

ABSTRACT

WILLIAMS, STELFANIE SHERRELL. The Experiences of Older Adult Dislocated Workers in Community College Non-credit Workforce Training Programs. (Under the direction of Dr. Tuere Bowles.)

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who participated in community college non-credit workforce training programs. The research questions guiding the study were: a) what are the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?, b) how do older adult dislocated workers, who attend non-credit workforce training, navigate the community college contexts?, 3) what facilitates the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?, and 4) what hinders the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training? The study utilized an interpretive narrative approach, guided by hermeneutics.

To develop narratives about older adult dislocated workers' experiences, data were collected through interviewing ten older adult dislocated workers, age forty and older, in non-credit workforce training programs in a southeastern community college system. In addition to semi-structured interviews, data were collected via participant demographic forms, observations and reviews of documents. The findings revealed how older adult dislocated workers navigate through community colleges by taking risks and by relying on knowledge from other dislocated workers and employment case managers, as well as support from family and faith. The findings also suggest that older adult dislocated workers need enhanced support from community college, particularly in the areas of academic and technical preparation, and student services.

From the findings, four conclusions emerged regarding the experiences of older adult dislocated workers in community college non-credit workforce training. These conclusions were: a) older adult dislocated workers experience community college non-credit training as workforce development rather than adult education, b) older adult dislocated workers obtain significant academic advising from outside of the community college contexts, c) part-time instructors, who maintain a connection to their professions, facilitate the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers, and d) outdated models of community college non-credit workforce training hinder the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers.

Based on the findings, I recommended further research that examines three areas: a) the experiences of older adult dislocated workers in other contexts, b) the roles of part-time faculty in non-credit training, and c) the delivery of non-credit workforce training programs. As well, I offered three recommendations for practice: a) early interventions provided by community colleges for older adult dislocated workers in non-credit workforce training, b) the development of educational pathways for older adult dislocated workers to continue education, and c) improved coordination between workforce agencies that serve older adult dislocated workers.

The Experiences of Older Adult Dislocated Workers in Community College Non-credit
Workforce Training Programs

by
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my three children, the greatest gifts I've ever known. Thank you for your patience and sacrifices during this journey. To my husband, my soul mate—you were a wonderful support as I accomplished this goal. And, to my parents—thank you for instilling in me the love of God, the importance of education, and the power to persevere. Those values helped me to complete this dissertation.

BIOGRAPHY

I was born in Manhattan New York, but spent most of my formative years in North Carolina. I grew up with my parents, Benjamin and Shirley, and my sister Elizabeth in central North Carolina. I attended high school at The Asheville School in Asheville, North Carolina. From there, I earned a dual baccalaureate in Public Policy and Spanish from Duke University, and later a Master in Project Management degree from Western Carolina University. Working in rural health and journalism, before making education my life's work, initiated my concern with poverty and quality of life issues.

As a community college educator, I have served as a teacher and most recently as an administrator. My administrative roles have included adult education coordinator and campus manager, director of continuing education, dean of continuing education, and vice president of economic and community development. I began my doctoral studies at North Carolina State University to inform my work as an educator, and in doing so I renewed a passion around the issues of poverty and worker dislocation. This dissertation represents the culmination of my studies and is an expression of the esteem I hold for community college students.

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I would like to begin by acknowledging the older adult dislocated workers who participated in this study. Your stories inspired my life and my career.

As well, I would like to acknowledge the professors who guided me through the process. In particular, I am grateful for the support of my advisor Dr. Tuere Bowles, who encouraged, facilitated, and guided my doctoral studies and dissertation project. Your commitment and support remind me why I entered the field of education. In addition, I greatly appreciate the members of my dissertation committee whose wisdom and expertise assisted me: Dr. Paul Bitting, Dr. Pooneh Lari, and Dr. Pamela Martin.

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PREFACE

On January 26, 2011, President of the United States Barack Obama, in his State of the Union speech, declared the world a different place. He described a global economy that has changed our understandings of education and the workforce as we know it. His words follow and clearly illuminate the social context shaping the lives of nearly two million older adult dislocated workers, such as the ones who participated in the following research study:

Many people watching tonight can probably remember a time when finding a good job meant showing up at a nearby factory or a business downtown. You didn't always need a degree, and your competition was pretty much limited to your neighbors. If you worked hard, chances are you'd have a job for life, with a decent paycheck, good benefits, and the occasional promotion. Maybe you'd even have the pride of seeing your kids work at the same company.

That world has changed. And for many, the change has been painful. I've seen it in the shuttered windows of once booming factories, and the vacant storefronts of once busy Main Streets. I've heard it in the frustrations of Americans who've seen their paychecks dwindle or their jobs disappear – proud men and women who feel like the rules have been changed in the middle of the game.

They're right. The rules have changed. In a single generation, revolutions in technology have transformed the way we live, work and do business. Steel mills that once needed 1,000 workers can now do the same work with 100. Today, just about any company can set up shop, hire workers, and sell their products

wherever there's an internet connection.

Meanwhile, nations like China and India realized that with some changes of their own, they could compete in this new world. And so they started educating their children earlier and longer, with greater emphasis on math and science. They're investing in research and new technologies. Just recently, China became home to the world's largest private solar research facility, and the world's fastest computer.

So yes, the world has changed. The competition for jobs is real. But this shouldn't discourage us. It should challenge us. Remember – for all the hits we've taken these last few years, for all the naysayers predicting our decline, America still has the largest, most prosperous economy in the world. No workers are more productive than ours. No country has more successful companies, or grants more patents to inventors and entrepreneurs. We are home to the world's best colleges and universities, where more students come to study than any other place on Earth (White House Office of the Secretary, 2011).

The older adult dislocated workers in this study did remember a time when jobs were available and security was promised for older workers. Transformed by these greater social forces and personal circumstances, they learned and developed as students in the uniquely American innovation of higher education—community colleges. Herein are their stories.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

By year-end 2008, more than 10% of unemployed workers were over age fifty-five, and this represented a 58% increase for this group from the prior year (Rix, 2009). As workers live and work longer, and the economy has become more global, older workers increasingly are displaced. Between 2005 and 2007, one-fourth of all long-tenured workers who became dislocated were older adults (Levine, 2010). By 2009, 1.9 million adults fifty-five and older were unemployed. For those adults at least age forty, relative displacement rates have increased each decade since the 1980s (Rodriguez & Zavodny, 2003).

Increases in older worker dislocation reflect both demographic shifts and an emerging global economy such that dislocated workers age forty and older face dim prospects for reemployment that matches their prior skills (Levine, 2010). In 2010, older adult workers comprised 31% of the labor force as compared to 11% in 1995 (Johnson & Mommaerts, 2011). But while the older available labor force expanded, United States' jobs shrank. Between December 2007 and February 2009, 8.4 million jobs were lost (Katz, 2010). The largest sector of job loss was manufacturing, representing 23% of dislocations, followed by wholesale and retail trades (Levine, 2010).

Amongst older workers, those without college degrees are most likely to be displaced (Friedel, 2008). Older adult dislocated workers are two times as likely to attend a community as a four-year college or university (Heidkamp & Van Horn, 2008). As the only form of public higher education directly focused on vocational education,

community colleges attract older adult dislocated workers seeking training for reemployment. Sixty-four percent of all non-traditional higher education students attend community colleges (Levin, 2005). Community colleges maintain an open door philosophy and provide opportunities to underserved populations (McCabe, 1997). Older adult dislocated workers are attracted to established institutional characteristics including convenience, flexibility, and affordability (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

From inception, community colleges have been connected to workforce development. The institutions were established to respond to the need for trained workers as the nations industries expanded, and many began as industrial training centers (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Throughout the years, public policy has served to strengthen the connection between dislocated workers and community colleges (Grubb, Badway, Bell, & Bragg, 1997). The most prominent legislation affecting dislocated workers, the Workforce Investment Act (1998), provides financial assistance to students retraining at community colleges. As well, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provided for increased funding to community colleges and dislocated workers seeking to upgrade skills including \$200 million in competitive grants for colleges, increased Pell Grant financial aid funding for students, over \$40 billion to be used by states on education, and \$3.95 million in job training assistance (Brumbach, Conner, & Van Nostran, 2009).

In the new economy, much focus has been placed on the ability of non-credit workforce training programs to prepare older adult dislocated workers to reenter the workforce quickly (Van Noy, Jacobs, Korey, Bailey, & Hughes, 2008). Non-credit

workforce programs include short-term occupational training as well as job-readiness or employability courses, and may also include occupational assessments, continuing education, vocational certifications, or any number of educational activities that provide skills for work (Pennington & Williams, 2004). Older adult dislocated workers are motivated to return to the workforce swiftly because they have an expected shorter term to generate earnings coupled with other barriers to reemployment. Older workers face long term unemployment as compared to their younger counterparts (Rix, 2009). As Zippay (2001) indicates “prolonged unemployment and underemployment are most severe among older individuals” (103). Older adult dislocated workers also face loss of job-specific skills value or human capital gained over time (Farber, 1997), loss of tenure (Farber, 1997), lack of technological skills (Friedberg, 2001), and more competition from an available younger workforce (Farber, 2003). Older adult dislocated workers view community college non-credit workforce training as a way to mediate these disadvantages and to obtain reemployment (Heidkamp & Van Horn, 2008).

While non-credit programs are a rapidly expanding market, community colleges still emphasize credit-bearing programs. In 1995, the community college non-credit student population was only 90% of the total credit student population; Yet by 1999, non-credit enrollment exceeded credit student enrollment by 8%, reflecting a tendency toward non-credit training (Van Noy et al., 2008). By 2009, five million students participated in some form of non-credit education (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2010). In a study of enrollment patterns, Mullin and Phillippe (2009) identified the availability of workforce training programs as a predominant factor in community

college enrollment surges. Community colleges have always responded to the changing needs of the workforce and community (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

To remain relevant in a dynamic world, community colleges perpetuate partnerships within their communities. Community colleges have formed partnerships with universities and high schools and most recently with business and industry (Vaughn, 1999). As college-level education became more significant to employers, community colleges broadened their programs to include two-year vocational degrees that prepare students for work, two-year associate degrees that provide transfer credit to universities, high school concurrent enrollment options, as well as baccalaureate-level and online education (Levin, 2007a). Community colleges also offer enrichment, avocational, and other programs that serve community interests (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Based on a global economy, and fueled by the recession that began in 2007, community colleges are engaged heavily in non-credit workforce training.

The global economy requires workers to continuously and rapidly upgrade their skills, and these needs are best matched by community college non-credit workforce training programs which can be customized to local needs and delivered swiftly (Giloith, 2004). Workforce changes occur more frequently as corporations streamline and outsource as a result of globalization (Friedman, 2005). Community colleges too have become more entrepreneurial, seeking out support of and responding to corporate influence (Roueché & Jones, 2003). As a result of corporate influence, Levin (2000) argues community colleges produce rather than develop students:

By the twenty-first century, the mission of community college had less

emphasis on education and more on training, less emphasis upon community social needs and more on the economic needs of business and industry, less upon individual development and more upon workforce preparation and retraining. (pp. 3-4)

In the global world, workforce training at community colleges equates to economic development (Conner, 2005; Roche, 2001). More than half of all states specify a direct role for community colleges in economic development (Van Noy et al., 2008).

Consequently, some researchers claim that contemporary workforce development diverges from learning for its own sake to a business model of community college education that accounts for multiple stakeholders (Slaughter & Rhoads, 2004). Public policies, political influence, and media attention to retraining have served to fund and perpetuate the notion of learning explicitly for the purposes of work.

Critics argue that the interests of politics and businesses compete with those of students. But by serving various stakeholders, community colleges build alliances that sustain their roles in higher education (Dougherty & Townsend, 2006). On a national level, the American Association of Community Colleges established a Center for Workforce and Economic Development with the expressed mission to “build community college capacity to align priorities, strategies, and resources with those of workforce and economic development partners” (AACC, 2009, para. 2). Community colleges are following suit. As a result of the growth of workforce training, Adelman (2000) describes a new parallel universe, paramount to a cultural shift in education, comprised of industry-

recognized, post-secondary credentials emerging from the expansion of non-credit activities or programs.

This cultural shift has promoted community college non-credit workforce training as an avenue for older adult dislocated workers to gain employment (Van Noy et al., 2008). Yet, the return on investment in training for older adult dislocated workers is questionable (Wirtz, 2005). Older adult dislocated workers face wages losses of up to 19% or more (Johnson & Kawachi, 2007). In addition, researchers note that older adult dislocated workers face particular issues not ascribed to traditional students such as depression (Gallo et al., 2000), financial constraints (Couch, 1998), chronic health problems (Kessler, House, & Turner, 1987), and mental health issues (Warr & Jackson, 1985). Limited research exists regarding the how these factors impact older adult dislocated workers as they navigate community college non-credit workforce training programs. To be sure, older dislocated workers enter community college programs as a way to address unemployment, but we know very little about their actual experiences (Beeghley, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

The number of older adult dislocated workers returning to community colleges for retraining is expected to increase as adults live and work longer and face higher rates of workforce displacement (Wiener, 2007). Dislocated workers “who are still fairly new targets for public training programs, have significantly different skills and circumstances. Researchers know very little about how training affects these workers” (Wirtz, 2005, p. 49). There is a gap within the literature regarding the experiences of dislocated workers

and how they navigate the community college context as students in training programs.

Furthermore, non-credit training programs are often “overlooked within institutional research” (“Faces of the Future,” 2009, para. 1). While non-credit workforce programs have outpaced growth of credit programs (Van Noy et al., 2008), non-credit programs and participants are minimized within the extant literature. In their study of non-credit workforce training, Van Noy and others explain: “data on the specific characteristics of non-credit workforce education students are limited” (p. 9). Data specific to older adult dislocated workers in non-credit training does not exist within the literature.

Though dislocated workers are minimized within the literature, there is limited available scholarly research on older adult learners that indicates older students may engage college differently than traditional age-students. Regarding older students Kerka (1995a) asserts that “they participate more in community life than campus life, and they have stronger ties to career culture than academic culture” (para. 8). Yet, further research is needed to understand the storied experiences of older adult dislocated workers in community college training programs.

Purpose of the Study

The intention of this research is to study the particular experiences of older adult dislocated workers that do not possess a college degree and participate in community college non-credit workforce training programs. Community colleges play a particular role in adult education as they have often “geared toward educating an older, working population” (US Department of Commerce et al., 1999, p. 13). Economic shifts,

combined with an increasingly aging workforce, spawned a growing population of older adult dislocated workers in community colleges. This study explores how older adult dislocated workers, ages 40 and older in community college retraining programs, make meaning of their experiences. Specifically, the research focuses on how these older adult dislocated adults find their way as community college students. The questions guiding this study were:

- 1) What are the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?
- 2) How do older adult dislocated workers, who attend non-credit workforce training programs, navigate the community college context?
- 3) What facilitates the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training programs?
- 4) What hinders the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?

Utilizing narratives within an interpretive framework, this study seeks to understand the experiences of older adult dislocated workers as non-credit students and how they navigate their community college contexts once enrolled in non-credit workforce training programs. Moreover, the research questions suggest the use of a qualitative research design in order to obtain detailed and rich insight into the experiences, beliefs, and perceptions of older adult dislocated workers attending community college non-credit training programs.

Conceptual Framework

This research is concerned with understanding the experiences of selected older adult dislocated workers as students. This study relies on an interpretive narrative framework (McQueen & Zimmerman, 2006). Thus, an interpretive approach is used to interpret the narrated experiences of individuals. The interpretivist paradigm is appropriate for this study because this research explores how participants interpret and make meaning of their experiences (Grix, 2004). Interpretivist research assumes that reality is socially constructed, and as such, understandings of the storied lives of participants emerge from interaction between the researchers and participants (McQueen & Zimmerman, 2006).

The particular interpretive framework of this study draws from hermeneutic tradition. Hermeneutics represents a range of practices involving interpretation. Traditionally, hermeneutics involved the analysis and interpretation of texts (Prasad, 2005). However, in its contemporary usage within qualitative research, hermeneutic philosophy may guide the interpretation of the meaning of any enduring cultural object beyond text including stories told (Dilthey, 1976). Ricoeur (1984) likewise asserted that human action and experience might also be considered as text. The model of the hermeneutic circle characterizes the process of co-construction in an interpretive narrative. The hermeneutic circle, as used within an interpretive narrative study, is a dialectal process of engaging the individual participants' stories as well as the larger social contexts, back and forth, until an understanding emerges (Crotty, 2003).

According to Patton (2002), the hermeneutic circle offers a process for formally

engaging in interpretation, particularly when new understandings are sought. Thus, a hermeneutic approach to interpretivism fits well with studies that draw on more than one body of theory (Williamson, 2006). As there is no specific body of literature that examines the experiences of older adult dislocated workers in community colleges, this study uses a multidisciplinary approach that is informed by a range of fields that are relevant to dislocated workers in community colleges including adult education, adult learning, student development, and workforce development. Through an interpretivist lens, this study seeks to explore the experiences of dislocated workers in non-credit training, how they navigate the community college contexts, and what facilitates or hinders their experiences.

Significance

Older adult dislocated workers increasingly enter non-credit workforce training, yet their experiences are minimized within the literature (Van Noy et al., 2008). In 1995, the community college non-credit student population was only 90% of the total credit student population. Yet by 1999 non-credit enrollment exceeded credit student enrollment by 8% reflecting a tendency toward non-credit, short-term training (Van Noy et al., 2008). Five million students participate in non-credit training programs according to the American Association of Community Colleges (2010). An increasing population of older adult dislocated workers is drawn to community college non-credit programs in order to upgrade skills rapidly for employment. Still, as Heidkamp & Van Horn (2008) assert, “there is insufficient information about...older worker programs. Even less is known about which strategies are most effective in assisting older adult dislocated

workers. More research is needed...” (p. 14). To this end, this research seeks to explore the experiences of older adult dislocated workers in community college non-credit workforce training programs in order to expand theoretical and practical understandings about older adult dislocated workers participating in non-credit training.

First, this study aims at expanding the theoretical understanding of older adult dislocated workers. Ortiz (1995) describes the challenges faced by dislocated workers in community college programs, but does not account for those who participate in non-credit programs:

Their age may make them feel as if they should know how to manage the community college environment, but their break in formal education may leave them feeling more disconnected from the college culture and environment. Their sense of identity may be deeply shaken when they take on the role of student, or more seriously by the loss of employment. (p. 67)

Ortiz and other researchers (Astin 1984; Tinto, 1993) recommend student support services as a way to mediate these challenges. But while college support services may mediate some challenges for credit students, dislocated workers participating in non-credit training typically do not receive the advising and student services available to credit students (Grubb, 1999), and non-credit students represent disadvantaged backgrounds at a much higher rate than credit students and typically reflect non-traditional enrollment patterns (Bailey & Morest, 2003). Therefore, the existing literature may not address theory relevant to older dislocated workers that participate in non-credit

workforce training programs.

Secondly, this study has practical significance for the following stakeholders: adult educators, community college practitioners, social and human service agencies, policy-makers, and individuals facing job loss. Adult educators may gain additional understandings to inform their practice of instructing older dislocated workers. Community college staff and faculty may gain new perspectives on serving these students. Social and support services agencies as well may obtain new knowledge of how to support older dislocated workers. This study may be beneficial to policy-makers in terms of understanding and valuing the needs and experiences of older dislocated workers in retraining programs. Various public policy address issues related to dislocated workers and workforce development and there is insufficient qualitative data on which to base these policies. This study seeks to provide new and richer understandings for those who serve older adult dislocated workers, but for dislocated workers as well who may find some interest or value in the stories of other older adult dislocated workers.

Limitations of the Study

While the intent of the research is to provide new knowledge, as with all types of research, interpretive narrative studies are limited by their scope. Scott and Morrison (2006) describe four central limitations that can apply to interpretive narrative studies. First, interpretive narrative studies do not take into account fully multiple perspectives. Interpretive narrative research is concerned primarily with the understanding from the perspectives of the participants and does not seek generalizable explanations. While hermeneutic interpretivism requires interplay between participants' individual stories and

the larger social context, the research remains grounded by the narrative focus on the participants' experience of the larger social context. This leads to the second limitation, which is that interpretive narratives do not explicitly engage institutional or discursive structures that impact individuals. Interpretive narratives are concerned with interpreting a slice of storied, humanistic experience in-depth, unlike other forms of qualitative inquiry such as ethnography and phenomenology that may examine the breadth of issues. Thirdly, interpretivist narrative research is limited by the fact that individuals do not readily reflect. Interpretive narrative studies engage participants in reflection, and reflection is not inherent. Finally, because the stories are interpreted between the participants and the researchers, narratives are a social manifestation that may evolve (Scott & Morrison, 2006).

