the way the instructor wants it. They also ask how much exactly they are expected to write on a paper or essay or how many footnotes there should be.

I have on occasion given the example of the guy who ran a large company but was terrified of the college environment and would call me because he had not read the chapter and was afraid I was going to call on him and I would get angry at him and embarass him and I was open to hear those kinds of things. I always give my phone number to any class because I do not have an office so they have to have a way to get in touch with me.

AB  What kind of material do you use?

DG  I use mostly things from my field. I've started to use different things. The first semester I tried to be very balanced about it and I tried to use materials from a number of different fields because I thought they should be exposed to how people thought in history, anthropology, etc., and I think I ended up using some boring books because of that and ones that I was not personally comfortable with, and I think I was aiming a bit high
in terms of what the class could handle. After that I started using material that was pretty direct and the last two times what I've started out with is a book that I think is terrible and misleading The Hunting Hypothesis and I do that to teach them right off that they should not believe everything they read and I think that worked pretty well. I've used anthropological or sociological works that tend to shake up the basic assumptions. I've used Tally's Corner to make them think about the dimensions of poverty. I have used Small is Beautiful. In the next class I will probably use Jessica Mitfords' Unkind and Usual Punishment about prisons and a book about male liberation. I've also used the Bruno Bettelheim book about concentration camps. I have to try to balance the kinds of books I use because I know I have a tendency to use depressing books. I use films and have the student write a description of what is going on, what their perception was.

AB One of the things I was wondering about was whether the following kinds of problems come up for you, and if so, how do you deal with them? One is conflict/disagreement either between you and a student or among the students.

DG That is not a problem. I'm happy to have controversy over a subject and as a matter of fact, that is something I have tried to sponsor. I've had debates--take something controversial and have the students argue it out. It's not the question of taking the position that bothers me. It's when I get a student who likes to mouth platitudes and does not want to think about something in any way and it's often difficult. I'll try to question them on their platitudes but after a time it becomes counterproductive. Those are the ones that create problems. Sometimes I talk to a student like that after class just to say that we can agree with some of the things they say but I'm trying in class to get a little beyond that. In the last class I seemed frequently to be at odds with somebody who was like that and I did not want to get into the position of arguing. I think frequently I manage to get other people to argue. But finally when this person made a presentation of her paper it was very confused and I pointed out how it was confused. Later, when she re-wrote it I was happy to see that she had responded to my suggestions and had cleared up most of the confusion, so it was not all futile.

AB Do you have complaints such as "I can't understand this reading, it's too hard, it's too long." "I can't understand, I can't get into it, it fails to grip me in any way, shape or form."

DG That's very typical early on in the course. There is always a large proportion of the class that will say that no matter what
you give them. I think that may be a form of resistance to the whole process. I think those things generally disappear with the discussion of the topics and you can raise it, bring it around and raise some kind of concern that is of interest to them so they get sucked into it. I always start out those kinds of discussions by saying "what is this about" so other students will tell those who don't know what is happening. At least once a semester I will come in and sit down with them and say "what did this guy assign us this for" and put them in a role defending the reading and that seems to work.

AB To what extent do you think it works?

DG Well, I see changes in students over the term. People are able to state things a lot more clearly and obviously they express a lot more comfort at the end of the whole enterprise. They feel good about themselves and they have a positive feeling. They generally have some good feeling about each other, they talk to each other. I guess I have to wonder to what extent it works for somebody who really does not have the ability. In this last class I had, everybody finished and I thought that they all had fairly good writing ability. I thought they were potentially high caliber students, just from what they brought into the class and I guess that is the best we can hope for. The idea of the program is that they make use of what they got. It's not remedial.

AB Did everyone in your class pass the Writing Sample?

DG No, not at all. I felt there was a lot of discrepancy. There were a lot of people who passed whom I thought their writing was adequate but not that great.

AB Well, you said all of your students finished and most of them were writing better and had some gifts. What do we do about the people who seem not to have the "gifts". I have limited experience in this state with these classes. I did have two students who had a rough time, and basically their biggest problem was that their work cycle was such that they could not make it to class.

DG This problem generally arises with men more than women. And it's not infrequent that those people drop out. I really don't know what to say about that. It may be that some kind of longer program is needed. I have no real impression on what happens after and I've been meaning to get back to classes to see what is going on with them.
Interview III with HG teacher of Section P2

AB How did your section go?

HG There were a couple in the class that probably did not need it—they had a little college. The kinds of students in there were so diverse that I was really kind of surprised. There were some people who were probably ready to go on and do college level work without going through the Pro-Seminar, and those in between. I think for a large percentage of them that more than anything else it sort of handled the idea that Yes you can do college level work. These are things that people are doing in college. It gave them the feeling or encouragement to go on so that they believed that they were capable of doing college level work, where some of them were not sure at the beginning. They had taken the step and really were not sure that they could do it.

AB That's interesting, because it means that they started without much faith.

HG I think they did. There was a couple in the class who recognized that they needed the degree for advancement in their job and they were very nervous all the way through and at the beginning really did not have a lot of confidence.

AB Did he work for a glass company?

HG Yes, I think he did.

AB That's funny. I am very curious about him. He turns out to be one of my pre and post interviews and I would never have guessed from my interviews with him that he was the least bit perturbed. It was clear that it was very important to him to be in control. So I'm interested in the fact that, in fact, he was very anxious and was not sure he could handle it.

HG Yes, as a matter of fact, he got up to give a report one time and he was just shaking; he wasn't going to lose control; it was not that bad, but he was very nervous about it. I think one of the best things that came out of that class was the requirement to talk in front of a group of people. Most of them had never done it before and they were scared to death. He was one.

AB Well, you probably would like to know that he regards the nuclear energy issue as really absolutely fascinating stuff. He took a speech course this term along with something else and is
doing his first thing in the speech class and was going to do it on the nuclear energy issue. But that is amazing, because he was the one person that struck me as "gee maybe we should have found a way to waive the Pro-Seminar."

**HG**
I don't think so. There were some other people who I think could have gotten by without the Seminar.

**AB**
Did they know it though?

**HG**
I don't think so. It's probably useful for all of them to go through it, but a lot more useful for others. The nuclear energy issue was really a method I used to reach my objective in the class. I think one of the questions you were going to ask me was what were my objectives. Very simply, my goal was to try and get the students to organize their thoughts, think analytically and then be able to put those thoughts down on paper or in some form of speech. I thought the nuclear power study was a good way to do that because we took it step by step. We started off just grasping for ideas and tried to focus in on several things and I'm not sure that they perceived it the same way I did, or I got out of it what they did, but the object in part was to get them to start with some sort of amorphous concept--I'm for or against nuclear power and narrow it down more and more to I'm against or for it because of these reasons and I can tell you what the reasons are in some logical way. To some degree they were able to do that.

**AB**
What did you move on to after the nuclear power debate?

**HG**
I wish you hadn't asked. I was going to bring my syllabus and I forgot it. I'm not sure it's in the right order. We read the Moral Equivalent of War and Lord Jim, and they gave oral reports on Lord Jim, and also had a written test on it. We went to Trinity and saw Uncle Tom's Cabin and we had a discussion on that after. It was quite a variety. I had told them both at the beginning and at the end that what they were doing was college level work but the big difference was that in every other course they took they would be dealing with a subject and of course in this course they were not dealing with a subject; they were dealing with the basics to get them into their subject matter. I kept trying to say that I'm not giving you work that is below college level; I'm just giving you a variety of it. I really don't think I gave them quite enough, in all honesty. I think I could have piled on more. I did not push them or rush them and my thought at the time was that I did not want to pile it on so much that they were overwhelmed and maybe I went a little bit too much in the other direction.
It's very hard to tell what direction to go in. One of the things that I do remember about one of the students I interviewed from your class was that he did not care for Lord Jim, and he said it in the tone of voice that said that I would understand that. Which was good because one of the things that I need to be reminded of from time to time about an entering adult student is that they are coming out of a whole other world and they have not had the [academic] conditioning and one of the nicer things is that they are not conditioned to knee-jerk responses to big names. I like that. Lord Jim had to make it or not on its own merits.

That's right. The books were available; that is one of the reasons I picked it. One of the perceptions the students had was that Conrad and Lord Jim were white 19th century Englishmen and the rest of the world was dark. They saw that.

Was that particular group exceptionally difficult to you?

Not really. There were a couple in the class that I felt I never really reached. There was one fellow who was in the Navy before and he is the one who had been in another class and then was shifted to this one and then had a new teacher. Somehow I think he resented that. Plus the fact that he was very sure of himself and knew he could do it; and so I think I never really reached him. In terms of the class, there were some that I thought I was just never going to get to and others I thought were responding; but I did not think it was a difficult class.

Interestingly enough one woman in the interviews said, "oh that nuclear energy debate went on a long time;" "I'm afraid (and she said this in her most protective tone of voice) some of those people just really hammered on him." I thought, well that would be interesting because if my guess was that they were all edgy about getting a new teacher, then certainly one consequence might be that they talked a lot more. Maybe they did badger the new teacher, but you don't feel that particularly?

No. They wanted to end the debate. I probably carried it too far. I never felt badgered. I felt a rapport with most of the class. We were joking an awful lot near the end.

Yes, they were very fond of you. That's why the woman I interviewed got so protective; she did not want you to be pushed around.

No, I never felt badgered. In fact I had told the class that I want them to push me; I want them to ask me questions and I want them to inquire and if they do they are at least thinking. I had a class down in Kingston where for the whole semester, nothing happened. It was just deadly and this class was not like that.
OK, what else occurs to you, just free flow?

Well, by the time we were done I really did not think I had done what I set out to. That bothered me an awful lot.

Why?

Well, I had the feeling, particularly because the people gave book reports near the end on Lord Jim, that somehow they were all going to be able to sit down and think like scientists and they didn't. They were still almost spastic. I felt that I had not gotten them to think the way I felt they should.

Well, if you figure out how to do that, please let me know.

I don't know how. There was one woman in the class who had a very serious illness and was hospitalized but she did finish the semester. She was one of the best students in the class. She seemed to have a very keen perception; she read a lot more into Lord Jim than most of the others did. I was trying to think of some of the more animated discussions. Before we went to see Uncle Tom's Cabin, we had read some reviews of it and talked about what the book was about; and the play, as we understood it. We came back from the play and everyone was quite proud of the fact that we saw the play differently than a lot of the reviewers did. The play did not get particularly good [press] reviews by some people. We thought it was better than they did and at that time, at least for the moment, the class began to trust their own judgment.

Marvelous--how nice.

Well, it was nice, because one person said something and someone else said yes I agree with you, so that there was a sort of strength in unity. But we had a good discussion after the play about what it was that they were trying to do. The play was an unusual interpretation and one of the questions was what was Trinity trying to do in the play, because it was not a straight Uncle Tom's Cabin. The class was good; they saw an awful lot that I think was quite accurate in terms of what Trinity's objective was.

I think taking them to a play is a marvelous idea.

Well, it was good in this case, I know.

I think so for several reasons. One is "Culture with a capital C" but secondly I think that Americans are more sophisticated about the performing arts than they are about literature and it's therefore easier for them to do that kind of a job, even on a high
class, capital C play. Just because they have seen more movies and television than they had read books.

HG I think you are right. I think it is very important at the beginning of the semester to tell the student what it is that you are trying to do.

AB I agree with you. It is absolutely essential not only that you tell them what you are going to do but then do it.
APPENDIX D

THREE STUDENTS: INITIAL INTERVIEWS
FM, 31-40, three years high school, two children over 18, single parent just remarried; works as employment supervisor at Brown University.