In addition to theoretical limitations, this study also has practical limitations. Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007) expound on the fact that narratives are stories that are continuously revised and therefore can be difficult to interpret. How the participant experiences and then tells, and how the researcher interprets and retells may differ. The practice of interpretation is wrought with challenges. This study only addresses selected older adult dislocated workers. It does not seek to make broad generalizations about all dislocated workers, but rather to illuminate the experiences of ten different storied lives. As well, the study explores older adult dislocated workers at community colleges and may not inform the practice of working with other dislocated workers or in other forms of higher education. Finally, interpretive narratives capture the story of the experience from the participant as viewed at the particular time of the study, and the practical application

may change with time (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Definitions of Terms

Adult learner. A learner in an educational institution who is at least twenty-five years-of-age (Kim, 2002).

Dislocated worker. This study relies upon the definition of dislocation as presented by the Workforce Investment Act and commonly understood in the workforce development arena. According to this understanding, a dislocated worker is an individual who has been terminated or laid off, or has received a notice of termination or layoff, from employment as a result of any permanent closure of, or any substantial layoff at, a plant, facility, or enterprise (Workforce Investment Act, 1998).

Economic development. This study embraces the use of term economic development as put forth by Blakely. In this way, economic development is the process of creating wealth through human and intellectual capital (Blakely, 1997).

Non-credit training. Non-credit training is popularly defined within the field of education as courses or activities carrying no academic credit toward a degree, diploma, certification, or other formal academic award at the institution, often includes workforce training (Van Noy et al., 2008).

Older adult learner. This study refers to an older adult learner as an individual who is participating in an educational activity and is at least age forty (Chen, Kim, Moon, & Merriam, 2008).

Older adult worker. This study reflects the view of law of an older dislocated worker as an individual who is at least forty years of age (Age Discrimination in

Employment Act, 1967).

Workforce development. Because workforce development is used in myriad of fields and contexts, this study reflects the broadest use of the term that encompasses the many activities that shape workforce development in this county. Therefore, workforce development is defined within this text as any mechanism by which learners are trained or prepared for work (McCabe, 1997).

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

As Americans work longer and are displaced from employment at higher rates, community colleges training programs incur subsequent enrollment surges of older adult dislocated workers (Biemiller, 2009; Bushong, 2009). Four out of five of the students enrolled in community colleges seek to upgrade skills to reenter the workforce (VanDerLinden, 2002). At community colleges, adult learners comprise 45% of students (US Department of Education, 2004). This study focuses on exploring the experiences of older adult dislocated workers in non-credit training. The research questions guiding this study were:

- 1) What are the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?
- 2) How do older adult dislocated workers, who attend non-credit workforce training programs, navigate the community college context?
- 3) What facilitates the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training programs?
- 4) What hinders the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?

Relatively little research exists on adults in community colleges, even less so regarding dislocated workers. Kasworm (2005) notes, there is “extremely limited empirical research regarding the adult student identity in a community college context”

(p. 4). Research, specific to the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who are community college students does not exist within the available literature. Therefore, this chapter reviews other scholarly bodies of literature that are relevant to older adult dislocated workers in community college non-credit workforce training programs. Included in this review are dislocated worker data and descriptions, adult development and adult learning theories, workforce development programs, and the role and mission of community colleges in workforce training.

Dislocated Workers as Adult Learners

Workers, who are learners, are primarily defined within the scope of workforce literature (Solomon, 2005). Solomon characterizes the learner-worker as “the learner who is a student in an educational institution and one who is the subject of various educational pedagogies....their learning in some way relates to their current or anticipated professional or workplace practices” (p. 2). Therefore, in describing an older adult dislocated worker who participates in training, it is useful to examine the descriptions of workers within the workforce development literature.

In workforce development literature, a dislocated worker is one who is involuntarily terminated from employment by no cause of his or her own due to downsizing, outsourcing, or closure of a company (Workforce Investment Act, 1998). An older adult dislocated worker is not so easily defined (Heidkamp & Van Horn, 2008). Research on older workers has categorized them variously with study categories beginning at age forty, forty-five, and over fifty in different studies (Pitt-Catsouphes & Smyer, 2006). The Age Discrimination in Employment Act protects workers forty and

older, while the United States Department of Labor and the Census Bureau refer to older workers as those who are at least fifty five (Heidkamp & Van Horn, 2008). Still, retirement norms would depict an older worker as those beyond sixty-five (Pitt-Catsouphes & Smyer, 2006). Acknowledging that the determination of older worker status is fluid depending on time and situation, Munk (1999) offers a description of the older worker impacted by a global economy: “In the new economy, the skills that came with experience count for less and less. Suddenly forty is starting to look and feel old” (p. 37). Therefore, the age at which one is considered an older worker has to do with social and historical context as well as the particular concerns faced by individuals during their career (Pitt-Catsouphes & Smyer, 2006).

Defining an older adult learner is equally challenging. Characterizations of older adult learners within adult education literature reflect the history of the field as well as the particular issues faced by adults as non-traditional students. In the 1970s, nontraditional became the term of choice for adult learners and any new groups to the collegiate sphere (Kim, 2002). This included blacks, Hispanics, females, and adult students. Today, non-traditional is still used to refer to older adult learners because their needs and experiences are viewed as different from traditional-age students, and because the nature of adulthood itself is variously understood.

There is no concise definition of adulthood. Nontraditional typically refers to adult students who are ages twenty-five and older (Kim, 2002). However, since the average age of a community college student is twenty-nine, non-traditional age for community college students may be viewed as older than that for higher education in

general (Ortiz, 1995). The American Association of Community Colleges categorizes community college demography as twenty-one and younger, twenty-one to thirty-nine, and forty and older (AACCC, 2010), thus broadly characterizing the community college older adult learner as at least forty years old.

Although there is no canonic definition of older adult dislocated workers or older adult learners, qualitative research within the social sciences often discusses adulthood in terms of development.

Adult Development

One of the foremost thinkers concerning adult development was Erik Erikson. Erickson significantly influenced understandings of adult development by postulating that individuals develop into adults through eight life stages (Erikson, 1950). Each life stage includes its own virtues or favorable outcomes. Erikson puts forth eight stages of development across the span of life: infancy, toddler, preschool, childhood, teenage, young adult, middle adult, and senior (Gross, 1987). The stages applicable to adult development—young adult, middle adult, and senior—provide a framework for understanding identity development of adults. During the young adult stage, generally ages twenty to forty, individuals seek to assimilate but also find their own individuality. The virtue associated with this stage is love as young adults seek intimate relationships. The stage that follows, middle adulthood, from about forty to sixty-five years old, is a time of work and family. For adult students, this may mean a difficult balancing act between the commitments of home life and school life, and for dislocated workers, it can also mean a real disconnect generated by unemployment. The senior stage begins at

sixty-five and involves a time of reflection and coming to terms with life and death (Gross, 1987).

Cognitive theories of adult development. From a cognitive standpoint, Jean Piaget provided additional knowledge about how adults develop with his theory of cognitive development. This theory posits four stages of mental development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational (Piaget, 1983). Children experience these stages in route to adulthood, and there are three principles that are maintained during each stage: organization, adaptation, and equilibration. According to Piaget, learners develop schemes as they progressively organize new information. When information is gathered, learners adapt it through two modes, assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the taking-in of new information, while accommodation involves change prior knowledge to account for new information. Finally equilibration involves the learner finding a balance between assimilated and accommodated knowledge and between their individuality and society (Flavell, 1996).

In the pattern of Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg envisaged adult development as cognitive. Kohlberg's model describes moral development and asserts that moral development is the premise of adult development (Kohlberg, 1971). The first stage in his model is Obedience and Punishment in which learners based ethical decisions on external consequences or ideologies of what is right and wrong. The model includes three levels of moral development with two stages in each level. The first level is pre-conventional morality in which individuals make decisions based on consequences to individuals. During the second level, conventional morality, individuals begin to view morality as

doing good acts and involving others. By the third level, post-conventional morality, adults base morality on human rights and universal principles (Crain, 1985). However, Kohlberg also assumed that stages unfolded the same regardless of culture or context and that development, although it may be influenced by social activity, is a cognitive process.

Adult development has been portrayed in phases also. Stages imply a step-wise, sequential configuration of development, whereas phases indicate that an individual may be at different levels of maturity or understanding in different areas of life. Phases also allows for the influences of emotions, culture, status, power, and society. “To be able to reason—that is, to assess evidence, make predictions, judge arguments, recognize causality, and decide on actions where no choice is evident—is often presumed to be a mark of adulthood” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 56). In phase-based adulthood, individuals may demonstrate adult qualities in some areas but not others. For example, one might be an “adult” as a supervisor who leads within the workplace and yet be child-like in their interactions at home. The view of development in phases supports the idea of development as influenced by social interactions.

Social theories of adult development. Gould (1978) describes adulthood as dismantling illusions from childhood. In this way, adults learn new ways of thinking and construct new knowledge as they have new experiences, but social structures play a key role in this development. According to John Dewey (1963), these experiences manifest by interactions between external conditions and an individual's needs and capacities. Development therefore occurs in a social context. However, how adults experience this interaction is influenced by how they make sense of the events that comprise the

experiences. Culture, gender, class, and other contextual factors can shape how and what people know and thus their course of development. Dewey understands education to be life-long and mediated by context and identity.

Levinson, on the other hand, focuses attention on the social nature of and influences on development. Levinson's life structure model emphasizes the impact of family, work, personal, and social commitments on adult development (Levinson, 1986). While Levinson outlines six stages of adulthood from adulthood transition to late adulthood, the significance of his research relates to his ideas of stable periods and transition periods. During the stable period an adult makes life choices; during a transition period an adult undergoes change. One may go through stability and transition during different phases of adulthood (Sugarman, 2001).

Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg viewed development as cognitively-based while Levinson's model examines the external influences on development. Still Kegan's (1982) theory of adult development goes further to incorporate feeling, impulses, the idea of transformation, and examines internal influences on learning (Merriam et al., 2007). Kegan's theory places a higher value on the person as knowledge constructor. Individuals become more open to the myriad of ideas as they mature through the five phases of incorporative, impulsive, imperial, interpersonal, institutional learning, and inter-individual. During adulthood one may demonstrate institutionalized values such as universal principles, and if an adult reaches the inter-individual phase, the individual understands one's own thinking as well as that there are many other perspectives (Merriam, Caferella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Adult Learning

Within the field of adult education, learning is viewed as a catalyst for development, and an individual that is continuing to learn is continuing to develop. Adult education emerged with influences from philosophers and educators such as John Dewey. Dewey (1916) defines education as “reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases one’s ability to direct the course of subsequent experience” (p. 74). His comments uphold that learning, and therefore knowledge, is empirical—gained from experience, and is instrumental in providing opportunity for change in one’s life. Dewey further asserted that learning is optimized when “pursued under conditions where the realization of the activity rather than merely the external product is the aim” (p. 297). Thus, adult education is viewed as centered on the unique needs of adults and on a dialectic educational relationship.

Learning as a cognitive process. The decisive shift in adult learning has been greatly influenced by the model of andragogy, proposed by Malcolm Knowles (Knowles, 1980). Andragogy, as opposed to pedagogy, describes the ways in which adults learn. Andragogy is based on four assumptions: adults are self-directed, adults possess personal histories and prior knowledge, 3) motivation occurs when learning is socially relevant to adults and 4) adult learners are interested in learning for problem-solving (Merriam, 2001).

Like Knowles, Kolb presents learning as a process. Kolb provides four elements of the process to include concrete experiences, reflective observations, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Chaves, 2006). Experiential learning, as

defined by Kolb, is the process of knowledge creation through experience. The strength of the model included its focus on the experiential nature of learning and the inclusion of reflection. Yet, critics of Kolb claim the model views learning as straightforward, purely cognitive, and neglects outside influences such as hegemony on the learning process (Jarvis, 1987).

Learning as a social experience. Viewing learning as dialectical, Jarvis (1987) contends that learning is not simply a cognitive process, but a social experience. Jarvis' model portrays the complex nature of learning that situates the learner within a context. The outcome of learning, according to Jarvis, is to be a more experienced individual, but a situation could leave one unchanged or even harmed as a result. Jarvis proposed that a situation could result in non-learning, non-reflective learning, or reflective learning. Within non-learning, an individual may act on presumption, non-consideration, or rejection of the experience. In non-reflective learning, the individual can demonstrate pre-consciousness, practice, or memorization. Pre-consciousness learning is that which occurs when one is not actively engaged. Practice includes mimicry and imitation, whereas memorization is reproduction of what is taught. In the reflective, and deepest, level of learning exists contemplation, reflection, and experimentation. An individual might think about a subject, or could go further to reflect on learning about a subject. Experimentation occurs out of curiosity and as individuals seek to ways in which to understand.

Drawing upon earlier research connecting learning and doing by Lave (1988), Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) propose situated-cognition theory that explains how

adults learn within experience. The theory of situated cognition puts forth that learning is tied to authentic activity. In this way, adult learners must be active participants in learning that reflects how the knowledge applied in real life. Situated cognition does include embodied ways of knowing that acknowledge spiritual and somatic experiences, but Kolb's research draws a direct connection between experience and transformation, but transformative learning as theory was fully realized by Jack Mezirow. Mezirow put forth learning as a mode to transformation or becoming critically aware of one's own assumptions and those of others (Mezirow, 1997). At the center of transformative learning is perspective transformation. Mezirow indicates that when an individual undergoes disorienting dilemma, the experience can lead to critical reflection that changes one's worldview. Mezirow's work brought together adult development and adult learning: "I do not believe in adult stages of development or that adult development is different from adult learning...I believe that adult learners are at different phases in their movement toward achieving an emancipatory understanding" (Mezirow, 1998, p. 67).

Emerging understandings. New understandings of other ways of knowing are emerging, and theories regarding spiritual and somatic learning (Tisdell, 2003); ethnicity (Holcumb-McKoy, 2003), and race and gender (Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2009), among other non-traditional understandings are becoming more prevalent. However, "despite the increase in nontraditional students in US institutions of higher education, most academic programs are built upon traditional student models" (Philibert, Allen, & Elleven, 2008, p. 583). Because of their orientation to application, community colleges rely heavily upon traditional theories of student development to guide their

practice (Ortiz, 1995).

Adult Student Development

Community college student services are geared to traditional students who continue along a step-wise educational pathway (Ortiz, 1995). Older adult students, on the other hand, typically have breaks in education, established personal and professional commitments outside of college including family, partners, financial obligations, and civic duties (Donaldson & Graham, 1999). Kasworm (2005) found that adult students in community college may face anxiety due to their age and incorporation with younger students. Adult students also judge themselves through beliefs of age appropriate expectations and ideal student images (Kasworm).

Barriers. When adult students are also dislocated workers, they can face other barriers to success: “they participate more in community life than campus life, and they have stronger ties to career culture than academic culture” (Kerka, 1995, para. 8). Add to that the stress of job loss and identity shift for dislocated workers that may induce additional psychological stresses (McAtee & Benshoff, 2006). As a result, older adult dislocated workers-turned-students may engage college differently and may view its meaning through work values. “Their age may make them feel as if they should know how to manage the college environment, but their break in formal education may leave them feeling more disconnected from the college culture and environment” (Ortiz, 1995, p. 67). Particularly, as older adult dislocated workers return to college for retraining, they bring their experiences and worker identity to the educational setting; their student status is complicated by many converging factors including age, unemployment, personal

commitments, and life issues (Farber, 1997).

Community colleges typically have high attrition rates across the board. For their adult learners, risk for attrition is greater (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2004) identified seven risk factors for attrition; Adult learners at community colleges exhibit these characteristics more often than traditional students: 1) delayed post-secondary enrollment, 2) high school drop-out or GED graduate, 3) part-time college enrollment, 4) financial independence, 5) dependents other than a spouse, 6) single parent status, and 7) full-time employment. Adult learners bring life circumstances into their roles as students including finances, family responsibilities, and issues of work, or in the case of dislocated workers, job loss. Researchers find that dislocated workers may deal with issues of depression (Gallo, Bradley, Siegel, Kasl 2000); financial constraints (Couch, 1998); chronic health problems (Kessler, House, & Turner, 1987); and mental health issues (Warr & Jackson, 1985). Dislocated workers deal with a convergence of complex issues impacting their lives.

Student life. As Valadez (1993) affirms, “Because of the complexities of their lives, these students need a system to support their emotional and day-to-day needs” (p. 37). Astin (1984) posits that adult learners must be engaged and involved in student life at college. Astin includes both academic and social aspects of college as critical to student success. Based on the theory of involvement, the more time and effort a student places on activities regarding college, the more learning will occur. Following this theory, adult learners would need to devote significant energy to integrating into community college life in order to achieve positive learning outcomes.

Extending Astin's theory of involvement, Tinto (1993) suggests that since adult students bring different experiences and their life circumstances into college, institutions should form communities for these students. He offers an interactionist model that emphasizes meeting students' needs in a natural setting. In essence, community colleges must engage adult learners academically and socially.

The academic nucleus. For many adult students with time constraints, the nucleus of activity is the classroom. Therefore, some researchers contend community colleges are best served to meet the student there and to provide support services through the academic departments (Tinto, 1997). Because the classroom experience is so critical for adult learners, other researchers have suggested centering student support services within academic departments (Rendon & Taylor, 1990). Chickering and Reisser (1993) stress that by "scaling down the environment" and positioning activities within the students' natural settings, such as academic departments, adult students may gain increased autonomy and feel more comfortable as a student.

Similarly, Bean and Metzner (1985) found that academia has the largest influence on adult students. Adult learners are "not greatly influenced by the social environment of the institution and [are] chiefly concerned with the institutions' academic offerings" (p. 489). As such, faculty and classroom experiences play a critical role in the outcomes for adult learners. Donaldson and Graham (1999) also determined that the classroom connects adult learners to the college. Adult learners, according to Donald and Graham, do not engage the community college in the same ways as traditional-age students. In their model of college outcomes, Donaldson and Graham outline six factors related to

adult learner completion: 1) prior experience and personal biography, 2) psychosocial and value orientations, 3) cognition, 4) the connecting classroom, 5) the life-world environment, and 6) outcomes. College student support services act to mediate the challenges faced by adult learners by understanding these six factors as impacting their student life.

Student support services can come in three key forms identified by House (1981). These are instrumental support, informational support, and appraisal support. Instrumental support involves tangible mechanisms such as financial aid, while information support includes advising and information. Appraisal support recognizes the value of praise and encouragement for adult learners. Still, despite all interventions, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2005) determined that for high risk students even the most engaging institutions may find student persistence evermore challenging.

Persistence. Simmons (1995) studied dislocated workers specifically. The research involved dislocated workers from the timber industry that entered training programs at a community college. She found that lower skilled dislocated workers with less previous education persisted longer. Those lower skilled workers generally enrolled in full-time in training programs for occupations with higher salaries. Based on the study, Simmons recommends four interventions for community colleges serving dislocated workers: 1) career counseling that includes skill and occupational assessments, 2) strong basic skills core curriculum to support students needing remediation or support, 3) an emphasis on applied science and technology to provide training to those who may lack

technological skills necessary for reemployment, and 4) short-term, rapid training programs that provide utility to the students.

Other studies (Sorey & Duggan 2008; Seftor & Turner, 2002) highlight finances as a critical issue in student persistence. Research connects the availability of financial aid and funding for support of expenses associated with education to the completion rates of students in training programs. Chiefly, for non-traditional students such as dislocated workers who no longer have work income, financial issues are significant (Choitz & Widom, 2003).

Workforce Development, From History to Public Policy

Public funding is a significant source of support for community college workforce training and other workforce development programs (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Modern public policy that promotes workforce training derives from a series of historical legislation established to fund and advance workforce development (McCabe, 1997).

The Smith Hughes Act of 1917 was the first national legislation that directly addressed workforce training. The Act was campaigned for by labor unions and provided for agricultural training for individuals entering the farming industry. Smith-Hughes served as the seminal legislation in the development of vocational education (Camp, 1987). In 1929, as the Great Depression struck increased emphasis was placed on workforce development; Workforce development was heralded as the plan out of the economic depression. The central mission of the New Deal legislation was to provide immediate employment in public works projects to unemployed citizens. The program failed to deliver long-term, stable employment, and critics mocked the program for its

lack of support for training (McCabe, 1997). The program was viewed by critics as providing employment to individuals who were not prepared for work. Thus by 1940, the Works Projects Administration changed focus to vocational training and education, leading to the recognition of workforce training, rather than job creation alone, as pivotal to workforce and economic development.

What followed would be a series of legislation aimed directly at broad workforce training. The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1963 was a program that provided training for workers who were displaced from their jobs because of new technologies (McCabe, 1997). It was complemented by the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and the Adult Education Act of 1966, both of which supported educational institutions as providers of training. In 1972, President Nixon authorized the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) that provided training to work in public service.

Later workforce legislations included work readiness skills training and job placement assistance (McCabe, 1997). The Job Training and Placement Act of 1982 called for service to disadvantaged youth and adults and persons lacking job skills. JTPA made available labor market data and federal technical assistance regarding employment issues. JTPA established local Private Industry Councils or Workforce Investment Boards that would oversee funds and services (McCabe, 1997). The Family Support Act of 1988 further strengthened the connection between learning and work. As a part of FSA, the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) project established direct job readiness training, job placement, and basic skills education for unemployed and underemployed

individuals.

By the 1980s, public policy specifically connected workforce training and community colleges. The Carl D. Perkins Act of 1984, reenacted in 1998 and 2006, served to encourage and fund community college vocational education programs. The act established direct linkages for high schools curricula to connect with community college vocational programs. The 2006 version of the act replaced the terminology vocational education with “career and technical education” (Meeder, 2008). The School to Work Opportunity Act of 1994, similarly, proposed skills training for school-aged youth in order for them to gain career-oriented skills necessary to enter the workforce (Paris, 1994).

In 1998, the single largest workforce development legislation emerged. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) would replace JTPA. Serving more than six million participants annually, WIA provides an array of employment services to dislocated workers and disadvantaged adults and youth (*Workforce Investment Act*, 1998). The services provided include: employment placement services, labor market and related information, funding for training to improve skills, and case management. As a part of the Workforce Investment Act, states were mandated to provide one-stop services delivery that provides access to support services within a central community organization (McCabe, 1997). In addition, WIA funded educational grants for students to attend training programs, the bulk of which are delivered by community colleges.

Workforce Development Mission of Community Colleges

The role of community colleges in workforce development is one that has existed from the beginning, but expanded as a result of economic changes, workforce development public policy, and later as a result of corporate and private interests. In the establishment of community colleges, Cohen and Brawer (2003) note, “most prominent was the need for trained workers to operate the nation’s expanding industries” (p. 1). Community colleges increased workforce development following World War II. With the onset of veterans from the war, unemployed workers seeking new skills, and a rapid expansion of high school graduates, community colleges focused attention to vocational education and workforce training. Present-day community colleges are described as the “center of the workforce development universe” as they have solidified their role as the only form of public education specifically geared at preparing the vocational workforce (Forde, 2002, p. 32).

Community colleges are favored to deliver workforce training programs because of their ability to respond to local need (Davis, 2008). The local need is comprised of a complex network of stakeholders who represent government, business and industry, and learners, among other constituents. As such, workforce development encompasses a broad range of community college activities related to learning for work. According to McCabe (1997), community college workforce development corresponds to four areas of workforce training: 1) programs for new entrants to the workforce, 2) programs for dependent individuals such as unemployed or underemployed, 3) retraining programs to improve skills, and 4) contract or customized training provided directly for an industry.

Practical examples include customized training, industrial training, contract-based instruction, pre-employment training, skills assessments, job placement, and job retraining; as well as activities that extend beyond education to include faculty job-shadowing partnerships with industries, facilitation of workforce and corporate forums, separate databases and facilities focused on economic development, and partnerships with other community agencies involved in workforce development (Pennington & Williams, 2004). Community colleges provide programs that are developed to meet learners' needs for training. Proponents of workforce development for learners conclude that it results in increased capacity for workers and can be a way out of unemployment or poverty (Alssid, Gruber, Jenkins, Mazzeo, Roberts, Stanbuck-Stroud, 2002). Still others view community college workforce development as driven by political and corporate interests.

Political influence. Just over half of all states legislate a direct role for community colleges in economic development (Van Noy et al., 2008). State and local governments utilize community college workforce training to lure industries to their areas, and federal government views local workforce development as maintaining the United States' global competitiveness (Dougherty & Townsend, 2006). The American Association of Community Colleges endorsed the role of community colleges in economic development and established a Center for Workforce and Economic Development with the expressed mission to "build community college capacity to align priorities, strategies, and resources with those of workforce and economic development partners" (Center for Economic and Workforce Development, 2009, para. 2). Workforce

training in the new economy equates to economic development, and community colleges have adopted their roles in promoting local economic development (Conner, 2005; Roche 2001).

Corporate Influence. Local economic development ultimately favors businesses and industries (Blakely, 1997). Corporations seek to cut costs by outsourcing training to community colleges.

As government funding no longer meets the demand and funding needs of community colleges, institutions have embarked on corporate resources. Cohen and Brawer (2003) explain “When colleges were small, they made modest demands on public funds. Few people outside of the institutions cared where the colleges’ money came from or how they spent it” (p. 141). Yet, modern community colleges must rely upon corporate and private funds to generate revenue in non-credit training. For this, corporations elicit robust influence on the mission of community colleges. As Levin (2000) describes it:

By the twenty-first century, the mission of the community college had less emphasis on education and more on training, less emphasis upon community social needs and more on the economic needs of business and industry, less upon individual development and more upon workforce preparation and retraining (pp. 3-4).

Specifically, community colleges have expanded non-credit workforce training programs to accommodate corporate interests. Non-credit programs receive less public funding than credit programs, and because the guidelines for non-credit education are not

restrictive, they more easily accommodate the rapidly changing nature of business.

Non-credit community college workforce development. Non-credit workforce training programs provide continuing education, occupational certifications, or employability skills. The coursework typically awards continuing education units (CEUs) or industry-recognized credentials. As they do not require accreditation, the training programs can be developed and delivered quickly and be customized. Non-credit programs generally have flexible schedules and convenient locations for students (Van Noy et al., 2008).

Non-credit workforce programs also present challenges. These occupational programs cost much more and can tap college resources greater than liberal academic classes (Dougherty & Townsend, 2006). In addition, occupational students represent disadvantage backgrounds at a much higher rate than academic track students (Bailey & Morest, 2003) and typically experience non-traditional enrollment patterns. Non-credit students are the most economically challenged of all occupational students and non-credit certificate attainment ultimately results in lower socio-economic attainment across the career span of the student (Dougherty, 1994).

Training utility and outcomes for dislocated workers. Workforce training is “an investment in which upfront costs are incurred to obtain future benefits” (Jacobson, LaConde, & Sullivan, 2005, p. 60). Yet, the economic outcomes for dislocated workers who participate in non-credit workforce training are discouraging. Heidkamp & Van Horn (2008) found that dislocated workers may struggle to find employment after training. And for those dislocated workers who do obtain post-training employment, they

are faced with seeking new jobs in vastly different employment sectors that do not compensate for their prior skills, tenure, or previous salaries. The likelihood is that, after retraining, dislocated workers will obtain employment that pays significantly less than employment prior to retraining, including wage losses of up to 19% (Johnson & Kawachi, 2007). Heckman (2000) asserts that “adults past a certain age...obtain poor returns to skill investment” (p. 39). This is not a positive indicator for dislocated workers who tend to be older adults. Furthermore, short-term certifications, as opposed to degree credentials, ultimately result in lower socio-economic attainment across the career span of the student (Dougherty, 1994). Yet, despite research that indicates negative employment prospects, researchers project that enrollment in non-credit community college training will expand as adults live and work longer and face higher rates of workforce displacement in the new economy (Wiener, 2007).

Chapter Summary

This study seeks to explore the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who participate in community college non-credit workforce training programs. Because of the convergence of work and education that influences the experiences of older adult dislocated workers (Solomon, 2005), this literature review examines the literature within the fields of adult education and workforce development.

This review begins by describing in detail the various descriptions that serve to characterize the older adult dislocated worker and older adult student. Because dislocated workers are minimized within the present scholarly literature, this chapter relies upon relevant multidisciplinary literature including theories of adult development, adult

learning, and student development; followed by literature concerning workforce development history, public policy, and the role within community college missions.

The literature within this review indicates that older adult dislocated workers are a growing population of concern for community colleges. In this review, the foundational theories of adult development, adult learning, and student development serve to frame understandings about adult learners. Then, this review examines the history, economic ties, and public policy regarding workforce development. Finally, this review covers the role and mission of community colleges as they provide workforce training in the new economy.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter serves to describe the design of this qualitative study. This study utilized narrative inquiry from an interpretive perspective. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of older adult dislocated workers in non-credit workforce training programs at community colleges. In particular, this research delved into how older adult dislocated workers make sense of and give meaning to their experiences as students. Through a qualitative methodology, the research explored the following research questions:

- 1) What are the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?
- 2) How do older adult dislocated workers, who attend non-credit workforce training programs, navigate the community college context?
- 3) What facilitates the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training programs?
- 4) What hinders the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?

This chapter outlines the methodology that guided the study. In the following sections, I address the design of the study, narrative inquiry, sample selection, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability, as well as researcher bias and ethical considerations.

Design of the Study

Martin (1980) indicates that research problems are worthwhile if there is little research that exists about the topic or if the research has not been applied sufficiently. Further, Howe and Eisenhardt (1990) assert that research questions should drive the design and methodology selected. In this research study, questions not previously addressed within the literature regarding the experiences of older adult dislocated workers were best explored through qualitative methods that allowed for study of the complexities within their experiences as students (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative research allowed for subjective and contextual elements of participants' stories to emerge (Merriam, 1998).

Qualitative research design aims at understanding the meaning of human action (Schwandt, 2007). This qualitative study was grounded in the constructivist view that reality is multidimensional and socially-constructed (Creswell, 2003). The study sought to illicit accounts of older adult dislocated workers navigating community college contexts amidst the background of a new economy. As a qualitative researcher, my intent in exploring the experiences of older adult dislocated workers was to maintain the participants' perspectives as central to the research in order to gather richly descriptive data as I co-constructed their narratives (Merriam, 2002).

In addition, the study sought to give voice to older adult dislocated workers in non-credit community college training, who are absent from extant scholarly literature of adult education. Present research has focused on the impact of workforce dislocation to institutions that serve them rather than the integral experiences of those who actually

have been dislocated (Wirtz, 2005). Narratives allowed for the preservation of particularity within their experiences (Reisman, 1993).

Narrative inquiry. The research I performed endeavored to understand the lived experiences of older adult dislocated workers who participated in community college non-credit workforce training programs. Narrative inquiry was a way of “getting at” those experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narratives have been described variously as a sequence of events that tells a significant story (Denzin, 1989), human activity of structuring experiences (Kramp, 2004), or a process of inquiry about storied lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As such, narrative methodology acknowledges the processes of investigation, analysis, and composition. Narrative research seeks to explore the human experience in such a way as to capture essence of the experience, and narrative research studies are presented in a form that makes those experiences salient (Kramp, 2004).

Interpretive narratives. Narratives generally are situated in a theoretical or conceptual framework such as interpretivism (Creswell, 2003). Narrative methods particularly suit an interpretivist framework as narratives themselves are a natural process of interpreting lived experience (McQueen & Zimmerman, 2006). Telling stories is a process of meaning-making (Merriam, 2002). This research engaged the stories of older adult dislocated workers, serving as co-constructors with me, the researcher, as I interpreted those stories within the broader social context. Interpretive narrative design allowed me to probe both inner meanings and outer manifestations of the participants’ experiences (McQueen & Zimmerman, 2006).

Sample Selection

Qualitative research supposes a purposive sampling process. Morse and Field (1995) purport that the participants should have special knowledge related to the research questions posed. Miles and Huberman (1994) add that establishing key criteria is a manner of obtaining a purposive sampling. With this in mind, participants selected for this study were identified based on relevant criteria as key informants able to address the motivations, perspectives, and experiences of older adult dislocated workers participating in non-credit workforce training. The four key criteria involved in participant selection were:

- Age: the participant was least forty years of age
- Employment: the participant was dislocated from work without cause
- Education: the participant did not possess a college degree
- Enrollment: the participant attended non-credit workforce training in 2010

Criterion sampling. The first criterion for the study was that a participant was at least forty-years-old. As there is no concise understanding of older adulthood within scholarly literature, this study relied upon definitions from sources related to the identity of older adult dislocated workers as workers and students. Specifically, I referred to student demographic data described by the American Association of Community Colleges that classify students that are ages forty and older as a category (AACC, 2010), older adult education literature which broadly defines older adulthood as no less than forty (Chen, Kim, Moon, & Merriam, 2008), and national policy within the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (1967) that defines an older adult worker as forty and

older (Pitt-Catsouphes & Smyer, 2006).

The second criterion was a participant must have been dislocated from employment. The Workforce Investment Act (1998) describes a dislocated worker as having been involuntarily terminated from employment by no cause of his or her own due to downsizing, outsourcing, or closure of a company. For this study, it was essential to establish this criterion of dislocation to differentiate the participants' experiences from other forms of unemployment such as voluntary, retirement, or termination by cause, in order that themes may be drawn around the particular experiences of dislocation.

The third criterion was that participants in this study must not have possessed a college degree prior to participating in non-credit training. Friedel (2008) finds that older adults without college degrees are those most likely to be displaced. As well, this criterion was necessary such that themes could be drawn around the experience of navigating the community college context for individuals without prior long-term college engagement. Individuals with college degrees may have been more prepared to navigate the community college context.

As Tierney (1995) suggests, narratives focus on capturing depth of experiences. To gather richly descriptive narratives, it was important to deeply engage a small number of participants. For this study, ten participants were selected to be studied over the course of six months, May through October, 2010. The participants were identified by providing research study literature to directors of community college non-credit and workforce training programs. Directors were mailed information regarding the study and asked to nominate participants who met the criteria for the study and to share the research study

information with staff and students. Nine of ten participants selected to participate in this study were nominated from community college staff, one participant was encouraged to participate by a community advocate who became familiar with the study. I contacted the students who were nominated by community college staff, while the participant, who was informed by a community advocate, contacted me to participate in the study. Research data regarding the experiences of the selected participants was collected through participant demographic forms, semi-structured interviews, observations, and reviews of documents.

Data Collection

Qualitative researchers use inductive data collection methods that are appropriate for understanding meaning in context (Merriam, 1998). The particular data collection methods employed by qualitative researchers depend on the theoretical underpinnings of the study (Crotty, 2006). Interviews, observations, and reviews of documents are three qualitative data collection methods that are consistent with interpretative narrative frameworks and thus were utilized in this study (Creswell, 2007).

Participant demographic forms. As a way to collect basic foundational data, I surveyed each participant about basic demographic information. The participant demographic forms were completed at the beginning of primary interviews in order to gather background information that would support the interviews and the research study. Demographic forms solicited data that would inform the study such age, race, gender, relationship status, whether children lived in the home, highest education completed, immediate past employment, time in that job, time dislocated, and the type of training

program taken [Appendix C]. Participant demographic forms served to provide background to the individual narratives and catalyzed conversation between the participants and me at the onset of interviews.

Semi-structured interviews. A primary data collection method in qualitative research is interviews (Bogden & Bilkin, 1992), and this study used semi-structured interviews as the principal data collection method. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to probe the choices, feelings, and experiences of participants in story form (Morse & Field, 1995). The semi-structured interviews relied on the use of a guide [Appendix D] Nine of the primary interviews occurred in-person, while one occurred via telephone. As well, I followed-up with participants to offer them opportunity to review transcripts and to clarify any responses necessary from the primary interview. The primary interviews each lasted between one to two hours, with seventeen total hours of interviews.

Interviews based upon an interpretive narrative approach require the researcher to be open to the storied lives of the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and to utilize open-ended questions (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). The semi-structured interviews in this study relied upon an interview guide, but utilized open questions such that the interviews were dialectical. Interview techniques used included open-ended questions, follow-up questions, and metaphors to elicit stories (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Denzin (1989) suggests beginning interviews with a biographical analysis, thus the initial phase of interviews focused on capturing a biographical sketch of the participants' lives. The interview continued with questions based upon the major research questions guiding the study (Morse & Field, 1995).

As narrative research promotes the use of naturalistic settings, the interviews occurred at locations selected by each of the participants (Denzin, 1989). Seven interviews occurred at community colleges, one at a participant's home, one at a home of an associate of the interviewee, and one by telephone, all at times convenient to the participants. Participants also selected pseudonyms that were used throughout the interviews. Following each session, interviews were delivered to be transcribed verbatim by a transcriptionist, and all research materials were stored securely in a locking file cabinet. Interviews and all aspects of the study followed North Carolina State University research protocol. Further additional discussion on protocol is provided in the section on ethical considerations.

Observations. In addition to interviews, participant observations informed the study. Observations are a key characteristic of qualitative research that, in this study, provided data on non-verbal communication, settings, and social factors relevant to the narratives (Scott & Morrison, 2006). During the research, observations involved listening, watching, and documenting the actions and behaviors of the participants in the study, the environment and any pertinent surroundings, as well as my perceptions and feelings as a researcher.

Because observations were both descriptive and evaluative, it was vital to maintain organization of the observations (Scott & Morrison, 2006). A systematic method of organizing observations is through the use of field notes. Bogden & Biklen (1992) describe field notes as written accounts of a researcher's observations, feelings, ideas, thoughts, and reactions. I maintained field notes in a research journal. The research

journal also provided a place to record my thoughts, experiences, and actions throughout the research study (Hatch, 2002). My field notes were composed using an observation protocol [Appendix D]. Observation protocol guides in documenting salient aspects of the environment and interactions and can facilitate the analysis of data (Merriam, 1988). The field notes and collected observations provided unspoken data that enhanced the construction of narratives.

Documents Reviews. A review of documents may include public or private information, materials, or belonging related to the setting or participants to provide additional data on the historical and contextual factors impacting the experiences of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Documents were used to provide insight not available through interviews and observations that further shaped the understandings of the experiences older adult dislocated workers. In the current study, I used documents available to me online and in print to include program brochures, community college websites, and the website of the southeastern community college system in which this study was set. These materials informed my understanding of the context and the social forces impacting older adult dislocated workers. As well, three participants voluntarily provided documents for review during the investigation: a) a certification from training, b) family photographs, and c) a copy of a course syllabus including clinical assignments. Their personal artifacts illustrated underlying values and perspectives involved in their experiences and were used to enlighten their narratives as well as compare with other forms of data.

Data Analysis

In order to gain useful knowledge from qualitative data, it must be analyzed. Marshall and Rossman (1999) describe data analysis as the processes involved in organizing, considering and interpreting the data. In qualitative research, the instrument of choice is the human (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a result, in interpretive narrative studies, the researcher and participants are involved in co-construction. The participants told their stories from which I constructed narratives that interpreted their experiences as older adult dislocated workers.

Within narrative research, narrative analysis is the predominant method of data analysis (Reissman, 1993). Narrative analysis involves the use of narratives to understand how individuals make-meaning of their experiences and perceive their identities (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002). An underlying principle in narrative research is that “people use narratives to create versions of themselves or their subjectivity” (Pejlert, 1999, p. 674). Therefore, the analysis of this research involved understanding the storied lives of participants. Reissman (2003) offers four broad forms of narrative analysis that were applied to this study: thematic analysis, structural analysis, interactional analysis, and performative analysis. Each form of analysis was performed utilizing a specific method. First, within this study, thematic analysis involved reviewing the transcripts regarding what was stated and the stories the words generated. From thematic analysis emerged *narrative profiles* which are discussed in the section that follows. Second, I utilized structural analysis which involved analyzing how the stories were told and how the series of events were sequenced. *Coding*, discussed in a section that follows, was a method that

involved structural analysis as well as thematic analysis. I examined the structures of the participants' stories, the people or characters involved, how their experiences played out in words, the descriptions selected to convey their experiences, as well as those aspects that were absent from their chronicles. Third, interactional analysis was particularly important to this interpretive narrative study. Because of the dialogical nature of this interpretive narrative research study, interactional analysis involved the co-construction of narratives that included the accounts of the participants as interpreted by the researcher. As the researcher, I probed and asked questions of the data throughout the study to gain a fuller understanding of the participants' experiences (Hatch, 2002). In this way, *the hermeneutic circle*, detailed below, was the tool of interactional analysis. Fourth, Reissman offers performative analysis which related well to my analysis of observations and other non-spoken elements of the narratives. Specifically, using the hermeneutic circle, I analyzed the narratives within the broader social contexts and implications. Further explanation follows regarding each of the specific techniques that were employed.