Why come back? Self satisfaction. I don't feel threatened by my job. I feel, my job, I'm doing very, very well as far as my education goes. I strived to get my kids their education first. I was kinda hurt at my parents not making me finish 12th grade. I left and went to Comptometer school. Then I decided to go back, went to summer school to catch up. But I felt finally too "tall" for them so I left again. Took a cashier job at Gladdings. Had a marriage going wrong. Decided to cut it out while the kids were young. I tried RIC about 7 years ago. I was working two jobs to keep my daughter in private school (both children have had private school educations). I knew one day I was going to go back and then I think I got frightened by the whole thing. You know, being out so long. You think you're smart but then when you're standing around someone else you find out you're not so smart as you think you are. No, it's the fears and this is hard for me right now. Because just recently remarrying, a husband that's older than I am and with not having any children to go home to, I'm taking some attention away from him by coming here but I also have to look at myself. I don't know what's going to happen. I enjoy working and I feel I would want to work until I was 63, 64. If I'm gonna work I should work at something I'm going to enjoy. Like I said, I don't feel threatened by my job but I, I also realize that any day they decide I've been there too long all they have to do is change the job description to say you need a degree and this and that, but at least I'd be prepared, I could go someplace else with my years of experience and show that I was working toward a degree. I know it's going to be hard and I'm not rushing it. My study habits are not all that great. I put things off and then do them at the last minute. That won't do. That's why I stayed this evening, to see what road I should take, who do I go to with problems? I feel more comfortable now that I've talked with you. See that's like in class. I had a hard time understanding this particular book. David talked about it. I observed the whole class and they all looked as if they understood. Well I spoke up and I said, You know David, I'm having an awful time getting through this book, and come to find out after class, so was a whole bunch of the others. But see I have to [speak up] 'cause I'm the only one who's trying to help me. I'm here for a purpose. I had to make up my own mind. David, he's excellent. Once he started to explain I understood ... a lot more.

I would make up excuses through the years, but she's in college now (Oberlin) and I've run out of excuses. I get encouragement from my daughter. My husband I think he's a little jealous. He doesn't see
why I have to go to school. He says he'll take care of me. I say the money's not important--but I need my--I have this thing with God anyway. God's been good to me. Everything I touch turns to gold--not money but personally, emotionally. I feel I did the best job I could do with my kids. He doesn't understand. His happiness doesn't make my happiness. We have different goals.

I'm anxious about coming back because I've been out so long. What I need, I'm excellent on a one-to-one, but I have the biggest problem with a whole group of people. I don't have the confidence. The biggest hang-up I got is up there at Brown. The professors use the biggest words. To me when they come out of my mouth, they're not me and so I kind stay away from them. And that's bad. I broaden my own vocabulary when I use words, and it's nice to be able to talk with everybody on their own level. Anyway, that'll come later. I feel proud I've got as far without a degree.

What do you want the Pro Seminar to do for you? Not exactly sure. What I wanted it to give me was a little confidence, to get back in the swing of things, to get study habits. Then I'll know if I pass this course, then I'm going in the right direction. You have to read in this course, you have homework, you have to do research. This is what you're going to be doing till you get a degree. But you're starting right off, the second time you come to class and I think that's the best part of it. Because if he had foun dered till another four weeks, you know, you'd think, this is a cinch. This is exactly what this course is telling you: Am I ready or am I still not ready? This is where the weeding starts, this is where I start weeding myself.

Right not I don't know how much confidence this will give me and I'm very far from enough confidence. Under testing, I'm dead. My biggest problem. If I take a test and I flunk it, then I have to go back and work harder.

I don't worry. Only two things bother me, talking to a group and taking tests. That's something I promised myself to work on, that.

HM, age 51-60, married worker, high school graduate 20 years ago, no children, assists administrator, insurance company.

Took courses at the insurance company, got a certificate. Next step is the CPCU. So I took a course here at URI that leads to the CPCU, and I passed it. I realized all the people in the class were college graduates and that I was somewhat out of my depth as far as the other people in the class went. Then I thought I ought to get a college degree first. Everybody seemed to be so bright. I felt like th oldest and the dumbest in the class... although another girl who worked
with me, a college graduate, took this insurance course and didn't pass. Decided to get college degree before CPCU. Liked high school. Family couldn't afford to send me to college. A friend suggested URI. No particular worries about starting the program.

BR, age 31-40, separated, key punch supervisor, two children, high school graduate 17 years ago, 2 evening courses at RISD 2 years ago.

Took EST in Boston, opened up the world for me. Discovered there that I'm bright, alert. Peg Lawrence at CHOICE sent me here. High school was a waste of time, like a repeat of the 6th grade. At 21 decided to go to college, but had to work, the other kids were younger than me [siblings] and I just let it go. In the years I was married I stayed in adult education, arts and crafts courses. I know I'm not dumb but--everything's fearful until you're in there. Fear about what? That maybe I'm not good enough to be there. Who am I to put myself out there and think I could get into that course. Can I do the work then? Of course I've been in training all these years, taking key punch courses and it seems that my head doesn't want me to know that I've been learning all along. Expect from the course? To get into literature, writing papers, someone telling me how to use a library. Want to work with children and art. Have a friend with a Ph.D. who encourages me to go to school.
APPENDIX E

THREE STUDENTS: FINAL INTERVIEWS
Student I

RW--Post interview

Assess the Pro Sem? Well, I'm having to struggle a little now with the course I'm taking now. My husband isn't exactly gung-ho; he says you're neglecting things here, etc., cause I do have so many commitments. I realize even in the anger and the argument we had last week that at no time was I going to back down. I figured I'll just ride the waves.

Is that you or the Pro Seminar? No, I found the Pro Seminar extremely helpful, very rewarding, it was an initial big step.

Topic of Prom Seminar? It dealt with social issues, some of the background, his anthropology. We all admitted it wasn't (anthro) our cup of tea. . . What he did do that I miss extremely, was he was aware we didn't have the campus interaction, so right away he gave us all everybody's name and phone number and he gave us a feeling of togetherness and it's lasted. I miss that very much; I'm not getting to know names and I did miss a class and I didn't know anyone to call and when we did research we phoned each other, where are you looking for information, we helped each other that way.

Changes in Pro Sem? For my part I didn't find anything lacking. What I needed had been covered. The pro seminar gave me a comfortable getting-back into the feeling of going to school. That's one of the things that's held me off for years and years--this adjustment. . . I was very comfortable in the situation. They handled CLEP in a comfortable way. Things were explained clearly; I absorb slowly--I was comfortable inquiring when I wasn't sure. . . very beneficial and a very happy experience.

The others? One, the anthropology, some would have been happier with the English bit (i.e., a teacher who taught Lit.) and I thought David was being picky. . . But I was glad I was being forced into situations that if I could have glided over them I really wouldn't have learned anything.

The others might say 'Who wants to learn anthropology?' But they really knew it wasn't the contents that mattered; it was how they were getting into it. They definitely did enjoy it. Some is David's personality. He made us get together at the end and once again it made us aware of ourselves as a class and we talked over where we were
going or what we were going to do with it. It kind of gave us a sense of—I suppose, drive. Which at this stage of the game you didn't always have. [School] may be a filling-in kind of thing but then you begin to say "Well, maybe I'm going to do something else." I found out about an opening at work and thought if I had one more year of schooling, I'd apply for that job. Suddenly. It's like the argument at home: what do you intend to do with this? Well, the fact that why I'm doing it is a personal thing, he can't grasp, but suddenly even though you don't expect to do anything with it, you're suddenly aware that maybe you want to. [change jobs]

Would you have been as well off starting with another course? Never, never. The Pro Seminar gave me an initial spurt. This one feels so slow and drawn out. I have enough behind me to where I'm motivated to continue, because I have a head start, I feel. Gaining CLEP, 15 credits, was a help. Not a specific thing so much as a general feeling of enthusiasm and confidence. I used to think "Who do I think I am?" I didn't want to face failure. It's not that it was made easy for you but almost as if—if you've gotten this far you're not going to fail.

Student II

CH--Post interview

I was in the day class. I really enjoyed it. It felt good to start. I had reservations though; I felt the Pro Seminar wasn't like what a real class was like. If I could have had exams, studying if I could have tested what I was going to be getting. I'm taking two courses now and there's a lot of time that has to go into studying. I've got my hands full. The Pro Seminar was good feeling and it did get me back into the groove.

A theme? Looking at society in general... started with Frankenstein and ended with the Bell Jar. Changes throughout society and how they effect the individual. I read a lot anyway so that didn't cut into my spare time. We did have a research paper to do and that did help me.

Much writing? The paper was the main thing. She taught us about writing a paper. Library? I'm comfortable with libraries. I didn't feel I needed help there.

Any changes? Pro Seminar should be more like a--there should be studying to be done, exams to take. In this course now, I studied too long for my first exam and I went in so nervous and I came home so angry at myself. Maybe something in the Pro Sem that had to be graded? Taking the CLEP discouraged me, and when the scores came back. I'd rather take CLEP the first week. I'd begun to feel very confident about coming back to school and then I went in there and
thought What am I doing here? I had to talk myself into coming back this term. Jeannie told us CLEP doesn't matter. But it does matter. You think, Oh where have I been all my life, I don't know what they're talking about. So I'd prefer to have it first and get it over with. Besides it's contagious in a group. When I realized how everyone was so geared up to this thing I started to get real reservations about it. Maybe take CLEP even before you start the Pro Sem. CLEP should never be a one day thing, it's so draining.

Would I have been as well off starting with a regular course?
Well it's a good way to get back into school, no, the Pro Seminar is different entirely. The knowledge that you do get out of it. A course in one subject is just on that subject and the Pro Seminar covered a much broader range, it's widespread. Just the feeling of being able to go into a group that are all in the same position you are and they're all airing their insecurities, it's just a wonderful way to start out. And it's wonderful to see them all again now that we're back in our second term.

Did it help others? I would think so yes. If it hadn't, I wouldn't be seeing so many familiar faces in the halls this term! We call each other. There's a feeling of a little community that you don't have in some college classes. We have a list of phone numbers. I think some just phone so as not to feel so alone with their worries. The Pro Seminar was well worth it for me even though I'd read and all. I'm angry at myself for the kinds of reading I'd done. Just enjoyable books, you know, nothing to provoke you to think a little bit. The point was to get back and start to read something you had to stop and think about, you know, where there is not always one right answer and one wrong answer, you know, which is the only way in some novels that you read, you know, where everything is so easy and pat. And just to be able to get--I say it's a different part of your brain working. This is what I keep telling my husband. This part of my brain hasn't been worked in so many years that it's--you feel you're thinking about things you wouldn't have thought about. . . It's not just one subject, a sociology class would just be about sociology. The Pro Sem sort of gives you an overall view of what it would be like, or will be like. . . it touches on a little bit of everything really.

On exams? I meant what kinds of questions will be asked, what would I be studying? My exam this morning I'm not sure what he's looking for. The class asked him and he said we'd know after we took the test. My other class the teacher, you know what he's going to ask. He's very good. He enjoys his subject. He loves sociology. I knew as soon as I realized that, that he's got to be a good teacher.
Student III

CA--Post Interview

How did you feel when you came back to the Pro Seminar?
I was nervous. I hadn't been back to school, well it was 14 years ago
I think. Of course I had taken shorthand at RIJC and went back to high
school to refresh my typing every couple of years, and to learn electric
(typewriter).

How was the Pro Seminar experience for you?
It was very easy. . . because I had the change of instructors. The
teacher had a nice personality, so it was relaxing. . . And I think we
were too much for him at times! We came across some subjects, all the
women got heated up, and what not! It was fun. . .

Theme? The teacher had us do a paper on nuclear power and we had
a debate and we had two men in--one was pro and one was con--one
from URI and one from Narragansett Electric.

What else? We did a final paper on Lord Jim and we did a review on
a book of our own choice. It was a mixed bag but it was fun. In
fact we were awfully tired of nuclear energy. After a month of it.
In fact, after you find out how horrible it is, you'd really rather get
on with life. At least I felt it was horrible. I was on the anti-
uclear power side.

Book Report. I did Gift from the Sea. I'm taking a Sociology and
a Psychology course now. In fact I'm taking two more in the summer
and three in the fall, I hope so anyway. My son goes to school full
time next fall. I'm in night classes now, but when he's in school I
hope I can take day classes.

From point of view of your experience now. Well there could have
been more writing. He recommended to most of us to take (a writing
course). But I got 21 credits on CLEP and I have an English course
on my transcript. I was pleased. I ended up with 31 credits.
When you figure that I started in September and I thought (then) I'll
never--I'll be 84 before I get a degree. So I'm quite pleased. That's
one of the reasons I want to take two courses at a time.

Suppose you had taken CLEP but there was no Pro Sem. You gained
21 credits. How would you have felt? Well, I can only go by how I
felt when I started taking college courses here at 19 or 20. It was
different down here then. You came in one night a week and you
didn't have a sense of coming in to anything (except the course) and
you stayed a stranger. And this time I didn't because everybody was
coming back, and I didn't feel like a stranger. In fact there are
people from my Pro Seminar in the courses I'm taking now.
The Pro Seminar, see, was a definite help. I didn't know how to start then, either. I didn't know how to get a degree, what to take, who to ask.

Did it help others? I know one woman who hated it, she thought it was dull. She'd had a lot of courses, I don't know why she signed up for it. Most of the others I think it did help too. The first days most of us were all very nervous and tense. And then we got very chatty.