Narrative profiles. One manner of analyzing narratives is through the use of narrative profiles (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative profiles were composed to provide an interpreted view of experiences of the participants as older adult dislocated workers. Yet, the process of constructing the profiles was also a form of data analysis.. In forming the narrative profiles, I engaged the data to capture aspects salient to the essence of the experiences of older adult dislocated workers, but I also probed my role in the research. As MacClure (1995) explains, "these narratives are fragmenting into a

disorderly array of little, local stories, and struggles with their own irreconcilable truths” (p. 106). The narrative profiles within this study are not to be viewed as overarching meta-narratives that follow generic scripts, but rather subjective bricolage that reflects what is like to be an older adult dislocated worker negotiating the context of community college non-credit training.

Coding. Coding is another appropriate method of analyzing qualitative data (Schwandt, 2007). This narrative study utilized coding to develop themes and subthemes regarding the experiences of older adult dislocated workers. A key to effective coding was to maintain organization and multiple copies of data. Since interviews comprised a significant segment of the data, I listened to the recordings of the interviews multiple times, read the transcripts several times, and analyzed iteratively throughout the research study (Agar, 1980). The interviews and other data were analyzed inductively (Bogden & Biklen, 1992).

Initially the transcripts were analyzed conceptually looking for broad ideas or open codes present in the stories. I made notes in the margins as well as in the research journal regarding schemes within the text. In subsequent readings, I searched the transcripts for relationships, recurring regularities, and contextual terminology using a highlighter and stick-on notes in order to uncover patterns. As I noted convergence and divergence within the texts, I established categories of data. Further reading of the transcripts included asking questions of the areas of texts, such as that suggested by Ryan and Bernard (2003, p. 87): “What is this expression and example of?” This questioning led to the emergence of themes (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Theme identification involved locating repetition, linguistic connectors, as well as metaphors and analogies used by participants (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Using word processing software, I color coded themes and tracked themes and changes on the documents. I searched for in vivo or indigenous themes by key words and cultural concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1993). I printed multiple copies of the transcripts and compiled captions by themes. Through several reviews, I searched for similarities and differences within each theme, convergences and divergences within themes, as well as missing data (Ryan & Bernard). The themes were scrutinized for subthemes or significant nuances that were embedded within the major themes (Patton, 2002).

The hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle describes the process of relating the parts of a phenomenon to the whole (Ricoeur, 1984). When used with narratives, the hermeneutic circle involves capturing the stories told by participants and interpreting those stories against the broader social context. In this current study, not only did I compare the themes emerging from each of the transcripts, I utilized the concept of the hermeneutic circle to compare themes from the stories to observations and documents about the community college settings and further compared stories to understandings presented by the prevailing scholarly literature. Hermeneutics was used to analyze data by “moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts...between description and interpretation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). The hermeneutic circle was a tool to draw out the narratives (Sandelowski, 1991).

Ensuring Validity and Reliability

Issues of validity and reliability are of central concern to qualitative research (Kramp, 2005). This study employed three techniques to ensure validity: prolonged engagement, verification, and triangulation; as well as three methods to be sure the research is reliable: rich, thick description, audit trails, and reflexivity.

Validity. Validity involves how congruent a researcher's findings are to reality (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olsen, Spiers, 1995). Within constructivist study such as narratives, researchers understand that reality is fluid, socially constructed, and based on perspective (Crotty, 2006). Narrative research is not performed in search of a truth, but seeks only to portray the retold, subjective experiences. Therefore, validity in interpretive narrative research concerns internal validity (Morse et al.). Three key methods for establishing internal validity within the current study were intense engagement, verification, and triangulation.

Prolonged engagement. Qualitative research is an iterative process by which researchers seek to illuminate the lived experiences of participants (Merriam, 1998). To do so, researchers must spend quality time with research participants and elicit rich, thick descriptions (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative researchers work to establish rapport, and understanding of a participant's context and experience (Kramp, 2004). One way of establishing prolonged engagement in narrative studies is through the use of follow-up interviews and observations (Kramp, 2004). During this study, I participated in primary and follow-up contact with each participant. As well, I visited each community college involved in the study to garner a sense of the environment in which the participants

trained. Importantly in developing the narratives, I grappled with the data persistently and in-depth.

Verification. Another method of establishing validity within qualitative research is verification. Verification is the process of “checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain” (Morse & Field, 1995). An accepted technique of verification is member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks involve participants reviewing data, themes, or research findings to determine if the narratives are congruent with their experiences. During this study, participants were provided the opportunity of reviewing the transcripts as well as the profiles. Emerging ideas from the initial interviews also were probed further and ideas clarified in the follow-up interviews.

Triangulation. Triangulation, a final method of ensuring validity within this study, involves the use of multiple data methods (Merriam, 1998). According to Morse and others (2002), “if a researcher hears about the phenomenon in interviews, sees it taking place in observations, and reads about it in pertinent documents, he or she can be confident that the ‘reality’ of the situation as being conveyed by those in it, is being conveyed as ‘truthfully’ as possible” (p. 54). I triangulated data from initial interviews with that of follow-up interviews, as well as data from interviews of each participant with that of the other participants. I compared information provided on participant demographic forms, in observations, and the extant literature with data provided by the participants. In addition, I reviewed online and print information about the programs and colleges attended by participants.

Reliability. Another measure of rigor in qualitative research is its reliability. Reliability involves whether the findings might be replicated (Merriam, 2001). Narratives support the use of methods of reliability including thick description, audit trails, and reflexivity.

Rich, thick description. Thick description is a principle of reliable qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). Thick description creates what Creswell & Miller (2000) describe as “versimilitude, statements that produce for the readers the feeling they have experienced or could have experienced the events being described in the study” (p. 129). Thick description requires deep engagement and vivid detail to capture the essence of the experience. As a researcher, I examined the constructed stories for gaps in understanding. To address those gaps, along with seventeen hours of interviews, I spent more than fifteen additional hours, exploring the community college settings within the study.

Audit trails. Audit trails are another method of ensuring reliability in a qualitative study. Audit trails “describe in detail, how data were collected, how categories derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (Merriam, 1998, p. 172). The audit trail is a systematic process of accounting for the actions and choices of the researcher such that the audience might be able to understand how the researcher arrived at the findings. The audit trail for this study included participant demographic forms, audio recordings of interviews, transcripts of taped interviews, field notes, and a journal of the research project.

Reflexivity. Lastly, reflexivity is a manner of establishing the reliability of qualitative studies (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research locates the observer in the

participants' world, thus the researcher conducts and participates in the research (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). The researcher is positioned inside and outside of the research (de Marrais, 1998). Reflexivity addresses the emic and etic nature of qualitative research. Reflexivity is the awareness of the researcher's position to the research and is both personal and epistemological (Willig, 2001). Personal reflexivity is the exposing of one's values, politics, beliefs, and practices, and how those impact the research study. Prior to collecting data, I considered my own influences, experiences, and biases as a researcher.

Researcher Bias

As a researcher, I brought myself and my own experiences to the study of older adult dislocated workers. There was a dialectical relationship between the participants and me in shaping the narratives (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Narratives rely upon the participants to share their stories; however, in interpretive work such as this, the researcher intercedes.

I brought several positionalities to the study. From the outset, my choice of research topic and research design was influenced by my concern for humanity. As a humanist, I care about the plight of others. I have made my career in community college education because I am concerned about empowering others, but I am also interested in colleges providing high quality, student-centered programs and services.

I have had several family members and friends to lose jobs, but I have not. I will be both an insider and outsider to the research (Merriam, 2002). In some ways, I had insider knowledge of how community colleges work, and I have participated in shaping the culture of a community college. Most pointedly, I am an adult student who faced

some of the same challenges that older adult dislocated workers expressed. But on the other hand, as an outsider, I have no direct experience with job loss or older adulthood as I define it within the study.

Ethical Considerations

My position as researcher was closely tied to ethical considerations involved in the study. In qualitative research, there exists what many researchers describe as the “crisis of representation.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Marcus & Fisher, 1986). The crisis of representation involves the researcher’s claims to understand the experiences of the participants so as to be able to present them in text. Narratives rely on interplay between the interviewer and participant to construct a life story (Miller, 2009). Narratives include aspects of living and reflection and influences of participants and researchers. Since, stories are the closest we can come to shared experience, the mutual construction inherent in narrative inquiry must be acknowledged (Savin-Badin & Van Niekerk, 2007). This co-construction can lead to new issues and perspectives that can affect the narrative. Enosh & Bushbinder (2005) explain that narrative inquiry includes four exchanges between the researcher and participants: struggle, deflection, negotiation, and self-observation. Each of these aspects challenge but can also generate substance to the narrative. Co-construction, and the inherent implications, is not to be resisted but acknowledged and considered in the research design process.

Protection of participants was of critical importance. Participants were all selected by informed consent such that they were informed of the value and intentions of the study as well as the use of the research data. Participants were briefed on information regarding

the voluntary nature of the study (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Sutton, 2006). To protect those participants that were included in the study, pseudonyms were used in place of actual names of participants, and any related identifiers such as the community colleges involved, were omitted. In addition, all data documentation, including interview tapes, observation field notes, and the researcher journal were maintained securely. North Carolina State University Research Protocol guided all aspects of this study.

Chapter Summary

Within this chapter, I outlined the key aspects of the methodology involved in this research on older adult dislocated workers in community college non-credit workforce training programs. The research specifically explored the experiences of older adult dislocated workers as students in community college non-credit workforce training programs. The study also explored how older adult dislocated workers navigated the community college context, including what hindered and facilitated their learning and development. In order to gain depth of data regarding the particular experiences of the participants, I utilized narrative inquiry. Interpretive narratives, as used in this study, allowed for the exploration of inner meanings and outer manifestations of experiences (McQueen & Zimmerman, 2006).

This chapter explained the sample selection process to identify ten key informants based on four criteria. As well, data collection and data analysis processes consistent with narrative inquiry were outlined including interviews, observations, and documents reviews all of which were analyzed through narrative analysis, coding, interpretation modeled upon the hermeneutic circle. Researcher bias was addressed, exposing my

positionality, subjectivities, and assumptions impacting the research. This chapter concluded by describing the ethical considerations involved in this study including protection of participants and data and appropriate research protocol.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of a qualitative study regarding the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who participated in community college non-credit workforce training programs. Framed by hermeneutics, this interpretive-narrative study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?
2. How do older adult dislocated workers, who attend community college non-credit workforce training programs, navigate the community college context?
3. What facilitates the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?
4. What hinders the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?

Ten older adult dislocated workers from a southeastern community college system participated in this study. The participants were purposively selected based on four sampling criteria: age, employment, education, and enrollment. Participants a) were at least forty years of age, b) were dislocated from employment without cause, c) did not possess a college degree, and d) participated in community college non-credit workforce training in 2010.

This chapter is composed of two sections. The first section presents profiles of the participants and, in the hermeneutic tradition, also addresses the contexts of the

participants' experiences. The second section outlines the findings related to the research questions.

Participants

This study utilized interpretive narratives to capture the storied experiences of ten older adult dislocated workers in community colleges in a Southeastern state in the United States. The participants selected ranged in age from forty to fifty-eight. There were six females and four males. Six of the participants self-identified as black while four self-identified as white. The participants' personal and professional lives varied, but the majority of individuals worked in industrial manufacturing environments. In addition to manufacturing, other participants had been dislocated from other employment including clerical, sales, and retail management. The non-credit programs in which the students participated ranged in nature, but the majority of students participated in medical or allied health related occupations, followed by human resources development or employability skills training, and other vocational trades. Four of the participants in the study indicated a high school diploma as their highest level of education completed, while six of the participants had taken some college courses or earned a post-secondary certification at some point prior to entering the non-credit workforce training. As well each of the participants had incurred prolonged unemployment from twelve to twenty-two months, mainly from manufacturing sectors. Other interesting data about the participants emerged during the course of research. For example, all of the participants lived within thirty miles of where they spent their formative years, and all attended a community college within thirty miles of where they currently resided. Table 1

summarizes the participants' basic demographic data to include age, race, gender, relationship status, children living at home, as well as, highest education completed, immediate past employment, time in that job, training program, and duration of dislocation in months.

Table 1
Participants' Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Race	Gender	Relationship Status	Children Living at Home
David	40	White	Male	Partnered	No
Fred	58	Black	Male	Married	No
Julia	55	White	Female	Married	No
Kanye	40	Black	Male	Married	Yes
Lisa	40	Black	Female	Single	Yes
Michelle	41	Black	Female	Partnered	No
Molly	54	White	Female	Single	No
Robert	42	White	Male	Married	Yes
Saturn	43	Black	Female	Married	No
Sherry	50	Black	Female	Single	No

Participants' Demographics Continued

Pseudonym	Highest Education Completed	Immediate Past Employment	Time in that Job	Training Program	Duration of Dislocation in months
David	High school	Retail customer service	6 mos.	Pharmacy Technician/ Small business	14

Table 1
(continued)

Fred	Machining certificate	Machining	19 yrs.	Human Resources Development/EKG	12
Julia	Administrative assistance diploma	Clerical	12 yrs.	Human Resources Development (HRD)	16
Kanye	Telecommunications certificate	Factory production	3 mos.	Electrical	22
Lisa	High school	Manufacturing	8 yrs.	Phlebotomy Drug Collection	12
Michelle	2 years of university	Factory Production	4 yrs.	Medical Office	20
Molly	Secretarial certificate	Clerical	34 yrs.	HRD/Nursing Aide	18
Robert	High school; few college credit courses	Sales management	12 yrs.	Phlebotomy /Med. Office	14
Saturn	High school	Factory production	15 yrs.	Nursing Aide	12
Sherry	High school	Factory production	10 yrs.	Admin. Assistance	19

David. David had been awaiting a promotion for months. He was the highest performing employee in the cellular phone store and had been told that he could expect to advance very quickly. It was a Friday afternoon when he received the phone call from the regional vice president. He was delighted as he walked to the phone expecting to be

promoted to manager. “In thirty days, we’ll be closing that location. Today is your last day,” the vice president stated.

The feeling felt quite familiar. This was the second time in six months that David had been laid off. It was a feeling of betrayal, frustration, and loss. As the family provider, David began to think about the fact that there would be no more movies, no more eating out, and perhaps even no more of the bare essentials like new underwear or shoes. He felt his pride shrink knowing that his wife would be working for every dime for the family. As we talked, the pain was evident in his face and posture as he sunk into his chair when talking about being unemployed.

When he was first laid off, David searched for work for five months. He was willing to take jobs that he had never considered before, but they were not available. So David decided he should go into business for himself, but to do that meant gaining new skills. David decided to return to community college, first to obtain a certificate as a pharmacy technician in order to gain employment with the ultimate goal of obtaining the skills necessary to be self-employed in hearing aid sales through college small business seminars.

In the pharmacy technician program, he obtained knowledge about the profession but to this point had been unable to secure a job in the field. Instead, David worked part-time at a beverage store and attended small business courses as time permitted. The frustrations from the two lay-offs still resided with him, and the fact that he had returned to train for a new career but still could not find a job only compounded the stress. Still David was committed to continuing his education.

Fred. Fred had worked since the age of thirteen. His first job was priming tobacco to pay for his school clothes. He began factory work at age fifteen and factory work became his career. At fifty-eight, Fred had been dislocated five times before this previous layoff from a pump factory. Currently, he had been laid off for a year, and he had just completed a human resources development training and EKG certification two months prior to the interview. He still wanted to be in school to earn another credential in cardiac monitoring, but he had stopped out of school in order to care for his wife who had recently been diagnosed with a chronic illness.

Having been laid off several times before, Fred indicated that he had a different perspective than others who had been dislocated during this recession. He described the first time he was dislocated over twenty years ago as a nightmare, but because he had made it through several dislocations, he knew he would make it through this one. Even still, he said this recession made dislocation different and harder for adults because there were literally fewer jobs and more educated workers. During the prior dislocations, he always knew he would find a job after getting laid off; but this time the job opportunities seemed more limited, particularly for older adults. He felt that training would be a useful way to spend his time and would give him a better chance at finding employment when his unemployment benefits expired.

Fred was a man with a good deal of wisdom to share. From his high school years as an A/B student to earning a silver level Career Readiness Certification, it was evident that Fred possessed a good deal of aptitude. Fred decided to enter the medical profession and earned a certificate in EKG because he felt the work would be less strenuous and

have more availability for employment than production labor. Still, Fred expressed that he worried greatly about being able to find a job as his age. He worried that employers would underestimate his value and select younger employees who might accept a lower salary and be thought of as more vital.

During our interview, Fred leaned back a bit in his chair, reached into his back pocket, pulled out a weathered leather wallet, flipped through a few papers and bills to show me his pocket-size machining certification that he earned June 22, 2000. He gathered a posture as if I were interviewing him for a job and said: “I know one thing I can do, and that is machining. Everybody can’t machine like I do. I can make a piece out of a 300 pound cast, and I can do it out of the old crank machine or the CNC.” He added, “Workers younger than me would just sit there when the computer would glitch, but I knew what to do.” Now, Fred just wanted to figure out something to do for the next couple of years until his house was paid off and a few years later he could earn social security benefits.

Julia. Julia, a fifty-five-year-old former secretary, met in a community college office for the interview. Her human resources development instructor had nominated her for the study, and she wanted to participate so that she could share her experiences to help others in a similar situation.

The situation she found herself in was one of long term unemployment, having been dislocated for about a year-and-a-half. She had tried to get a job during all of sixteen months but felt that she was not being considered for employment because of her age. She really wanted to work, and came back to college to improve her chances of gaining

employment. She felt the human resources development class would give her a slight edge in the competitive job market, but she clearly wasn't convinced as she returned to the topic of age impacting her employability throughout the interview.

Julia never expected to be laid off. She had worked as an administrative assistant for twelve years with excellent performance. At the time, she knew the company, a food processor, was downsizing but she never expected that it would include her. She had taken that Friday off so while other employees received notice that day, she did not learn until the Monday when she returned to her office that it was not her office any longer. That was her last day of employment, and the beginning of a journey to find work.

She gave herself a two-month respite, and then began to apply for job after job for over a year. Despite her inability to locate a job, she was grateful to her husband who maintained their lifestyle, allowing her to focus on school and staying in touch with her elderly mother who lives about thirty miles away and her two adult children who live in another state. Faith, family, and friends were important to her, and all were a part of her entering training.

Julia belonged to a support group for adult dislocated workers held through her church. She attended frequently. She had decided to enter the human resources development course as a result of the program coordinator presenting at her support group. In the human resources development class, she gained a new network of friends that had similar experiences.

Kanye. By the age of forty, Kanye had been laid off four times. His life played out like a series of obstacles, and he did not understand why attending school had to be

one of those obstacles.

Kanye had grown up not knowing his real father until he was nearly a teenager. Now, a father himself of three children, ages ten, thirteen, and seventeen, he wanted to be able to provide and lead his family. It was hard to do that while being unemployed for nearly two years. Kanye served in the military for two years before returning home to work at a local plant. That job lasted four and a half years, followed by employment at another plant for ten and a half months. After that, Kanye returned to the first plant and stayed another four years until another lay-off. Then, Kanye decided to go to college because WIA public aid was available to cover the expenses. He enrolled in a telecommunications certification program, but just as he was about to complete the program, he received a job offer that meant dropping out. That lasted for three months, when to his surprise he faced lay-off again. This time, returning to school through public aid was not an option because he had dropped out previously while enrolled in the grant program. So he had to sacrifice the funds to enroll in an electrical program.