Any other kind of thing that should have been in the Pro Seminar? There might have been different readings. The instructor took us to the library and the librarian talked to us, and I learned things there I use in my library. I use the town library.
Pro Seminar Questionnaire

For questions 1-8 please circle answers or fill in the blanks.

1. Sex: Male ___________ Female ___________

2. Age: _______________

3. What was the last year of formal, full time, schooling you completed? (circle one)
   - High School: 1 2 3 4
   - College: 1 2 3 4

4. When was that? (Give the year) ________________

5. If you graduated from high school, give the year. ________________

6. If you earned a High School Equivalency (GED), give the year. ________________

7. Before starting this Pro-Seminar, how long had it been since you last took a course of any kind? ________________

8. If you have taken courses in anything since you stopped being a full-time student, what kinds of courses did you take? ________________

9. As you begin the Pro-Seminar, what were your feelings about starting college?

10. Now that you have finished your Pro-Seminar, what are your feelings about continuing with a college program? Why?

11. What is the most important thing that happened to you as a result of the Pro-Seminar?
12. Now that you have completed the Pro-Seminar please indicate your self-confidence about the following list of items in comparison with your confidence when you entered the course. For each item, check the one rating that best reflects the difference.

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<th>Much more confident</th>
<th>Somewhat more confident</th>
<th>Less confident</th>
<th>No Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>A. Your ability to join in a class discussion</td>
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<td>B. Your ability to write a paper.</td>
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<td>C. Your ability to get a reading assignment completed.</td>
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<td>D. Your ability to initiate contact with instructors.</td>
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<td>E. Your ability to learn whatever you choose to learn.</td>
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<td>F. Your ability to initiate contact with fellow students.</td>
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<td>G. Your ability to decide on what it is you want to learn.</td>
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<td>H. Your ability to find what you need in a library.</td>
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<td>I. Your ability to understand new information or ideas.</td>
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<td>J. Your ability to complete a degree program if you decide to do so.</td>
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13. Was there any part of the Pro-Seminar experience that was a particular help to you in feeling comfortable and confident about being in college? Explain.

14. Overall, to what extent do you feel the Pro-Seminar contributed to your feeling of confidence about yourself as a student? Circle one answer.

- Contributed a lot
- Contributed a little
- Interfered
- No effect
16. Please explain your rating in Question 15.

17. Did anything other than the Pro-Seminar contribute to or affect your confidence as a learner? Explain.
APPENDIX G

RESPONSES TO OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS
(#9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17)
RESPONSES TO OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

Question #9: As you begin the Pro-Seminar, what were your feelings about starting college?

-I was apprehensive but excited about it.

-I was scared, but determined.

-1st to get going--indecision; 2nd, certain of continuing--not sure if I really wanted to do it; 3rd, felt good, then loss of interest.

-It was an easy way to "begin again" through the required Pro Seminar, and I would, hopefully, find out if I really did want to work towards a degree.

-Eagerness to learn; timid of my placement in the college structure; proud to have the courage to go back.

-Scared! and at the same time needing to search for some new avenues of interest.

-I had been thinking about it for some time and finally my children had reached an age where this would be possible. I had the complete backing of my family which I found necessary, in order to begin again.

-Enthusiasm mixed with apprehension.

-I was extremely nervous and lacked self-confidence. I knew I wanted to come back, but I was afraid I wouldn't be able to succeed.

-Ambivalent; frightening; fear of failure.

-Unsure of myself.

-Excited, nervous, determined.

-Enthusiasm. I had no idea what to expect and was pleasantly surprised the first day.

-Feel it is not such a meaningful or traumatic experience for myself since I have been here before.

-Exciting. Since I was urged by my daughter, who is studying for her Ph.D., she is giving much encouragement.
- Back in September I really didn't think I could do it, but having completed the Pro Seminar with Jean as my instructor (great) I can't wait to go on.

- Optimistic, determined to earn a degree, it's a necessity.

- Total excitement, expectations, and inner satisfaction.

- Good, a little afraid I may not have enough discipline.

- Excited to be enrolled in a program.

- A feeling of great anticipation—coupled with a desire to learn.

- Apprehension, uncertain.

- Mixed feelings. Eager to start but insecure about ability.

- I felt that my education should continue. I wanted both to broaden my outlook and life, and to improve chances for a choice of employment if there should ever be a need.

- Looking forward to it.

- Wondering if I would be knowledgeable enough to keep up with class.

- Apprehensive, but curious.

- Looking forward to broadening my outlook and finding a new direction in life or at least a different point of view.

- Anxious about updating myself—through academic training of reading, writing and comprehension of the aforementioned.

- Whether it would be worth all the problems it would cause—whether I'd be able to carry a full time job, run a household and study.

- Great—enthusiastic.

- Challenge, interest, opportunity for self-improvement and growth, meeting new people and hearing new viewpoints.

- I was afraid and unsure of myself.

- Very insecure, afraid of failure.

- Excited, but a little bit frightened. I felt very inadequate, being away from formal schooling for such a long time.
-Sincere, no guarantee for degree, my future depends on this.

-Excited.

-I lacked confidence in myself.

-I really didn’t know what to expect.

Question #10: Now that you have finished your Pro-Seminar, what are your feelings about continuing with a college program?

Why?

-I am more apprehensive because I feel inadequately prepared, educationally, for some of the courses I will be taking.

-I want to continue on but I am afraid to handle too many courses. I think I will take it slowly.

-Still a certain reservation about the program. To pace myself and not overdo. Looking forward to learning and new friendships could be a rat race.

I prefer a combination business and human services degree so I’m still undecided. Question of time. It’s more pressure than I thought and the time is limited, plus family obligations were neglected. Whatever I gain, knowledge and friendships, is sure to be a big plus.

-I definitely do want to go on and finish, although I'm not yet certain in what field as my interests are rather into a combination of the degrees offered presently through a Pro Seminar to BGS Degree.

-I can do it.

-I feel encouraged to try to continue. In having the Pro-Seminar as the "baptism," I feel I have gained confidence and an understanding of what is expected of a college student, that is, an adult college student.

-Next semester I plan to be a full time student. The time is right for me and I'm taking advantage of this opportunity. I have already arranged a HELP loan.

-I am confident in my abilities. Earlier recognition of society's need for more educated, empathetic beings in human services--has been more confirmed.