Kanye now spent most his time, outside of the twice-a-week course, at home, looking for jobs online by day and assisting the kids when they arrived from school. His wife, a manager and stylist at a chain hair salon, paid most of the bills. It was at his home that we began to talk about this experience. As I sat down with him on the couch, just across from us was an area with a stack of bills and a pile of toys. Clearly, his focus was on balancing these responsibilities.

Lisa. Lisa had never been out of work for more than two weeks since she began her first job at age sixteen at Burger King. Now she had been laid-off from manufacturing

for a year. After being laid-off from her production worker position, she decided to pursue a credential in medical occupations.

She began her training at a private, for-profit institution in medical office assistance, but decided to attend community college after it was determined that the private school did not qualify for public funding; Lisa received financial assistance through the Trade Adjustment Act which required fully accredited programs. After attending the private institution for nearly a semester, Lisa enrolled at the community college in phlebotomy and drug collection specialist training programs. At the time of the first interview, Lisa had completed her training a few months prior and was entertaining the possibility of continuing her education to earn an electrocardiogram certification. She wanted to earn multiple certifications to make herself more marketable for employment. She and the others she had met in her training programs were helping one another to locate jobs and to stay encouraged.

It was difficult to stay motivated in such a tight job market. Lisa had been unemployed after working eight years at a manufacturing company, and she returned to living in her parents' home with her three children during the lay-off because as a single mother she could no longer afford to live independently. Her parents kept her kids at night so that she could attend school; she studied during the day while the kids were in school. She learned how to study from her children and shared with them tips that she gained as well.

Michelle. Michelle contacted me to participate in the study after a community worker had shared the research study poster with her. We interviewed at that community

worker's home. The community worker had worked for years in the public sector but was now disabled and spent a lot of time mentoring those around here such as Michelle.

Though Michelle had initiated the participation in the study, she started our interview very measured. I noted feeling as if she were providing me an incident report: She grew up with one sibling and one parent, a single mother. She grew up in the same neighborhood where she currently lived. Her mother completed high school so she was expected to do that. She attended a university, but did not complete it. She had told me her whole life story in bullet points after the first inquiry.

As she kept talking, I listened, and after about twenty minutes, she began to relax a bit. As she talked about university life and how much she enjoyed it, but was not serious about academics at that time, she seemed more comfortable. As the incidents became stories, she opened up. She had attended a state university right out of high school, but returned home to live with her mother after three years. She exclaimed that college was not for everyone, and that it was not for her at the time. She lived with her mother off-and-on from that time until this year.

Only eight months before our interview, she had moved from her mother's home to her grandmother's house. Her grandmother had moved in with her mother because of Alzheimer's disease so it was an opportunity for Michelle to move into the grandmother's home and lived independently. At forty-one, Michelle had no children and shared the home with her boyfriend who was disabled. With his disability, and her unemployment, finances were limited. She received WIA benefits to attend school, but relied upon their fixed unemployment and disability income to make ends meet.

Michelle was currently enrolled in medical office certification. Her goal was to obtain employment at a medical facility. She had debated between medical office certification and pharmacy technician training but decided on the former because she did not know if she could handle the responsibility of making sure medications were filled exactly. But she figured she would continue on to pharmacy technician certification if the funding remained and if she felt like she could handle it. She said she might even consider getting her two-year degree. The nagging feeling, of never having completed her college degree after years at the university, persisted.

By the time of our next discussion, Michelle had received notification that she could receive additional funding from the state employment agency which would allow her to attend a two-year degree program and finally earn that college credential. Michelle left that interview still deciding what to do. Ultimately, by the time the study concluded, she did not continue her education; She had gone back to work in a different local factory because as she put it ‘a bird in hand is better than two in the bush.’

Molly. Molly had worked in the same job at *that* same factory for thirty-four years, and in ten minutes it was all over. A director walked in her office first thing in the morning nearly a year-and-a-half ago. Yet, the pain was still apparent today as she sat down to interview with me.

Before we even began, her eyes were watery. I thanked her for joining me to discuss her dislocation and her experiences as a student. She leaned toward me and said “No, thank you...for the chance to get this out. It is hard.” Molly had driven back by that factory at least fifteen times in the past eighteen months, mostly during the six months

immediately after dislocation. She had been through anger, grief, questioning, pain, and now a ray of hope in the opportunity to work in a new career.

About eight months after being laid-off, Molly finally decided to return to community college after glancing at several ads in the local newspaper about available training. She enrolled in optometric technician training but dropped out within the first week because she could not pronounce the words that were unfamiliar and it just did not feel like the right fit. As she would have done in the workplace, she contacted the program head to inform her that she planned to drop out and that it was no fault of the program. That administrator directed her to human resources development, a program geared to developing employability skills.

In the human resources development course, Molly learned much more about herself and realized that she wanted to help people. Soon after, she enrolled in certified nursing aide training. It was for her. She enjoyed it and thrived, making an “A” in the course. She followed it by enrolling in certified nursing aide II, the course that she was taking when we sat down to talk.

What Molly enjoyed most about the certified nursing aide classes were the clinical practices, and she expressed how she could not wait to start the clinical rotation for her current course which would begin the following week. The clinical rotation provided an opportunity apply and practice the skills that taught in the classroom. Clinicals, as she called it, were the “real-life” part of the class that Molly and her older adult colleagues, she said, enjoyed most. She had developed a core group of peers who were older and dislocated and in her classes. They supported one another and competed

to do well. They would constantly remind each other that you are never too old to learn. Her best teachers reminded her of that as well. She had encountered one instructor that she described as “young and inexperienced” who she felt did not understand the needs of older dislocated workers. Molly stated that older adult dislocated workers need information, need help, and need to spend time on topics that will help them get employed. But, the two other teachers she met inspired her to do well and know she could achieve. The confidence had helped her to get through the pain of losing a job that was all that she knew. She had a “93” average at the time we talked, and she was not satisfied with that so she was planning to go study right after our conversation. She generally spent about five hours a day studying and four hours a day in class, the same amount of time that she had spent doing her job at work.

Robert. Robert was my first interview for the study. His mother worked at a community college, and she became familiar with the study I was performing, so she nominated him to participate. He was eager and comfortable in doing so. We met for the first time to interview on the campus where he attended and where his mother worked. She arranged for an office for the interview. It was quiet and ideal. We sat across from one another at a two-person round table. Robert had obviously been in this space before as he reached out to help me set-up my things. I had rehearsed the questions in my head for several days in preparation for the interview; Robert had thought about his answers for a lifetime.

Robert had considered getting a college education right after high school but he had to “go to work.” He grew up the son of a single parent. His mother raised him, with

the help of his grandmother. While his mother worked in the US Air Force, Robert stayed at home with his nana. He made it to school most of the time, but he also knew how to play hooky. He graduated high school, the only high school in his county at the time, and had taken a few college classes here and there, but decided that work was more important.

He worked for a few years in odd jobs in retail. For the past twelve years he had worked in electrical sales at a management level. It was clear to me that he had been a sales person. He was quite charismatic in the interview. But he now had to redefine himself as a student after a shocking loss of employment. On the day that he became unemployed, he was called into the office, given a one-page letter of lay-off, and told he no longer had a job. He felt 'lost' and 'without identity,' but he somehow mustered up the strength to go to the local unemployment agency that same day. They too sent him away, telling him that since he would receive one month severance pay; they could not help until that expired. They told him to come back later. He'd be coming back again and again over the next year up to training.

By the time we met, fourteen months into his unemployment, Robert had completed a phlebotomy certification and was in the midst of working on a medical office assistant certification. Most of the jobs in the phlebotomy field required experience so he had figured out how to get that experience by volunteering in a doctor's office. He volunteered by day and attended classes at night at a satellite adult learning center of the local community college.

Saturn. The forty-three-year-old, factory-worker-all-her-life asked to be laid off;

Saturn felt that it was the best and right thing to do. Her company was laying-off workers in phases as it prepared to cease operations. Because of tenure, Saturn could have stayed on with the company, but she took an early dislocation because of a back injury and because she wanted to give more time to other workers who had families to consider. Married without children, Saturn assumed she could handle the throws of dislocation and saw it as an opportunity to do what her sister did, become a nursing assistant.

Saturn's sister had encouraged her to take certified nursing aide training, so she did. Saturn received Trade Adjustment Act and Workforce Investment Act funding that allowed her to go to school without worrying about job searching for the semester. Though she had recently completed the training, she did not take the state certification exam for nursing assistant, thus it was more challenging for her to enter the field. Still, she wanted to help the elderly so she continued to think about and look for jobs that would allow her to assist seniors. She was open to whatever opportunities would emerge, but she knew she simply did not want to return to factory work.

Saturn had worked as a machine operator for fifteen years. Factory work, as she described it, was a good job that paid good money, but was not what she wanted to continue to do because of the physical strain involved, boredom, and social conflicts that she experienced. Saturn envisioned nursing aide as an endeavor that would allow her to avoid the issues from her former work and fulfill her passion of helping those in need. Saturn traveled twenty miles to attend her class even though there was a program offered within ten minutes because she stated she wanted to avoid the drama of people that she knew.

But by the time of our follow-up interview, Saturn had returned to factory work in a different company in a job she described as much harder and a position that was not full-time. She disliked it, but her unemployment benefits were going to expire and she felt that she had no other options. She wanted to go back to be trained again, this time to be a polysomnographer or sleep disorders technician, but that might remain a dream.

Sherry. When Sherry walked in the door for the interview she told me “I need a job. I’ve got to go to work.” It did not matter that she was enrolled at that time in an administrative assistant certification; she wanted any job that would hire and pay a livable wage. School was simply a route to get back to work, and she was determined to drop out of training as soon as any possibility of employment emerged.

Sherry had spent nearly a year searching for work after being dislocated. Her brother had encouraged her to attend school, as well as her mother who had only completed eighth grade. She finally decided to do so when employment opportunities did not avail. Sherry, a single adult with two adult children, talked to her mother everyday about her school experiences. For Sherry, school also was about maintaining her unemployment and Trade Adjustment Act benefits until such time that she could secure wages. Still, she had gained a lot from her six months in school. The program that she participated in required a series of three courses to lead to her certification. During that time, she encountered a handful of instructors and students who shaped her experience and learned new information that she hoped to take with her back to work.

Sherry fondly recalled making it through her first course that covered some basic writing skills. She established a circle of friends, three older adults who like her were

unemployed from factory work. They studied together, supported one another, and were planning a trip to the beach together once the final course was completed. Also, the teacher in that class realized Sherry's test anxiety and allowed her to test independently when needed. Sherry claimed that the instructor understood her needs as an older adult student, and those needs were different than those of younger, traditional students.

At fifty, Sherry described herself as the "grandmother of the class." She felt the younger students did not understand the value of education. Yet ironically, Sherry exclaimed that she "need[ed] to work, education is for young people." Right now, a job was more valuable to her.

As was the case for Sherry, other participants' stories illustrated the challenges of being older adult dislocated workers who are continuing their educations while also fulfilling their personal commitments. As the findings below suggest, these older adult dislocated workers managed the competing responsibilities of being students with those of being older adults. They experienced stress as they sought to navigate their community colleges to increase their skills for work.

Findings

The findings of the study are presented based on the research questions. The findings consist of experiences related to dislocation from work and experiences as community college students from the stories of older adult dislocated workers. This section also includes findings as it relates to what facilitates and hinders the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers in non-credit workforce training.

Regarding the experiences of older adult dislocated workers in non-credit training, four

themes emerged with two subthemes for each. The first theme was stress from dislocation with emotional distress and financial hardship as subthemes. The second theme was stability by relating college to work with treating college as if it were work and stability as an anticipated outcome of post-training employment as subthemes. The third theme was worries about the value of training with perception of age discrimination and concerns about re-entering the workforce at entry level as subthemes. The fourth theme was non-traditional student understandings with older adult status and isolation from student life as subthemes.

In terms of navigating the community college context, two major themes were present. These themes were that older adult dislocated workers receive significant advising from outside of the college and take risks in order to navigate their contexts. Advising from outside of the college emerged with three subthemes: college staff was not accessible for non-credit students, older adult dislocated workers turned to case management and advising provided by funders, and older adult dislocated workers formed social networks with other dislocated workers.

Finding related to facilitation of learning and development comprised three major themes. Those themes were that older adult dislocated workers depend on engagement of teachers with practical experience, grants or aid for training, and personal support systems as ways to facilitate their learning and development. Within the theme of personal support systems, two subthemes surfaced. These subthemes were family and loved ones, and faith. In terms of hindrances on learning and development, three themes also emerged. These themes were a lack of college support services for older adult

dislocated workers, lack of academic and technical preparation on the part of older adult dislocated workers, and reemployment as issues that hinder learning and development. Subthemes for lack of college support were that early interventions were not provided by colleges and non-credit programs did not provide the students ready access to student services. Table 2 outlines the major themes and subthemes that emerged from analyzing the narratives, and further explanation of the themes and subthemes is provided in the sections that follow.

Table 2

Data Display of Themes and Subthemes

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- I. Experiences of older adult dislocated workers
 - A. Stress from dislocation
 - 1. Emotional distress
 - 2. Financial hardship
 - B. Stability by relating college to work
 - 1. Treating college as if it were work
 - 2. Stability as an anticipated outcome of post-training employment
 - C. Worries about the value of training
 - 1. Perception of age discrimination
 - 2. Concerns about re-entering the workforce at entry-level
 - D. Non-traditional student understandings
 - 1. Older adult student status
 - 2. Isolation from student life and support services

Table 2
(continued)

II. Navigating community colleges

A. Advising from outside of the college

1. College staff not accessible for non-credit students
2. Case management and academic advising provided by funders
3. Social networks formed with other dislocated workers

B. Taking Risks

III. Facilitation of learning and development

A. Engagement of teachers with practical experience

B. Grants or aid for training

C. Personal support systems

1. Family and loved ones
2. Faith

IV. Hindrances of learning and development

A. Lack of college support services

1. Early interventions not provided
2. Non-credit programs do not provide ready access to student services

B. Lack of academic and technical preparation

C. Re-employment

Experiences of older adult dislocated workers. By the time individuals without a college degree reach age forty, they likely have been in the workforce for the majority of their lives. The values of work greatly influence the choices, perceptions, and meaning made concerning education. The participants in this study shared stories about the experiences of being dislocated and participating in community college non-credit workforce training. The study revealed that participants' experiences are dually tied to both learning and working, but more so to working. They discussed their professional, personal, and academic experiences as older adult dislocated workers. The participants communicated the extensive challenges and stresses involved in dislocation and subsequent training, as well as how they believed training would mediate those stresses. The study revealed four key themes related to the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who enter community college non-credit workforce training. These themes are 1) older adult dislocated workers experience *stress from dislocation* that impacted their roles as students, 2) older adult dislocated workers seek *stability by relating their college experiences to work*, 3) older adult dislocated workers *worry about the value of the training* they receive, and 4) older adult dislocated workers *demonstrate non-traditional student understandings* related to learning and development.

Stress from dislocation. Each of the participants shared stories about the immense stress resulting from unemployment. These stresses involved personal, social, and academic endeavors. The specific stressors differed by participants, but included two major sub-themes: *emotional distress* and *financial hardship*.

Emotional distress. For all participants, the shock and subsequent strain of losing

their jobs was described in terms of emotional distress. From feelings of despair and depression to anger and resentment, participants shared their feelings and experiences related to dislocation and the impact unemployment had on their emotional states. Molly, who had worked for one employer for thirty-four years, experienced dislocation as a life-changing event:

I think I went through a semi-depression because that was my life. Unfortunately, I say that was my life. I did not know anything else but getting up going to work. And, being the age that I am which is fifty-four, I grew up with those people. They were my family. It devastated me. I have a lot of sleepless nights, a lot of actually driving by the facility and just losing it. I mean crying mercifully because it ripped my heart out.

Even in the case of participants who had been laid off previously, the emotional pangs were evident. At fifty-eight, Fred had been dislocated many times, including five lay-offs at one company, but he still recalled the gravity and emotion tied to the experience. He compared it to a nightmare:

The first time they laid me off, I cried. Because I thought it was the end of the world because I had so much hope in what I was doing. I never looked past it. Because you know when you are in love, you don't look to the other side. So I was just so satisfied because I had had some jobs that weren't as good as this one. But after that first time I got laid off, I realized that you know this grieving is going to turn into a nightmare sometimes. So it's a nightmare when you're laid off. And the unemployment office is good, but when you go to the unemployment

office you don't feel like a first class citizen, you feel like a second class citizen. You feel tainted; you're just out of place. Because you give what you got this company, you give heart, body, and soul. You work when you're sick. Now for ten years I had perfect attendance, crazy, but it's so funny, I never got nothing for it, but this.

There was a sense of frustration present in the stories of many participants. They had worked for their adult lives, and then dislocation changed their perceptions about themselves and the world of work on which they had depended.

Kanye, age forty, became dislocated from work because the entire plant closed. Kanye recalled vividly the day that he received notice of dislocation. Kanye's description highlights that dislocation generated emotional distress as well as financial hardship:

They came in one day and they said we were having a meeting. I had just bought a house, just bought my house about three months before that. They sent everybody to this upstairs counseling meeting. It was probably about thirty-five to forty-five people. We were in between rotation. They had already told the early shift that morning, and they were getting us as we were coming in. They got us all in this meeting, and everybody was wondering what was going on. Then they hit us with it. Well we were all thinking we were going to get laid-off; nobody was thinking the plant was going to shut down. They were shutting the plant down...Didn't nobody see it coming. We had people up in there that were mad, people was hot and upset, and one man was talking about killing somebody.

After having worked twelve years in a clerical position, Julia, age fifty-five,

struggled to find the words to express how dislocation made her feel, she described it as hurtful, but paused a lot as her mind searched through other emotions that showed on her countenance: “It is ah... it hurts your feelings, it makes you feel...it made me feel like ah...I was not ah... I knew I was doing my job and doing it well but that I wasn’t of value to the company. It’s just um...so painful.”

Not only did participants’ stories reflect the emotional distress caused by dislocation, during interviews, several participants’ body language changed as they described those experiences. The physical changes included shaking heads and teary eyes, as well as facial expressions of tension and movement in their chairs. Participants’ stories portrayed anger, worry, and disappointment. For most participants, their emotions extended beyond the moment of dislocation because of the detriment of dislocation to their finances.

Financial hardship. Financial hardship was expressed by all participants, most pointedly by those who viewed themselves as providers for the family or those who were single. Financial hardship affected the personal as well as academic choices the participants made. David, a forty-year-old who described himself as the family provider, illustrated his particular concerns: “I feel responsible for the situation I’m in. My wife brings in every nickel and dime. Where you used to say yes to things that your family needs, you have to say no...Your pride goes away.” Financial hardship relating to providing for one’s family was reflected in the stories of other participants who felt responsibility to take care of their families.

Kanye, who also provided for his family, echoed similar frustrations. He, too,

described concerns about how his role in covering household bills and expenses:

What you know and what you have been doing for so long, you won't be doing no more. Your comfort zone or your regular routine is finished. Now you got to start all over. It's a bunch of emptiness because one) you don't know where you going to be working; two) you don't know where your money is going to be coming from to support whatever, and 3) it's pressure thinking, wow, now I got to learn something new, something different all over again. It's just a trying time. If you never been through it before, it can really stress you out. Your mind start playing tricks on you like: you are this many year olds, you got babies, house, cars. Your wife is going to be upset because you don't have any money coming in. How you going to pay the bills? Some women would look at it and panic and ask how we going to make it; some would ask what are we going to do now. That puts a lot of pressure on a man. It can be rough, real rough.

Kanye's experience with financial hardship appeared in the accounts by other participants who struggled to meet their financial obligations.

Lisa, forty and a single mother, shared similar financial concerns: "It's stressful. You were making this, this, you know, certain amount, and now you got to juggle around things you can do and what you can't do now." Financial hardship affected every aspect of the lives of participants.

Sherry, fifty, explained that financial hardship persisted even while receiving unemployment insurance subsidies:

I have no insurance; I have no benefits, nothing. I am starting, I am really

starting from scratch. I am living off unemployment, which that's not you know... when you, you are used to making X amount of money to unemployment, there are a lot of cut backs and you know... woo, uhm... I used to be a person that you know, when I was working financially, I could do pretty much travel. Now everything is so limited, and I feel like I am in a closed closet and can't get out because I can't go like I use to because of gas... But the pressure of having to meet those bills and not having no money to buy anything, not even buy stuff for my grandchildren, ah, that kind of works on me. You have to count those nickels and dimes.

Saturn, forty-three, described financial hardship as the most prominent challenge she faced. When asked how dislocation impacted her, she indicated “tremendously, financially. Number one financially...” Financial hardship resonated even with participants who had experienced dislocation previously.

Robert, age forty-two, who had been dislocated before, explained that the current recession posed particular stresses that previous recessions had not: “You feel lost, especially in this economy. You know five years ago, even three years ago, you could have went right out and got another job. But now due to downsizing and everybody shipping jobs overseas, you can't—there's nothing here for you to do.” Many of the participants, like Robert, had experienced dislocation multiple times, but even for those who had been through dislocation before, they shared common descriptions of the financial challenges they faced while trying to balance their budgets. Although participating in training meant additional costs and stress, these older adult dislocated

workers also discovered ways to maintain a sense of stability in the midst of transition to being students.

Stability by relating college to work. Stability emerged as another theme in regards to how older adult dislocated workers related their college experiences to work experiences in order to gain control over their changing circumstances. For participants, entering training was viewed as a way to mediate the stress associated with dislocation. Education was seen as an avenue to improve one's station but also provided an opportunity to manage their lives by treating it as work. The participants described understanding their educational experiences as similar to work experiences. In particular two subthemes were apparent: 1) older adult dislocated workers created *stability by treating college as if it were a job*, and 2) older adult dislocated workers also expressed *stability as an anticipated outcome of post-training employment*.

Treating college as if it were work. In the modern workplace, training is a recurring element so participants in this study were familiar with the practice of learning new skills. Several participants described viewing non-credit training as professional development that one might receive while employed. One vivid example is in the case of Robert. Robert compared training at the community college to on-the-job training he had received when he was employed. Imagining the workforce training as if we were engaged in company training helped him to make-meaning of his experience:

I compare school to on-the-job training. You got to complete this to get the job. Just like with a new employee, you got to be trained and you are receiving the training you need for the position...I'm probably more like a company trainer, my

own type of company trainer. Because when you are going to all these conferences, instructional classes, or you had new equipment, you had to do it because that was your life; that was your job. So I kind of approached the class as a part of my job or something I wanted to accept.

Several participants related their training to work, even in terms of the learning that occurred. David explained what he learned during his pharmacy technician training:

Really I guess I learned how complicated the job could be. I was really blown away how complicated and how underappreciated those positions are working for pharmacies. I do perceive pharmacists in a different light now. I understand why it may take so long. I don't complain, if they say it takes two hours. I don't complain because now I know why it takes so long. The differences of compounding drugs, customized drugs that doctors throw on them at the last second, patient walks up and needs a complicated compound created mostly like salves, ointments. They make them there; they are not premeasured, a lot of the ingredients are pre-prepared like in size so it helps speed up the jobs, but they have to manually do it and the math involved to create these compounds, 'cause 1% more or less could make someone sick. You don't want a 2-year-old to have a rash that might put them in the hospital.

Not only did participants describe views of their community college training as professional development, their appearance and behaviors reflected the connection as well. Saturn's connection to the profession for which she trained was demonstrated in her wearing a nursing uniform top to our interview while Molly brought her clinical rotation

assignment section of her course syllabus with her to the interview. Molly was most excited about the practical, work-related components of the program:

I am ready to do it. I am ready to do it. When we did CNA I – we prayed before we went in. And then it was just a blessing, helping those people seeing the need that was there. I am going to share this with you: the first day I went was an Alzheimer’s patient, and she was introduced as a two person patient, which means she bit, she hit, she slapped and she hurt you. And immediately my thought was she still has ears, she can still hear. So she became my patient. I took it personally because she has ears. She and I became good friends and I still visit her. And she may not know me but I developed a bond; she knows my spirit. And I am looking forward to this clinical because there is going to be somebody out there that’s gonna get me and I am gonna get them. And I know you probably can’t use that but... I don’t want to just sit in the classroom.

The older adult dislocated workers related to the applied aspects of their training, and how it would prepare them for work, as a way of dealing with the change from worker to student.

In similar fashion, participants followed work schedules while they were in school as a way of creating stability in their lives. Julia, age fifty-five, noted that as a student she maintains the same schedule as when she was working as a way of coping and understanding student life. As she describes it, “I put my time into school like a work day. I get up a six when he [husband] does, and I am ready to start on the computer usually before seven.” Julia went on to describe her typical day of class and study that

ends with dinner with her husband as it always did when she was working.

Also interesting, during our interview, when asked about his experiences in class, Fred began by talking about arriving to class but the train of thought carried him back to his work experiences:

Now it's important to me that I be here at nine o'clock. Yeah I treat it like work. I called you because I don't miss class without calling. It's two things about a job, at a job you just got to work and work hard. You got to show up, you got to show interest, and you got to produce something...

While one might view dislocation as an opportunity to rest from work, as participants described their schedules, it became clear that most were comfortable with regiment. Non-credit workforce training generally provides flexible scheduling and convenient offerings, yet the participants, all of whom enrolled in one non-credit workforce training course at a time, described longer days similar to work schedules.

Stability as an anticipated outcome of post-training employment. For other participants, the stability was portrayed as an expected outcome after the training. Participants spoke directly to the idea of obtaining a job, as a result of training, that would be stable or recession-proof. Six of the participants participated in medical training, noting that this was a field that appeared to be able to sustain economic shifts.

David, who was a forty-year-old participant, stated that he chose to participate in training as pharmacy technician and medical office assistance, because he wanted job security: "I chose the medically oriented field...I don't think that it suffering as much as the retail side of things. Stability is what I was looking for."

Robert, too, echoed that he had selected phlebotomy because he felt there would be more job opportunities, “With medical, it’s always going to be there, and with Obama’s plan with universal health care I think it is. Then that is just going to be more opportunities that you have to learn.” Participants stories showed that they understood that the workforce as they once knew it had changed. Jobs were no longer guaranteed for older adult workers, but they attempted to make decisions about training programs that would position them well in the new economy.

At forty-three-years-old, Saturn, who had performed production work all of her adult life, selected medical training for similar reasons. Her sister, who had lost her job many years before, was able to find stable employment as a phlebotomist. Therefore Saturn felt it might offer her the same possibility:

I took it because my sister, she did that and it worked for her...And uh, my sister she was um... we had went to this place, some place, some plasma place in [city deleted] and they got some openings and you don’t have to have any experience. She supposed to be checking into that for me. They got three openings in [city deleted] and five openings in [city deleted]. That’s my ticket to feeling normal again.

Even for those participants who did not select medical-related training, there was a clear expectation to obtain stable employment through training. Kanye had selected electrical training as an occupation that he felt would be secure as well:

My first option [after dislocation] was okay, what to do. I knew I had unemployment, but that was not going to last forever. So my first reaction was I

want to do something quick, go to school for something quick. I started thinking I could take me a class that might last three to six months. Get certified or a diploma or whatever then go back to work, quick then get back out there. I wanted to do something where I knew I would not be laid off six or seven months down the road.

Older adult dislocated workers sought training that would quickly return them to work and that they expected would provide stable employment against future economic turmoil.

Julia's story expressed both the view of training as offering stability and the expectation for security through new employment:

Well for someone who has been in the workforce all these years and then you are not, you feel ah...I don't know that dislocated is really the word, but you feel like everything in your routine and all that has changed. So you want to get back in a working routine, and whatever education opportunities you can take advantage of help you to have a routine and to have more to offer to get work.

Worries about the value of training. Despite the hope expressed about entering fields that were secure, the participants shared a common worry and frustration about the value of training. Two subthemes were evident in the findings involved 1) *the perception of age discrimination* that might prevent them obtaining employment, and 2) *concerns about re-entering the workforce at entry level.*

Perception of age discrimination. The perception of age discrimination permeated the participants' descriptions of employment outlook. This was most evident for

participants who were at least fifty. Age was described as an obstacle to securing a good job after training. Molly, who at age fifty-four had applied for jobs intermittently, shared a story about one specific incident that stood out to her as reflective of the prospects older dislocated workers in training might face:

I'll be honest, I am afraid, that being age fifty-four and no experience, it's going to hurt, and you can't prove it. I feel like discrimination exists. I went on a job interview where I met all of the criteria, everything they want, everything, and did not even get a call back. If I didn't have this to fall back on I probably would be worrying that that was job discrimination.

Fred, fifty-eight, also expressed worry that age discrimination might prevent him for obtaining employment:

There is so much demand and so few jobs. See jobs are tough right now. It's a different world out there. The thing too now is...my biggest fear is this—see I know it's illegal, but we have age discrimination; we have health discrimination. My next door neighbor was telling me yesterday he went to college and took automotive and it is no good...So that's the biggest obstacle, you got the knowledge, but then you're faced with once I get through this are they really going to give me a job or am I going to keep spinning my wheels after I get through. That's the dilemma you have to face. So it's kind of tough when you are in my situation. You got to face the fact that well if I do this it may take a while to get through what I am going through.

Older adult dislocated workers worried about if their age would outweigh the training

they received. They feared that, even with new skills, employers might prefer younger workers who might be less costly to companies.

Julia, the eldest female participant at fifty-five, talked about the “age thing” as well. Julia talked about how her instructor shared the fact that he had obtained employment later in life, but the fact was that it was part-time employment and Julia was not convinced:

There’s an age thing. Yes I know Mr. [name deleted], you know, use his example about how old he was when he lost his job and how old he was when he got this and got that. But I just feel like he’s the exception to the rule. I’ve seen too much and heard too much about how the majority of people when you’re in your fifties, and well I’m fifty-eight.

Sherry, fifty, concurred: “At my age, it’s harder to get back into the workforce because they are looking at younger and younger people and yeah I am fifty years old and versus trying to hire when they can get a younger body in there, they are going to go with the younger body.” The stories participants shared indicated they held strong views that age discrimination existed and did or would hinder them from being successfully employed. These concerns impacted how they perceived training and employment outlook.

Concerns about re-entering the workforce at entry level. None of the participants under age fifty directly relayed worries about age discrimination but rather referenced concerns about not regaining their economic status because of having to take entry-level pay the same as younger workers, the possibility that their prior experience would not be valued, and perception, not that they would be discriminated in obtaining employment,

but that they would be viewed as old in the new workforce.

As Kanye, who was only forty, described himself, “Sometimes even an old man has to change his lifestyle, he has to do something different. So I’ll be an old man out working again in something new. I’ll be starting over again” Many participants reflected on the idea of starting over and the frustration of reemployment at entry-level pay after working for many years to gain the level of income they had in previous jobs.

Lisa also expressed her frustration that she might have to accept entry-level employment: “It does not even matter what you are going to school for. You have to be competing with everybody else trying to get in the door.” Though Lisa was positive about the opportunity to find employment, she remained concerned about the supply of jobs versus the demand of unemployed workers.

By the time of our follow-up interview, Saturn had returned to work and confirmed the concern that dislocated workers expected from new employment. She had gone to work at another factory because her unemployment benefits had expired. She shared this feeling: I had to take the job even though I really don’t like it, and my back still hurts. And the money...you know it’s nothing like what I was making. Her discontent displayed a common concern amongst older adult dislocated workers. Although they held long employment histories, and had invested in training, they feared employers would not compensate them for their experiences.

Non-traditional Student Understandings. While older adult dislocated workers felt they would be pooled with younger prospective workers in the workforce, they clearly differentiated between their student experiences and those of younger, traditional

students. In the study, the majority of participants positioned themselves as different from traditional students in terms of their academic choices and experiences, with those participants who were oldest having the dimmest outlook. Non-traditional students have been described within the extant literature based on their age, time away from education, and lack of engagement in student life. The participants described themselves in two significant ways, or subthemes, that reflect non-traditional student experiences. These subthemes that reflected their non-traditional understandings were participants perceived themselves as non-traditional students based on their status as 1) *older adult student status* and based on 2) *isolation from student life and support services*.

Older adult student status. Several participants described themselves as having real-world experience that juxtaposed the lack of experience held by younger classmates. They felt that this experience provided them a different perspective but also created challenges for them. At age fifty, Sherry actually did not want to return to school, but was encouraged to do so by her brother. Although she had received high grades in her coursework, she indicated that she would drop-out of training the moment a job opportunity arose. In sharing her story, Sherry depicted the challenges of being an older student:

Sometimes you wake up and say good Lord, am I going to have to go through this again today. Coming to school, this is a nightmare too because I feel I am the grandmother of them all. I am the oldest one in my class. You got the younger ones that just came out of school and you got some twenty, maybe, twenty-plus year olds. And I am sitting here going, yeah, the grandmother of them all.

Sherry's story illustrated how older adult dislocated workers' perception of their older adult student status impacts their experiences. Like most other participants, she felt different from the rest of the class based on her age.

In his story, Fred shared that it is not just the older adult dislocated workers that view themselves as different, perhaps traditional students view older adult dislocated workers as different based on age. He shared an encounter with another student on the way to class: "I was on a stick, and the guy said 'you should have parked in the handicap park' because I was walking so pitiful, but there is nothing wrong with me."

Fred also added that he had to give more of himself as an older student, "When you are an older student and when you are trying to go it takes a little more studying. It takes a little more discipline than it did, and when you are older you want to take a nap or your mind wants to wonder." Participants perceived age to be a key in how they experienced college.

Michelle, age forty-one, relayed feeling different because of her older adult student status as she discussed one expectation that she felt was particularly challenging for her at her age:

I am trying to come out of my fear of speaking. I mean at my age I'm going to have to learn to talk in front of people you know. It's getting better. It's not as bad as it was. It was like a total phobia. I would pass out. I have to worry about it a little bit, but not as much. It's not half as bad as it was. I am coming out of like, what they say, a shell. But those young kids, hmm, they don't have no shells.

Participants signified age as a factor in how they understood themselves as students.

While community colleges serve more non-traditional students than any other sector of community college and are a site of adult education, older adult dislocated workers viewed themselves as a specific sector of non-traditional students based on their age.

Age also manifested in their descriptions related to time out-of-school. Kanye, forty, described a mixture of anxiety and excitement that comes with being an older adult dislocated worker:

It's been so long. I was nervous about taking placement tests. You've to register. You got to do so much. They throw so much on you so I am freaking out. At the point I'm at it takes a little extra. So I kind of get butterflies thinking I got to do this and do that. But it was fun getting a lot of this stuff together. It was fun. It gave me something to look forward to again, sort of energized me...I feel like a little kid and trying to do some of the problems to see if I still got it. I am sweating, and I am doing all kinds of problems, trying to get it right. I am studying hard. I go get my transcripts, all my paperwork so I am running all during the day. With all this going on, I feel like I am straight out of high school. It was sort of stressful, but it certainly takes a little extra effort.

Lisa and Robert, who were also both forty, were the only dislocated workers who did not express a feeling of being different because of age. Lisa indicated that everyone in her medical office assistance class shared similar experiences and situations, while Robert stated that he had "simply learned to go with the flow after dislocation and focus on the important stuff."

Age appeared as a salient issue in the experiences of older adult dislocated

workers. Participants described their experiences in ways that related to non-traditional student understandings but connected those experiences to their age.

Isolation from student services and student life. Non-credit programs typically do not provide services equivalent to students in degree programs. This is, in large part, because of the fact that non-credit workforce training evolved from professional development programs that were geared to upgrading skills for workers to remain employed as opposed to re-skilling dislocated workers. Additionally, because accreditation and financial aid are tied to degree programs, resources are focused on credit students. All of the participants in this study participated in state-subsidized non-credit workforce training programs provided at a fraction of the cost of degree programs but with limited student support services. The participants demonstrated isolation from student services and student life. David described it as “I kind of did my own thing,” while Robert described college as “just another public place.”

Other participants provided specific examples demonstrating inaccessibility to resources that might otherwise be available to traditional students. One such example was Sherry’s, who at age fifty exhibited test anxiety. Her institution listed counseling and support services for test anxiety through academic assistance, but when Sherry faced it, this is how she described what she received:

The instructor, she knew I knew the stuff. She knew I was having that anxiety problem, and she said I’m a tell you what Sherry. I am going to put you in a room by yourself, and I passed that test. She was very good. Without her, I would not have passed that test.

Though Sherry did not receive available student services, her example illustrated the vital role instructors play in shaping the experiences of older adult dislocated workers.

Molly recounted her first day of class, “The first day I wanted to throw up. I mean I told you I’m being honest here. I was nauseated. I was scared to death, and nobody to talk to to tell you what to expect.” Later she continues, “There is a hole. If there could be somebody there. If I had known, hey I can run to you, but there is nobody there.” Molly’s experience compared similarly to those of other participants who desired supportive services but were not able to access them.

Lisa described how challenging it was for her when the instructor did not teach in a way that was beneficial to her learning. She did not know where to seek assistance. Based upon her experience, Lisa offers an idea that might help older dislocated workers:

Have a meeting and ask, you know, like are they getting the material? Is the teacher teaching them right? One of the girls had another class. She was saying that she did not like the way the teacher taught. You know she said she did not teach from the book. She said she had a book but she pretty much like did her own thing. So, I mean just have a meeting and everybody discuss their issues or whatever they can do better.

Michelle spoke positively of her interactions with college personnel. She could not provide any specific examples of support services, but she recalled fondly speaking with office staff this way, “The women in the continuing education department, just love them, love them. They are so helpful. They tell you good luck and I hope everything goes well.” While it is a positive recollection on her interactions with college staff, the

example also may also reflect the lack of depth of engagement experienced by non-credit students with the college personnel.

Participants in the study demonstrated engagement and vivid recollection of classroom experiences. However, their accounts reflected disconnect to students services that might have enhanced their learning and development.

Navigating community colleges. Non-credit workforce training programs at community colleges typically do not provide the level of student services that students in degree programs receive. While non-credit training offers flexibility, short courses, and convenience, it is generally at the expense of any additional support to students. Navigating the community college contexts means a lot of figuring it out on one's own for older dislocated workers or relying upon networks that already surround them. Two major themes emerged from the data regarding how older dislocated workers navigate community colleges. These themes are: 1) reliance on *advising from outside of the college* and 2) *taking risks*.

Advising from outside of the college. The participants indicated minimal engagement with the college staff, administrators, and student life. They generally did not access academic assistance or supportive services. As well, the program literature for the courses of study that the participants took did not indicate any available services. Three subthemes regarding advising from outside of the college referred to: 1) *college staff was not accessible for non-credit students*, 2) *older adult dislocated workers receive case management and academic advising provided by their funders*, and 3) *older adult dislocated workers rely on social networks of older adult dislocated workers*.

College staff not accessible for non-credit students. Participants noted a lack of interaction with college staff in terms of navigating the community college context. Several participants expressed a sense of figuring things out independently or exhibited a lack of awareness about matters pertaining to their college's services.

David's experience depicted one of isolation from the college services. David explained that he followed his own path, "Everything was my own decision, one hundred percent. I don't even know if I know anybody else that works at the college other than my teacher...I've been more self-driven. If I didn't know something, I am sure I would have asked." Several participants described their experiences as one of independence.

Although Saturn's community college indicated that it had a career assistance center, when asked about what might have been helpful to her as a community college student, Saturn seemed to be unaware:

I wish I had a counselor or something that could tell me more stuff; somebody that can work with you and they are not too busy themselves. I be trying to figure out what kind of jobs are out there for me when I was in school, but it was just me, well and my sister, trying to figure this thing out.

Participants described attending and leaving school without much interaction with college personnel beyond registration for classes.

When participants described their engagement with the college, it generally revolved around interactions with the teacher. As Julia illustrated, students received advice from their instructors of the class she took. Julia shared, "I only took one class so the teacher was pretty much my advisor. As far as interactions with others, there was a

little bit but not really.” A review of online information for colleges included in this study confirmed that college student services were tied to information regarding two-year degree programs and not non-credit workforce training. While non-credit workforce training programs are described as a form of educational programming, many of the services determined to support student success were absent from the experiences of these older adult dislocated workers.

Case management and academic advising from funding providers. Many participants relied upon case managers tied to their funding or grant providers as a way of making academic decisions. Based on the descriptions provided by participants, these case managers would seem to be less informed about college choices and services than college staff and more concerned about the agendas of their particular agencies. Robert, who received his academic advising from his Workforce Investment Act case manager, described it this way:

They just say you can take whatever you wanted to. There is no guidance or anything. So I think they basically want you to take the first thing that can get you a job and get out. And I can understand because they have a different outlook.