-I would like to continue and I feel confident that I will succeed. I have gained a great deal of self-confidence.
-More positive, more goal-directed. Pro Seminar instilled feelings of self-worth and confidence.

-Great, I received 16 credits.

-Determined to finish, very positively reinforced that this is what I want to do.

-I am planning to continue because I can't go back to what I did formerly so I can see no other way but to go forward. I am leery about biology and a few other subjects. I really am interested in a few subjects but I'm not anxious to acquire knowledge in others.

-Expect to continue and get degree, but I did before I took this course.

-It will be a challenge, but an enjoyable one--I think. There is a sense of urgency and I have to hold myself back from taking too much.

-Very excited about coming back for the spring semester.

-Must continue, I enjoy the Pro Seminar, our instructor was informative, learning to read, write and study are an essential before becoming involved as a 'college-student' again.

-I'm enrolled in the spring term at URI Extension!

-Positive. I enjoyed my instructors approach to positive learning and once I got the courage to start I know I'll finish.

-Still interested in finishing the BGS program.

-I am greatly encouraged about my experience and look forward to continuing.

-Good. I think I can handle it--not too old to learn.

-Very interested in more courses. I feel somewhat more relaxed.

-A definite desire to continue. However, I am very impressed with the quality of my professor--contrary to what I have heard about continuing education. I do hope this quality will continue.

-Great. Because I've always wanted to.

-I feel I will be able to continue. This course gives good basic information on many aspects of college. Our professor was most helpful--we all enjoyed coming to class.
-I'm wondering if I'll have the time to study, go to school and still carry on a home life.

-I still feel as if there is so much more I would like to explore and digest then incorporate into my life.

-I don't know. I have to find out more about it and what I want out of it.

-That it's a hell of a lot of work. But satisfying and challenging. Right now I'm tempted to take a semester off but probably won't because I don't want to be 97 when and if I ever finish. If I decide not to continue it will be because I feel I should help my daughter get through college financially. That it's more important for her at her age than for me at mine.

-Definitely want to continue with my courses towards a BGS degree. At this point I feel that I can handle the college requirements re: time--study--and especially writing and presenting.

-I plan to continue for the same reasons I started the program--the growth and learning experiences, challenge, exposure to new ideas.

-Things have changed, I learned so much I am amazed and think I would be foolish not to continue.

-I see now that the Pro Seminar was just right for me. It was enough work to be a challenge, and not too much to take away from my other commitments. And I learned a great deal in all the reading assignments and discussions in class.

-I feel a lot better about continuing. It wasn't as difficult as I thought it would be and I was surprised that I could keep up with the rest of the class.

-A necessity, I love the program.

-Will continue. Because of the need for that degree, to advance in employment.

-I feel more confident in the different subjects that I have learned.

-I feel my study habits have improved and I know I feel I can do well in any course I take.

-I would very much like to continue. I do find that working and going to college is trying, especially with a wife and 3 children but the rewards and self satisfaction that I feel will come from the college diploma and justify the sacrifices.
Question #11: What is the most important thing that happened to you as a result of the Pro Seminar?

-I have finally started and completed my first course towards a degree--something I have only talked about for years.

-I was able to come to certain conclusions about my own life and make some long overdue decisions.

-I finished it and wrote my (dreaded) paper. Missing the friendships developed and the new awareness in reading.

-Taking CLEP.

-The CLEP scores that I was able to acquire! The various and interesting class discussions I have participated in and thoroughly enjoyed. The reading that I have begun once more to do.

-The gray matter is tickling again and it feels great!

-I was made to feel, largely by the instructor, that I had ability, and much to contribute. She greatly encouraged me.

-I've enjoyed the Pro Seminar. It has been an enrichment course for me. Reading, discussing, going to the theater, etc. I have definitely gained self-confidence as a result of this course.

-I am aware that I have the capabilities necessary for college work, but more importantly for work for which college will prepare me more fully.

-I gained a greater feeling of self-worth.

-I now know I can do college level work, after years of child care, house, etc. Corp. wife.

-Received confidence that I am capable of college level work.

-Friendships I developed. It filled a gap in my life. Reaffirmed direction in my life.

-Didn't feel I really gained that much except 3 credits towards degree.

-The results of CLEP exam.

-Gained confidence that I never had in my life.

-Learning to concentrate, participate verbally, express myself in writing.
-The feeling that I have the ability and strength to continue my education and attain a degree to continue for a master's and possibly a Ph.D.

-More confidence in myself.

-Nothing.

-Learning to read and write on the college level.

-I have confidence in my ability and in myself to use that ability to accomplish whatever I choose.

-I have been given insights to who I am, where I am, and where I would like to be going.

-Confidence that I can succeed in other courses—perhaps that do not interest me as much.

-I am more aware of a newspaper, what the library has to offer, and all the interesting people I've met.

-It gave direction and a goal for me to work toward.

-Awareness of reading and comprehension of that subject.

-I learned to question what I read—I learned that not every book is boring simply because it doesn't fall into the category of my favorite subjects.

-Met many new people and I now feel that we all had the same problems with re-newing ourselves personally as well as educationally.

-Opportunity to gauge my abilities and weaknesses, re-training in area of study habits and in-depth reading and comprehension, acquiring good study habits.

-I became more aware of the world I live in the problems that there are which was something I didn't stop to consider before. I also read a number of intelligent books which seemed difficult in the beginning but as I went along was able to understand more.

-I had the opportunity to see that I can make it in college. This is where I want to be. Learning and sharing.

-I gained self-confidence!

-Found my own level of knowledge.
- Brought about a better understanding of fellow classmates, their needs, problems, etc., know I have a better understanding of myself through them.

- Gained more confidence in myself.

- Improve study habits.

- I can't really say anything significant happened.

**Question 13:** Was there any part of the Pro Seminar experience that was a particular help to you in feeling comfortable and confident about being in college? Explain.

- The Pro Seminar to me, was looked forward to every week. I enjoyed the class immensely, but it did nothing to build confidence and until I can take a regular college course and pass, I won't have any confidence in myself as a student.

- Yes! The instructor. I was really afraid, but she was so real and so honest. I probably would not have felt so positive about the class if I had another instructor. She helped the class immensely to look out from different perspectives. She made us feel very good about ourselves.