Their job is to get you a job and not support you.

Participants’ experiences reflected that employment case managers may be driven by performance measures tied to employment. For participants who received Workforce Investment Act or other related funding, there were time limits and restrictions regarding coursework. As well, their success was tied to obtaining a job.

Another participant, Michelle, seemed to concur, “I don’t know if it is the

employment office or the college. Unemployment office talk like they want you back to work, but they don't seem to act like they want you to go back to school." Participants in general noted that they connected with workforce agents for advising, but the advising seemed to fall short of what they needed as students.

Though participants based their academic choices on the advisement, most advising received from case managers related to workforce centered on economic indicators. Saturn claimed that "They just tell you what you already know about how, you know, medical is the growing area or there ain't no jobs in this area, like that."

The experiences, relayed by older adult dislocated workers, indicates that much of their academic decision-making revolved around employment outlook and workforce measures. Lisa, who also received public funding, changed schools from a private institution to a public community college because the private college was not approved to receive public aid. Most older adult dislocated workers in the context of this study based their college choices, program selections, and academic decisions to some degree on information from employment case managers.

Social networks with other dislocated workers. In addition to employment case managers, the participants in the study relied heavily upon social networks of other dislocated workers to navigate the community college context. These networks typically spawned from relationships in the classes and then developed into study and support groups that met on and off campus.

Lisa shared her own experience, "I made a couple of friends of the people in the class, laid-off, and we kind of got close cause we sat together. Before the test, we got

together and studied and then at the actual clinical when we had to stick each other. We got kind of close and I still talk to them.”

Molly, too, described bonds with other dislocated workers in class: “I’ve got cell phone numbers. We keep in touch with each other. The group, like I told you, we’re family. We meet for lunch, we talk to each other, we help each other try to get through this, and one of my friends is having a baby, and I will be there.”

When asked about the most meaningful part of his experience, Robert referred to his classmates that had helped each other get through class and all that comes with being a student: “I mean it’s just fun with everybody being in pretty much the same boat. Everybody sitting there asking questions, and you make fun of your situation and you accept people for who they are and you know just enjoy it.”

Fred’s social network of dislocated workers arrived to college together and supported one another by taking classes together: “We all were friends and we all got together and it was good. Now I had this guy named [name deleted] that worked at [company deleted]. He was in class, I was in class, [four names deleted]. We all work together and we all went to school together.” Fred added:

We kind of worked together as a team to get through it, the same way we did we was going through journeyman. You have to have somebody that’s doing the same struggle that you are and you all get together and put your heads together and your thoughts and all your participation together, and work together for the goal. You need a support system.

The idea of a network of older adult dislocated workers permeated participants’ stories.

They used these groups for personal and academic support. Molly discussed the bonds she formed with other older adult dislocated workers in her course:

Yes, ma'am. I've still got cell phone numbers we're still keeping in touch with each other. That first group, like I told you - we're family, We meet for lunch, we talk to each other and one of my friends is having a baby and I will be there.

The one thing I contributed that to is an instructor helping to develop that.

Another participant Lisa referred to forming bonds with other dislocated students in class:

“Who helped me? Well my parents and my kids and of course some workers that was in my class, like I said, we talked on and off and you know we got together. That helped me.”

Julia also referred to a network of older adult dislocated workers, but hers was external to the college. She described a dislocated worker support group started at her church as her main avenue of information about the college even as she attended class. She stated that college staff would come present to the group and she would find out things that she did not know as a student. In this way, the dislocated worker social network provided a forum for her to navigate the college. However Julia began a program for optometric technician certification that she dropped seemingly because of lack of appropriate academic and inaccessibility to college staff to assist in academic decision-making. The majority of participants indicated that they had developed lasting relationships with other dislocated workers that helped them through training.

Taking risks. The participants described the discontinuity that comes with dislocation. The security they had relied upon in employment was shattered. The

realization from dislocation that nothing material is guaranteed had empowered them to take risks, and participants described a willingness and benefit to going beyond their comfort zones in order to navigate community college. Evident in the stories of participants was the idea of taking risks.

Participants described the ability to take risks in ways that reflect exposing self to the possibilities of the future. Some participants viewed it as taking progressive steps until getting comfortable or as being receptive to change.

David described a sense of purpose that came with allowing himself to work through the experience of being a student:

I just jumped in and get my feet wet. I am going to wade in and be more successful. Once you get started, and you get your feel for your surroundings, it's kind of like an old hat or a comfortable pair of shoes. You just do it...I think you take the path you were meant to lead anyway.

Participants shared stories demonstrating their resilience and ability to figure things out by trying.

Another participant, Fred, talked about his fortitude and risk taking in these words:

It may not mean much to a lot of people, but when you tell me I can't do something, I am just bound and determined to do it...That's why I said in the beginning that you have to continue to open yourself up to the possibility of you having to change. As you get older, you don't like change, but change is something that's got to be a part of your life. I've learned that you got to change.

In order to take risks, participants had to change their perspectives and make decisions that may have been uncomfortable previously. In fact, returning to school was an integral step in taking risks.

For several participants, there were intrinsic aspects of their taking risks that provided them with strength to navigate the course. Molly described her willingness to take risks as based on inner drive: “My inner drive pushes me to do it. I want to be what I set out to be. And somewhere along the lines I am going to be at a hospital somewhere working. I am going to be somewhere. And I see it and I’ve stated it and its going to happen.”

Other participants described a relationship to faith in their risk-taking and ability to progress. Molly described it this way: “My first thought was I am fifty-four years old. I am not going back to school. This is not happening. I don’t take tests. I don’t do tests. But I did it by deciding to take a leap of faith, step out of the boat, walk across the water, and it was like I was where I needed to be every time.”

Julia described herself as “a gerbil or some kind of little creature running on that little wheel, ah that’s what I think of, and juggling, a juggler. It’s like you just do what you can do and don’t worry about the part out of your control.” She demonstrated resolve to manage those things that she felt she could control and believe in the possibility of positive outcomes for those things outside of her control.

Michelle offered this similar thought, “It’s not good to question why this or why that, just say things happen for a reason, and jump out there and do whatever you need to do. I am glad I took this course.”

Older adult dislocated workers in this study reflected the ability to take risks in order to navigate the community college context. For some participants this involved believing in themselves, while for others risk-taking meant having faith to do it. The experience of dislocation had offered them the will to know they could make it through the journey of community college training.

Facilitation of learning and development. As they navigated the community college context, participants recalled what facilitated their learning and development. Three major themes emerged regarding facilitation: 1) *engagement of teachers with practical experience*, 2) *grants or aid for training*, and 3) *personal support systems*. The final theme of personal support systems was further divided into subthemes of *family and loved ones* and the support of *faith*.

Engagement of teachers with practical work experience. Although participants indicated very little engagement with college staff and services, when they did provide examples of involvement, the examples centered on their experiences with their teachers. Of those interactions with teachers, the practical experience level of the teacher surfaced as contributing to participants' learning and development.

The teacher who Michelle encountered facilitated her learning because of her experience working in a medical office. Michelle pointed to her connection to the instructor: "The teacher, the instructor, I love her, I love her. I think that the background that she has, she knows what she is talking about and she could relate to us. She just knows her stuff." The practical knowledge that teachers possessed was viewed by participants as enhancing their learning and development.

Robert shared that he believed the age and experience of the teachers in non-credit training made a difference for him as well: “I think that work experience makes a difference for the teachers. I mean my teacher now she works in a doctor’s office and she is an office manager. She knows how it will really be for me out in the workplace.”

Participants valued the practical work experience instructors possessed as contributing to their ability to learn about the norms and expectations of the profession for which they trained. Participants noted learning tacit knowledge from engagement with instructors and through applied activities within their courses.

Molly, who had taken a human resources development course as a part of her non-credit training, shared a converse story that led her to the same conclusion:

The HRD teacher was right out of college, young, very young. She wanted us to play games and do things and a lot of us were my age in the class and had been there and done that. I need help. I need somebody giving me direction on what I need to do and how I need to do it, right? I need real life situations because this is the real world and I don’t have a job.

Later, Molly noted that her more experienced nursing aid teacher had “helped her so much. She was a great instructor.”

Participants favored instructors who appeared to have experience in the workforce outside of academia or in the vocation for which they trained. Older adult dislocated workers also valued teachers who demonstrated a good deal of experience working with adult learners.

Sherry added that she was able to determine the instructors who would be best

suited for dislocated workers:

You know the teachers who have been doing this a long time. They realize I am at an age coming back to school, and they recognize that I have some, you know, problems with certain things, and they are willing to work extra with me. I like that about them.

Saturn offered a similar experience, “The one that I really like was Ms. [name deleted]. She was my teacher. She had changed jobs and stuff. She was a good, good teacher.” Saturn believed that the instructor who had also changed professions was able to understand how change impacted older adult dislocated workers. Her story, and those of other participants, displayed how integral experienced instructors are to the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers.

Grants or aid for training. Funding to attend training was crucial to the ability of these older adult dislocated workers to persist. With the loss of income and added stress of dislocation, participants could not ignore the great impact funding had on their participation in training. Eight out of ten participants received some form of public aid to attend training. The ninth participant no longer qualified for public aid so he paid out of pocket using unemployment benefits. The tenth individual relied upon severance pay from her former employer.

Robert had worked through a complex set of funding streams to finally obtain Workforce Investment Act funds that would cover his training expenses. Robert and other participants in the study noted that obtaining funding was the critical first step to take after dislocation and in preparing to attend training. Robert described his experience

this way:

From day one, as soon as I got laid off when they told me, I left and went to the unemployment office. They told me I had to wait till all my severance is taken care of. Then as soon as you receive your last check, you go in to apply. Then that's a process where I think it takes two weeks before you get a paycheck. Well it depends on how much money you've built up. So just say for twelve years I had a job, so I never claimed unemployment so I had a good stash. So you have ahh, like an account at the unemployment that has how much money you have accumulated from your time of work. If you haven't worked and say you were, let's say you get laid off tomorrow and you've only been here two years, you might have a little bit and not much. So it's like a hit and win type of thing. But then they offer you certain programs were if you were fortunate to get the unemployment office to offer WIA programs then they pay for you to go back to school which in turn helps continue your payments of unemployment to keep you in school and continue your finance so when you graduate or finish that course you are able to go back to work. See it's complicated but that is the only way to pay to get back to school.

The complexity of obtaining funding for school was described by several participants, but their persistence through those complexities reflected how significant funding was to their success.

Lisa, who began her study at a private college, also relayed the complexity but significance of funding sources to cover training:

I started, I actually did start going to a college called [institution deleted] in [location deleted]. I started going there and my unemployment once it did kick in good they told me they couldn't pay for it because it wasn't fully accredited so it had to be fully accredited. So I stopped going there and it was for medical assistance so I went to a community college because I knew phlebotomy and drug collection was one of the things that medical assistants does and ah they was telling me that you can get a job sort of like medical assistant because it does consist of those things. So I just went ahead and did that because they paid for it. For Lisa, and other older adult dislocated workers, if funding provision was not resolved prior to training, it meant having to correct courses of study or change institutions to those that would fit grant guidelines.

Further, as Michelle alluded to, "if you don't get the money figured out first, you can't really think about what to take." For older adult dislocated workers, funding is a key component of continuing education.

Not only was funding a critical first step, grants or aid were determinants in the colleges and programs students attended. In this way, funding is not only a starting point, but a decisive factor in learning and development. Fred explained the dire need for financial support that older dislocated workers face:

I know money is tight, but when you ain't got the financial support that's what changes the situation. You want to do, but you ain't got the financial support, and you're running the risk at your age group by just devoting your time and your resources to the school because you may not be able to get a return on it.

Financial matters resonated in the stories of all participants in some way. All of them were trying to balance the demands of training against challenging financial odds, and grants were critical to mediating financial barriers.

Kanye, who had stopped out of training before, had hoped to receive public aid to attend training, but because he had not persisted previously, he no longer qualified. He paid out of pocket to attend class using his unemployment benefits but described the strain that it presented for him:

I'm trying to do the best I can and hear I go have to pay. I went back to work last time. They know that; they have my records. But they still won't pay for me to go to school.

Although Kanye and others had figured out a way to cover costs of education, they viewed funding and its agents as instrumental. Funding allowed older adult dislocated workers to transition into their roles as students.

Personal support systems. Given the emotional distress and financial hardship caused by dislocation, an older adult dislocated worker faces challenges that have implications for their success as students. The participants in this study pointed to the importance of a personal support system in facilitating their learning and development as students. These support systems included family, friends, loved ones, pets, and were often underscored by a connection to faith or religion. This was a commonality shared by all of the participants.

Family and loved ones. Family and loved ones were described as important in providing resources as well as emotional support. Loved ones often provided child care

or financial support as well as advice and encouragement. Michelle noted her boyfriend as supporting her through training:

Well I do live with someone, and he, when I feel like I am not, like when I worry about a test, and I am walking around with a book in my hand up in my face [*she illustrates*], you know studying or whatever, he says—oh you know you are going to do good. You're smart, you're smart. He's always telling me oh you know you will be fine; you know you gonna do good on your test. Even when you think, you know, Oh God I am going to flunk, I am so nervous. He helps me study really, he's helping me with my terminology, my prefixes and suffixes.

Personal support systems were critical to the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers as they provided both encouragement and academic assistance.

Lisa described her personal support from her parents as critical to her success as they cared for her sixteen, ten, and seven year-old children. Lisa explained that having the childcare allowed her to have time to devote to attending school and studying.

Sherry also relied upon her mother for support and inspiration:

I talk to my mother every day. I am her only daughter out of fifteen kids. Well I had a sister but she was murdered about ten years ago. So uh, I call her. Not only do I call her, I go see her. I take time out for that. She always tells me to, she says, get all you can, because she didn't go no further than the eighth grade.

Kanye describes how he draws inspiration from his loved ones:

My wife had went to get her cosmetology license. She did that. She could have worked and went back to school, but I held it down. I took care of everything.

Then I look at my kids, I stay on them about doing good in school and making good grades. Go to another school, college, get you a good education and have a better way of life. Then I look at my younger brother-college, my sister-college but she didn't finish. So I am looking at okay-how do I want to find myself. So I am like I am not going to start and not finish. One, I got to show my kids that when you get into something, you finish it up. Two, let them know you are never too old to go back to school. A lot of people say, well, I am too old to go back to school. You are never too old.

Several participants, like Kanye, drew inspiration from their personal support systems. Their relationships reminded them of the importance and value in continuing their education. And, for many participants, their family and loved ones influenced their decisions about specific training programs.

One such participant was Saturn. She explained her decision to enter phlebotomy as based on her sister's recommendation:

Okay – I grew up with my mother, my sister and myself. We grew up a real close family. My sister she was the one you know – into the phlebotomy, and I just followed her. She said I would like that. She said that I would like that, so that's the reason why I went into phlebotomy – because of her.

Likewise, David, received a good deal of his support and information from family:

“Really, probably my wife was very supportive, and my mother was very supportive. My in-laws even was excited about me changing or getting another career field perhaps.

Actually my father-in-law was a male travel nurse, so he had a lot to discuss with me

with me about it.”

Fred also pointed to his wife as a personal support that has helped him develop as a student:

You have to have a good mate, you know. She was, ah, I have always worked. My wife and I have always worked together as a team, with raising the children, with taking care of the house and everything. So whatever she pursue in life, I had her back. So whatever I pursue in life, she has my back. She supports me. You need that support.

But Fred’s story also demonstrated that personal support systems can strain learning and development. His wife had drawn ill and he would no longer be able to continue his education because he felt that he needed to be available to care for her. He did not really know how he was going to make it, but he seemed to have faith that he would.

Faith. Faith was an element that facilitated the development of the participants, particularly the women. While male participants alluded to faith and hope, each of the six female participants referred directly to God, the Lord, or church. Fred, for example, was clear that hope was an important element to assist him as a student. He offered, “You just have to hope things get better each day; that you do better each day. And it will, you have to believe.”

Sherry explained that she obtained her strength to progress from her religion, “My strength comes from going to church, having you know my bible study on Wednesday night and church on Sundays, and you know if we’re having to support the pastor through the week, that has to come first because that’s where my strength come from.”

Molly explained how talking to God provided her support:

I talk to myself a lot, and what I tell people is I am not really talking to me, I am talking to God. So I am not crazy. And I was going to say, I am going to say this, I am going to share this with you—I also have a class that I attend and I got this class from Bishop Eddie Long, and it's called the class of knee-ology. The class of knee-ology is that you get on your knees and pray because the best teacher that you have is the Lord.

Molly's story illustrated the perspective that faith provided strength and resolve for older adult dislocated workers to learn.

Julia relayed a familiar experience in discussing her church's support group for dislocated workers. Several participants discussed relating their faith practices to their specific dislocation experiences including bible study and religious services geared to dislocation and reemployment. Two other participants, Michelle and Saturn, related to faith by thanking God for their abilities to learn.

A single mother, Lisa, described it this way—"What helps me make it other than the Lord, nothing! That's how I keep my sanity." In explaining what facilitated learning and development, participants did not emphasize cognitive skills or individual abilities, but rather focused on facilitation from faith and other personal support systems.

Hindrances on learning and development. The absence of educational services, that traditional students may typically expect and receive, was apparent in the experiences of older adult dislocated workers in community college non-credit training. These findings appeared in three themes regarding hindrances on learning and

development: 1) *lack of college support services* and 2) *lack of academic and technical preparation*, as well as, 3) the idea that *re-employment* may hinder the learning and development of older dislocated workers in workforce training. Within the theme of lack of college support services, subthemes regarding colleges did not provide a) *early interventions* and b) *access to student services* surfaced.

Lack of college support services. Non-credit programs offer flexibility and convenience of short courses that may appeal to older students, however they typically do not provide college support services and often serve underprepared students. Many of the study participants noted the lack of college support services available to them as students. Support services might have assisted older dislocated workers from the initial stages throughout the training process. Older dislocated workers describe themselves as not knowing about the options available to them when deciding what to do after dislocation and also when participating as a student. Most notably, even informal services were not readily accessible.

Early interventions not provided. Participants in this study referred to missed educational opportunities based on not receiving information about college training and services in the initial stages of dislocation. Early interventions may have provided older adult dislocated workers with information necessary to make informed choices about training and may reduce the time spent trying to figure out if and which training programs to attend as their funding sources are expending. In this way, Michelle believed that support services from the college should begin prior to enrollment:

I think when people, you know when you get that letter from your job that day,

the college should be able to say look there is an option out there if you want to go to school. You know, this is who you contact, go here and talk to so and so. I mean that is what I wished somebody would have told me. I spent sixteen months unemployed before coming to school. Um, you know that would have been something you know they could have provided. That would have helped me a lot. I was even in the group with a lady who never graduated from high school. She, she got laid off the same time I did. She went back to school; I think the beginning of this year just to get her GED. I don't know, you know, if she knew that was the thing to do or who to talk to or where to go. That would help and save a lot people's time.

Many participants had not entered training directly after dislocation. They had time limitations on public aid that they would receive from unemployment, and for some the delay in entering training meant that they had a shorter term to receive benefits to cover educational expenses.

As a student, Molly fluttered through another program before getting to training that she felt was the right fit. Before nursing assistance training, she had enrolled and dropped out of optometric technician training. She felt that advising and support services might have helped her make more suitable academic choices:

Oh yes ma'am, I just dropped right out of that optometric class. It was not for me. I got a call from the teacher Ms. [name deleted] and she said she just didn't understand. She was devastated. But I have to say it just didn't feel right. I did not know what it was when I went and then it just didn't feel right.

Julia shared similar reflections that early interventions would have been helpful:

I wished I would have gone to school a lot earlier. Because I have been out of work for about 16 months. So it took me almost whole year just to go back to school. So I wished I would have gone maybe sometime last year. But I didn't know about it. See I was just gonna try to go to school to go through a program and get an associate. After looking on line I thought about the continuing ed., I always thought it was something else, but I don't know what I thought it was, but I didn't think I can take that. I didn't know.