- Definitely the teachers approach and understanding. Being exposed to other student's feelings on going back to school and the sharing. Both helped as we shared our insecurities and acceptance was there.

- The teacher was really great at making the students feel perfectly comfortable and worthy of being listened to "for their own ideas and observations." She was able to lead and support the students into better performances, I believe. The rate of growth in participation for some of the students, is almost measurable. Their self concept and esteem has been upgraded by finding out that they really could produce the needed work.

- The fellow students were my peers. I was not competing with the young student.

- The instructor had a unique way of making whatever you happened to say in class discussion seem valuable and important. She was open and taught us, almost indirectly, that it was ok for us to be open and expressive.

- One of the very first things that the instructor said was totally encouraging. She told the class that we as adults, were the very best students. I credit her as being a real influence on the class in a positive way.
The ease, honesty and personality of the instructor as well as classmates helped me to feel very comfortable and to look forward to returning next semester.

I think the attitude of the instructor was of great help in my growth. She always positively reinforced our ideas and gave me the confidence I previously lacked. I think the books that she asked us to read forced me to think and evaluate my feelings about the future.

Instructors and fellow classmates support of me and acceptance of my ideas. I was very unsure of my writing skills. The essays and term paper helped me to evaluate these skills.

Talking with other students and finding out they were as unsure of their ability as I was of mine.

The instructor was very supportive and encouraging to me.

The informality of the class gave me a comfortable feeling about speaking out but I would do so only on a subject I was interested in or felt confident I knew about. Some students brought in many aspects of their private life and I found this hard to understand.

The instructor was one of the most uplifting people I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. She made each of her students feel very special, and I thank her for that.

Yes, the instructor was excellent, did not pressure but got material across, focused on essentials, easy to talk to, which helps to build confidence.

The instructor was open to discussion and did not embarrass a student who asked what might be an innane question. This may be unusual for professors, but does help with my self confidence.

Yes, instructor was great in having all his students participate in a manner that you did not realize you were participating until you actually finished!!!

No.

Knowing that I could handle the course fairly well gave me confidence to continue.

The teacher--he gave you confidence in yourself and encouraged student/student-student/teacher contact, bringing many of us out of our shells.
-The instructor is a relaxed person. He enabled me to feel more confident about my own opinions. I found the debating and writing assignments helpful.

-I had a fear that the time invested would be a waste of time—that the class, because of its nature, would be talked down to or not expected to participate as fully as a full-time student. I no longer feel this.

-Our professor was a great help—he has paved the way for us—and being with students with similar problems made all of us at ease.

-Meeting people, who felt as I did and were about my age, starting to work on a college degree made me feel very comfortable. This has encouraged me to continue.

-The whole approach was really good for me because it gave me the opportunity to get help in being more confident which then seemed to open my mind to be more college-oriented.

-No—and I probably wouldn't until I had a comparison with other courses.

-The professor's accessibility even though I didn't avail myself of it.

-I feel that the relaxed and unhurried atmosphere in every class, whether lectured or class participated, was due entirely to the precedent set by the instructor. Several times I felt that another more overpowering or domineering instructor would have scared me about my ability to perform college assignments. He has been great!

-This means of re-entry into college is preferable to a "cold start" as other students are in substantially the same situation, as far as experience, schooling, and motivation is concerned. It allows you to proceed at a reasonable rate in keeping with your abilities and desire to perform.

-My instructor who gave a very interesting course and made sure we understood important concepts. Helped us understand the reading material, which was difficult since we weren't used to that type of reading.

-The small group was great. We felt more like a family than a class. I never felt alone or lost, ever.
My contact with fellow students. I felt that I would be the only one that was away from school for so long and wouldn't be able to grasp it. In talking and working with others, I realized that we all share the same feelings no matter how long we've been away from school.

I had 'readers' to help me do the work and testing that I needed (I am blind).

Just proving that I can make the time sacrifice.
Question 14: Was there any part of the total Pro Seminar experience that was a difficult hurdle for you or that shook your confidence in yourself as a student? Explain.

-The CLEP examination results, verified my feelings of inadequacy and have made it very difficult for me to stay determined to go on toward a degree. Before the exams I was extremely determined and somewhat confident.

-No.

-Writing the paper as it always held me back from going before. Really trying to remember what I read (in detail). The memory bank just isn't what it was. That shook me and the writing sample as I felt I wasn't as smart as I thought.

-The CLEP tests in natural and physical science. I do not think that this test should be obligatory. I think more people would be able to do better generally in the rest of the CLEP tests if they did not have to take tests they absolutely knew nothing about.

-I did not get 3 credits for writing sample. That was crushing for a day or two. On the whole, this was not long term.

-I sometimes had difficulty in some reading assignments to glean symbolism and higher and deeper insights from certain readings. I learned I wasn't alone in this--it didn't shake my confidence, but made me realize I could no longer read superficially.

-In the beginning, the class would get bigger every week. It is obvious that the course is designed for a large amount of student input, so I feel that the number of students should be limited. By the end of the course the number of students had dwindled down making it easier for discussion, etc.

-No.

-N/A.

-No comment.

-I have a problem with public speaking in a formal group and didn't want to give my oral presentation of my report.

-The writing sample shook my confidence very little. Also, I had difficulty with the research paper.

-No.
The CLEP exam was difficult.

Yes, I am terrified of public speaking.

No.

No.

I was totally bored by the course and I hope that I will be able to get back in full swing after the course has ended.

I didn't feel that I was as smart as some of the other students and I wondered if I would be able to make it.

Some of the required reading was dull and uninteresting.

No.

To write on paper what it is I wanted to say on an essay.

No.

My problem with punctuation, when writing an essay, gave me moments of discomfort and definitely shook my confidence.

No.

No. Dividing my time.

Oral discussion is a hurdle I haven't gotten over--I have a tennible time contributing orally.

Yes. I had great difficulty with the reading assignments--the length of them. But I was a slow reader--and have improved.

No.

Yes. The very first exam given us. It also at the same time gave me confidence in attempting CLEP. The instructor also a great aid in the CLEP experienced.

Speaking in front of the class.

I had a hearing loss that was discovered in class discussion.

CLEP tests.
-I expected to learn more about how to go to college. I figured that was the purpose of the Pro Seminar. I had contact with 3 instructors, each doing their own thing, but the discussion of returning to college was non-existant.
Questions 15 and 16: Overall, to what extent do you feel the Pro-Seminar contributed to your feeling of confidence about yourself as a student? Please explain your rating in Question 15.

-No effect. Due to the lack of exams, no studying required and informal discussions, I do not feel I can assess myself as a student. The assignments were of great interest to me, therefore I enjoyed doing them. I do not know how I will do with more difficult courses that may require some previous knowledge that I lack.

-Contributed a lot. I know I'm not the best student--but it gave me a desire to go on. Before I wouldn't start a thing because I felt inadequate.

-Contributed a little. (No additional comments)

-Contributed a lot. I just enjoyed thoroughly the class, the discussions and the general participation in this renewed learning experience.

-Contributed a lot. The course or P.S. experience helped me to realize how much I had learned in the past.

-Contributed a lot. The instructor gave of herself in making each and every one of us feel welcome--that we should be here—that we can do it if we want to. She never let us sell ourselves short!!

-Contributed a lot. (No additional comments)

-Contributed a lot. I have done much independent study and work in practical areas and I have realized I need additional education in academics for balance, and I am positive about achieving it.

-Contributed a lot. I felt good to know that while many students shared the same ideas and feelings, it was also ok for me to be independent and think for myself.
-Contributed a lot. The seminar essentially eased me into college program—allaying my fears and doubts. Course no threat as a pass-fail course.

-Contributed a lot. I now question how to best spend my time. I feel with proper handling of my time I can do the work needed for a degree.

-Contributed a lot. After not being involved academically for several years I was gratified to learn I could still think in those terms.

-Contributed a lot. It gave me the confidence to participate and feel well received by both teacher and students.

-No effect. Already proved myself an A-B student and switched to this degree program with 54 credits.

-Contributed a lot. The results of writing sample and research papers. Comments made by instructor gave me the feeling that, yes, I can do anything I make up my mind to.

-Contributed a lot. I just feel like I have something to give.

-Contributed a lot.

-Contributed a lot. I did not feel too old to return to school.

-Contributed a lot. The instructor and students help each other to have confidence and it was a "working together" group.

-No effect. I find the Pro Seminar very boring. It has done nothing for me except giving me 4 credits.

-Contributed a lot. The introduction to college through the course informed me that college was not all that mysterious that I couldn't handle it.

-Contributed a lot. I'm sure it was a combination of the course and the teacher.

-Contributed a lot. (no additional comments)

-Contributed a lot. I feel that if I can complete this course satisfactorily, I can look forward to completing more.

-Contributed a little. I had confidence I need to finish.

-No effect. I did feel I could do well before I entered the program.
-Contributed a lot. I did better than I expected.

-Contributed a lot. I really feel I can tackle a new project with confidence.

-No effect. (No additional comments)

-Contributed a little. I've almost always kept an interest in outside courses—even crocheting. So I feel pretty confident about that.

-Contributed a lot. Separated the men from the boys.

-Contributed a little. I felt relatively confident that I could pursue college experience, but Pro Seminar provides a good starting procedure for returning students. URI personnel appear very supportive of students of this program.

-Contributed a lot. (No additional comments)

-Contributed a lot. I was sure I would be the dummy of the class. Now I can see we were all about the same and to see that felt good.

-Contributed a lot. My feeling of confidence was brought out as we went along each week.

-Contributed a lot. Acquired new knowledge.

-Contributed a little. (No additional comments)

-Contributed a lot. I learned to be more outspoken about things that I have a knowledge for.

-Contributed a lot. Not having the pressure of a grade, I was able to relax more and enjoy the course. At the same time learn new skills and sharpen some old ones.

-Contributed a little. The pro seminar did little other than prove that I could make the time sacrifice.
Question 17: Did anything other than the Pro Seminar contribute to or effect your confidence as a learner? Explain.

- I am assuming other courses will require more studying and time, in my household, is at a premium.

- No.

- Teachers availability. The classmates and my family (their patience, encouragement and continual support really helped) plus a certain friend.

- Yes. I failed the writing sample after I already had received an "A" for Eng. 110.

- Also taking Psych 113. A very rewarding experience. It is fascinating how the two courses were related--through reading and studies, a "must" to take them together (that is if one is in Jean's class).

- Association with people has always been a valued part of my life. College has provided exposure to many varied types of personalities who have different educational backgrounds and goals. This has been helpful to me for self-evaluation.

- I think just being with a group of adults and discussing topics was helpful. The fact that I did well on the CLEP exams was also a big boost. I don't think they should ever grade the pro seminar. It would make people nervous and probably drop out.

- Success with CLEP and writing sample.

- Yes, the 12 credits from CLEP that I received.

- Finding so much reinforcement from the staff and fellow students.

- Passing the CLEP test.

- I do feel it is a good experience for anyone starting out, but it was not very beneficial to me at this point. I was bored very much of the time and feel it shouldn't have been required since I had already taken Scratch. I do think it's a good program and a good degree or obviously I wouldn't have switched to it.

- Yes. Association with other students all of whom gave me additional confidence. They are all so enthusiastic about their future and in my opinion I believe they all will do well.
-The instructor was the key person.

-Other courses I am taking, scores on CLEP test were good and helped with self-esteem and confidence. Other students are interested in the class and seem determined to earn a degree--feel that we all have similar goals, that contributes to confidence.

-Yes. I am determined to get a degree.

-Being able to read and absorb the five books which were assigned gave me confidence.

-No.

-The scores on the SCAT test.

-Working in library.

-Especially our evening in the library showed where we can gather important information.

-When people heard I had returned to school they respected me for what I was doing and I felt I should live up to their expectations.

-Working as a group with my class was also a contributing factor.

-The teacher even though I was angry with him many times and couldn't understand why we had to read what we did--but it all came together at the end.

-Yes. I've enjoyed the new ability in dealing with finding things I need in the library--so that I don't feel like a foreigner there any more.

-Yes. I would have never read Conrad, or Miller on my own. From the seminar I discovered new authors and a chance to share them with other people. Before the seminar just reading the newspaper was a drag.

-Talking to people who have been through this already.

-My instructors were very helpful. Also my fellow students.

-The CLEP test. Because of the scores I received it made me feel less confident.

-No.
The learning aspect never bothered me. It was just seeing if I could do it, and I feel that I can. For me, the Pro Seminar was basically just like any other course I will take and did little to "prepare" me for going to college. (A course in penmanship might help.)