A lack of early interventions was evident in the experiences of older adult dislocated workers and hindered their advancement into training. Molly, whose company provided early intervention services, explained how those provisions were often not convenient in the way that community colleges services traditionally are: The company contacted me and wanted me to attend the employee assistance program which turned out to be an absolute joke. They wanted me to drive all the way to [city deleted] to get help. And how fair was that?"

Most Participants described not knowing what resources were available to them or how to access educational services in order to make a decision about training early in their dislocation. Early interventions by community colleges, the findings suggest, would have facilitated their progress and development.

Non-credit programs do not provide ready access to student services. Non-credit programs do not typically provide traditional students services such as financial aid or formal academic advising. However, the stories of participants illustrated that they also

did not access basic or informal supportive services that would enhance their learning and development.

Julie indicated that she wanted to meet with her teacher to gain a better understanding of material, and that could only occur before or after class: “If I had a question, I had to come to class early because the teacher isn’t really here all the time. She is just here for her class.” Based on information gathered about colleges in this southeastern community college system, all of the participants attended classes that were taught by part-time instructors.

Several of the participants also attended training on satellite campuses because their colleges provided non-credit workforce training off-site. Sherry was one of the students who attended a satellite center. When Sherry discussed her study group of older adult dislocated workers, she also mentioned that they met at the homes of one of the group members in contrast to a campus library or other college facility.

As Fred talked about his college experiences, it sounded familiar to the experiences of other participants who felt training worked differently than they had expected:

Yeah, well you see, at one time you are a worker, but then after you work you are just a student. I am an older student but I am a student. But you know it was funny, they were teaching us, I’ve been taught several times how to do a resume, how to dress for a job, how to present yourself, the things that you do and the things that you don’t do... You know that you are capable of doing one thing. But then when you go and you in an atmosphere of younger people, people that are

more familiar with it than you are. Then nobody will help you figure what's best for you because they think you should know.

Program literature described Fred's course as one that would provide training to improve employability including job search techniques, interview skills, and resume-building.

While Fred's description aligns with the course description, his experience demonstrates the absence of supportive services to transition older workers who may be less familiar with contemporary course requirements or expectations in new fields.

Lisa understood the lack of college services for non-credit students as the norm. Though she did not possess a college degree, she knew there was a marked difference in services provided to students in non-credit education. In fact she described her non-credit workforce training as outside of the college sphere: "In continuing education, it's easy. You just take your classes. It's not like when you in college."

The stories of older adult dislocated workers positioned them such that they were not able to receive even many of the informal supportive services customary to students.

Lack of academic and technical preparation. Very closely tied to the lack of college student services was the participants' lack of preparation for college training. Older adult dislocated workers return to training often after many years out of school. The landscape and requirements of training have changed and hinder older dislocated workers learning and development.

Several of the participants expressed difficulty managing class work load and understanding what they are asked to learn. Their stories reflected their lack of academic preparation as hindering their learning and development. During their courses of study,

Saturn, Sherry, and David experienced a need for tutoring but only Sherry indicated that she was able to obtain it. Sherry offered this explanation:

It's much harder for me. I been out of school forever. I had to prepare my mind mentally. You know you have to change everything, all your habits, everything. Get back into the swing of studying and putting focus in your mind... Sometimes I find myself doing, staying on that particular subject for almost three hours at home and I am neglecting other stuff.

Her story represents the balancing act that many older adult dislocated workers in the study described. They were attempting to balance academic requirements for which they felt unprepared while continuing to manage other responsibilities.

Robert provided an example of learning for which he was unprepared: "Homework is my main obstacle at this point and time. But I am still working on it; I am not giving up. It actually interferes with your home life... I was reading a chapter on body parts that I didn't even know I had. I don't remember learning any of this."

Not only was academic preparation a hindrance to learning and development, the demands of technology and technical skill required by training courses presented challenges to learning and development of older adult dislocated workers.

Julia, who described herself as fairly smart, believed that training was much tougher than she expected after being away from school for so long: "If I had taken on one more thing, I would have been so discouraged, I would have just quit." She goes on to discuss the role technology plays in the course and how the technical requirements of the course made it difficult for her to complete:

Well I wonder if everybody else was having the same problem. Either the instructions need to be as if it is computer for dummies or exactly what you are going to see you know and what you need to chose, step you right through it. Not just say go download here, cause there a lot of people who don't have that level.

Fred, too, found himself unprepared for the technology integrated in his program:

It was frustrating at first being in class with the word keys, getting use the computer, and getting frustrated when I am on the computer taking a test. Like on the computer, I had a math problem, and it's like eight times four and my mind might have drifted and I didn't put the right number in there. And I'm getting ready and I said 'no', and it just put that X in there. That's when I said, 'We need a teacher; forget this computer.'

Several older adult dislocated workers in the study noted a feeling of not being able to meet the academic and technical demands placed on them. Other participants avoided situations that they felt would present additional academic or technical challenges for which they were not prepared. Saturn described her experience this way: "because you been out of school all those years – been out to long – I say it was hard for me that's how I feel trying to absorb everything at one time."

In a review of program literature, I noted that there was an online/hybrid version of the training that Saturn could have taken that would have allowed her to save money, but instead Saturn had traveled more than twenty minutes one-way to attend class. When asked, Saturn indicated that the online courses were "not for her." She went on to add that she "didn't even have a computer." Technical requirements impact most employment

options in the present economy, and as such, impact training programs to prepare for those fields. Based on the data gathered regarding older adult dislocated workers, an aversion to educational technology and lack of technical preparation hindered their learning and development as students in non-credit community college workforce training.

Re-employment. The desire to obtain employment drives dislocated workers to participate in training. But if an employment opportunity presents during the training, dislocated workers may choose to take the job. This leads to incompleteness, or stopping-out, for some students and part-time employment for others.

Older dislocated workers may stop out of training when a job opportunity avails. In the stories of participants, stopping-out of non-credit training meant not completing the credential. Within popular non-credit education, students who stop-out do not maintain the hours completed but must retake the course even if it is near completion. Kanye had entered and stopped-out of training in the past, and by the conclusion of this study had done so again, all in an effort to take care of his family responsibilities. In describing why he left training before, Kanye expresses the difficult choice that older dislocated workers face when a job becomes available before they complete training:

I liked school, but at the time I was in the process of going to school and had to support my family. I end up having to drop out. I had to go back to work; my unemployment [benefits] ran out, so I had to go back to work. So I went back to work. Three strikes and you're out. The third time I started back up on the very first side. Right there on my third month when I was about to be made permanent,

they closed the doors... So I am back in school again.

Kanye stopped out of training that may have provided him longer-term employment because employment is so critical for older adult dislocated workers. Because there were no routes to completion, he was unable to finish the certificate, and his stopping-out impacted subsequent academic opportunities.

When Sherry, a single female participant, walked into our first interview, she exclaimed ‘I need a job.’ It was the first statement she made and an obvious desire for her. Sherry was currently experiencing the same pressure of feeling the need to be employed and would accept employment even if it meant foregoing training:

I have been unemployed two years. Its two years in September. Woo, um, I used to be that person that you know, when I was working, could do pretty much, travel. Now everything is so limited and I feel like I am in a closed closet and can’t get out. I need to get out. I can’t go like I used to because of gas. I drive a Jeep and that means you better come where you gonna make everything whenever you go out. But the pressure of having to meet those bills and not having no money to buy anything, not even buy stuff for my grandchildren, that works on me...Now even my girlfriends say ‘you are going to have to find a job.’ I need a job right now.

Most participants expressed a job as more important to them than completion of their training. Their personal responsibilities, and the lack of available jobs, intensified a compulsion to work if an opportunity presented.

For some participants, they had to work when public aid was exhausted, and as a

result, they would not be able to continue training that would make them more marketable or provide additional skills. Saturn wanted to obtain another certification but did not do so because she needed to return to work after her unemployment benefits expired. She talked about how she wished she could return to training to obtain an additional certification, but it was not possible because she must work.

Another participant, Lisa, who had shared how much she desired to continue on to earn an EKG certification and even a two-year degree, started working at a fast food restaurant by the time of our follow-up interview because she expressed that the “the costs of not working were greater than the benefits of going to school right now.”

One student managed to obtain part-time employment during their training. Doing so meant managing the demands of school and work and whatever income limitations were imposed by their funders. Unemployment insurance benefits generally specify limits on earnings, and the requirements of training often impose inherent time constraints on students. David had to start working part-time during training to handle his financial obligations. He indicated that if it were not for his flexible employer, he would have had to drop-out:

One of the obstacles I can say is that I had started class before this past fall and then I accepted a job on top of that and I was so afraid that the job would make me stop going to class. That part of it or that side of it sort of bothered me, because I didn't want to turn down a job and at that same time I didn't want to lose sight of a new career that was possible... They kind of made it easy for me. They said you normally have two days off, so we will give you those two days off

for your classes. So every Tuesday and Thursday, I knew I was going to be off and I had plenty of time to rest that morning and study during the day time. Most of us don't have that luxury, and I wouldn't have been able to continue if I didn't. David was able to find an employer who worked with him to continue the training, but he acknowledged that his case was an exception. For all participants in this study, employment was the desired goal, but reaching that goal also hindered the successful completion of training that might increase the opportunity for stable employment.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the findings of this study based upon the research questions. The findings pointed to emotional distress and financial hardship as aspects central to the experiences of older adult dislocated workers. Also as a part of their experiences, older adult dislocated workers sought stability through relating to college as work, but worried about the value of training because of perceived age discrimination and the concern about returning to the workforce at entry-level. As students, older adult dislocated workers, in this study, reflected non-traditional understandings based on age and isolation from student services. Older adult dislocated workers in non-credit training do not interact with college staff, but obtain their academic advising from other sources such as unemployment case managers or networks of other older adult dislocated workers. As well, older adult dislocated workers learned to take risks in order to participate in training. To facilitate learning and development, these older adult dislocated workers engaged instructors who had real-world experience, relied upon grants and other funding sources, and utilized personal support systems. On the other hand,

those things that hindered their learning and development included lack of college support services, lack of academic and technical preparation, and re-employment which forced older adult dislocated workers to stop training or continue while balancing work

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

This study sought to explore the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who participated in community college non-credit workforce training programs including how they navigated the contexts of community colleges, and what facilitated and hindered learning and development of these dislocated workers. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. What are the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?
2. How do older adult dislocated workers, who attend non-credit workforce training programs, navigate the community college context?
3. What facilitates the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?
4. What hinders learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training?

This chapter includes five sections: a summary of the exploratory study of older dislocated workers in community college non-credit training, a discussion of the conclusions drawn from the research, implications for research and practice gained from the study, and recommendations for further inquiry.

Summary of the Study

An interpretive-narrative approach was utilized to explore the questions posed by the study. Using qualitative inquiry, data were collected through semi-structured

interviews with ten dislocated workers who were at least forty years old. The participants were purposively selected based on the following criteria: a) at least forty years of age, b) having been dislocated from employment without cause, c) not possessing a college degree, and d) having attended non-credit workforce training in 2010. Participants, six females and four males, all lived in and attended community college programs in the southeastern United States, but their backgrounds varied including six individuals who worked in production at factories, two clerical workers, one retail sales worker, and one sales management worker. Participants in this study were unemployed between twelve and twenty-two months. They attended non-credit training programs that ranged from paraprofessional occupations to vocational trades.

The primary data collection method involved semi-structured interviews. Nine of ten primary interview sessions were in-person with one by telephone. All of the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The participants were interviewed in various settings of their selection: seven at community colleges that the participants attended, one at the participant's home, one at another individual's home chosen by the participant, and one by telephone. Each primary interview lasted between one to two hours, while follow-up communications allowed participants the opportunity to review transcripts of primary interviews and to clarify responses from initial interviews. Interviews totaled seventeen hours of data.

Data were collected also through demographic forms, participant observations including during interviews and at the institutions, and reviews of documents. Participants completed demographic forms at the beginning of primary interview sessions

that captured basic demography. Observations were recorded during and immediately after interview sessions. Documents that were reviewed included program materials, such as brochures and websites, as well as personal artifacts voluntarily provided by participants to include a certification, photographs, and a course syllabus. Data were captured using recordings, transcripts, field notes, memos, and observation protocols.

This study revealed twelve themes and fifteen subthemes related to the major research questions. Concerning the first research question about the experiences of older dislocated workers, four themes and eight subthemes emerged. The first theme was *stress from dislocation*. The second theme was that older dislocated workers seek *stability by relating their college experiences to work*. The third theme involved older dislocated workers' *worries about the value of training* even as they were students. Finally, the fourth theme was that older dislocated workers have *non-traditional understandings* about college. Two themes and three subthemes were found regarding the second research question about how older dislocated workers navigate community colleges. The first theme was that in order to navigate the context of community colleges, older dislocated workers depend upon *academic advising from individuals from outside of the college context*. While the second theme was that older dislocated workers *take risks* as a way of navigating community colleges. Inquiry into the question of what facilitates learning and development for older dislocated workers yielded three themes and two subthemes. The first theme was *engagement of teachers with practical experience*, followed by *grants and aid for training* as a second theme regarding what facilitated older dislocated workers. The third theme regarding facilitation of learning and

development referred to *personal support systems* utilized by the older dislocated workers. Finally, in terms of what hinders learning and development, three themes and four subthemes surfaced. The three themes were *lack of college support services*, *lack of academic preparation*, and *re-employment*. These themes and subthemes are outlined in Table 2. From these findings, conclusions were drawn and are discussed below.

Conclusions

Four major conclusions emerged from the study regarding the experiences of older dislocated workers in non-credit training at southeastern community colleges. These conclusions are: 1) older adult dislocated workers experience non-credit workforce training as workforce development rather than adult education, 2) older adult dislocated workers in community college non-credit workforce training obtain significant academic advising from outside of the community college, 3) part-time instructors, who maintain a connection to their professions, facilitate the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers, and 4) older adult dislocated workers are hindered by outdated models of community college non-credit training.

Conclusion one: Older adult dislocated workers experience community college non-credit workforce training as workforce development rather than adult education. Though extant literature regarding non-credit training programs describes them as adult education, older adult dislocated workers, by contrast, understand non-credit training as workforce development. Scholarly literature (Prince & Jenkins, 2005; Henry & Basile, 1994) positions non-credit workforce training within the field of adult education, utilizing adult education theories and models. Community colleges, too,

advertise non-credit programs as adult education and base instruction on theories of adult learning. However, older adult dislocated workers, in the context of this study, reflect values of workforce development within their experiences. Haralson (2010) describes workforce development as a coordination of activities that provide individuals an opportunity to sustain their livelihoods and contributes to societal economic development. In this way, workforce development is more concerned with economic enhancement, organizational goals, and human capital; whereas adult learning theory has traditionally focused on individual learning, the needs of adult learners, and empowerment through education (Brookfield, 2005).

To begin, extant adult learning literature is not congruent with the experiences of older adult dislocated workers. Studies regarding older adult learners depict all older adult learners as homogenous. According to Chen, Kim, Moon, and Merriam (2008), who performed a comprehensive literature review regarding older adult education, older adults as a rule were depicted as able-bodied, retirement-seeking individuals possessing disposable time, riding off into the sunsets of their lives. Participants in the current study painted a different picture of older adult learning, one focused on work. For older adult dislocated workers, the pressing need for employment is paramount and their identity as workers is pervasive throughout their student experiences. Training, as they see it, should be purposeful and based on employment outcomes, rather than solely on the desire to learn. While extant literature on older adult learners purports that older adults seek learning opportunities out of personal interests, older adult dislocated workers focus on those aspects of learning that they believe will advance their employment and economic

statuses rather than intrinsic values of education.

Still, as Hatcher and Bowles (2006) explain, there are some intersections between workforce development and adult education, and those intersections are evident in the experiences of older adult dislocated workers. Older adult dislocated workers' views of non-credit training as workforce development may actually reflect their personal biographies (Bean & Metzner, 1985). As Kerka (1995a) reports, older workers connect more to career culture than to academic culture because of their long tenures in the workforce. Defining themselves as workers, participants indicated that they learned most from applied activities that mimicked practices in the profession.

As students, older adult dislocated workers favored practical activities such as lab, clinical rotations, and work experiences within the courses, supporting experiential learning as a mode for adults. Kolb (1989) put forth that experiential learning occurs when adults engage themselves in the process of learning through active involvement and problem-solving. Likewise, older adult dislocated workers in this study focused on practical components of training seeking to develop expertise in the practice rather than accumulate knowledge. Participants highlighted the importance of understanding the culture of the profession for which they trained. They gained from instruction regarding performance expectations, work habits, and professional customs. As participants formed tacit knowledge, they developed expertise about the fields. Older adult dislocated workers' stories more strongly emphasized tacit knowledge they gained through engagement with instructors as they trained for work (Polyani, 1966).

While adult education offers some understanding of participants' experiences as

students, older adult dislocated workers in the current study, by in large, described themselves in terms of working rather than by attributes associated with students. They referred to themselves predominantly as older adults, workers, dislocated workers, and other language that reflected their adult responsibilities external to the community college contexts. When discussing their academic experiences, they typically referenced space and time, for example using ‘when I am in class’ rather than associative language such as ‘as a student...’. Their stories depicted disengagement from student identity and a connection to worker identity. According to social identity theory, individuals form groups with others for whom they perceive as possessing commonalities (Ahmed, 2007). The participants in this study aligned themselves with networks or other older adult dislocated workers although their classes were mostly comprised of younger adult students because their social identity was largely based on their status as a dislocated worker rather than a student.

Furthermore, the stories of participants in the current study indicated that older adult dislocated workers understand the value of training in economic terms. Participants indicated that job stability and employment outlook were motivating factors in deciding to enter training and in their choices of study. These older adult dislocated workers made the decisions to return to school for the purposes of obtaining a job rather than intrinsic reasons. As well, participants expressed greater interest in training for fields that could sustain economic shifts, even when those fields may not have reflected their own personal interests or academic preparation. Their academic decisions were actually based upon workforce development understandings regarding training including employment

outlook for fields, available salaries for positions they sought, and expectations from employers about skills employees should possess.

Within workforce development literature, older adult dislocated workers are depicted as having a much shorter term and less opportunity to generate earnings in the workforce. Heidkamp and Van Horn (2008) found that many dislocated workers struggle to find employment after training. For those dislocated workers who do obtain post-training employment, they are faced with seeking new jobs in vastly different employment sectors that do not compensate for their prior skills, tenure, or previous salaries. Workforce studies confirm that, after retraining, dislocated workers will obtain employment that pays significantly less than prior employment including wage losses of up to 19% (Johnson & Kawaski, 2007). Likewise, participants in this study trained for fields that were starkly different than their prior work, and for participants that found work during the study, it was at earnings less than obtained in prior employment. Farber (2005) found that adult workers who become unemployed face loss of human capital when reentering the workforce. Also, workforce development studies note that older adult dislocated workers experience longer post-displacement unemployment and many will not regain employment (Elder, 2004). Participants in this study noted similar concerns regarding the benefit of training including worries about age discrimination, salary decline, and decreased value to the workforce. Older adult dislocated workers in the study described the value of training as its ability to provide opportunity for viable employment. They also connected more to instructional activities representative of workforce development.

To cope with the discontinuity between their perspective of non-credit training as workforce development and its delivery as adult education, older adult dislocated workers related their academic experiences to prior and anticipated work experiences. In the current study, older adult dislocated workers described maintaining work routines during their training experiences. Participants also related their training to on-the-job training or professional development in order to frame their experiences. In addition, they sought academic advising from workforce-related agencies and case managers. The majority of participants in this study received funding to attend training, and while it might have been viewed as a time in which to focus on studying, learning, and developing one's personal interests, most participants expressed such as strong connection to work that they were willing to forego training if an employment opportunity availed.

Solomon (2005) contends that the identities of those involved in vocational training are shaped by the social context. For participants in the current study, the strong inclination to work identity may reflect a broader social context emphasizing training as workforce development. Not only were notions of workforce development present in the stories of participants, non-credit training as a field may be bending toward the tenets of workforce development and away from adult education philosophies. Levin (2007b) explains that political and social forces advance training as workforce development and pervades adult education with workforce development influences. Older adult dislocated workers are influenced by corporate interests, national policy, and media rhetoric to engage in workforce development even if more liberating adult education is in their best interests. Grace explains that the focus on learning solely for the sake of work may

negatively impact adult learners, as this shift represents a movement away from the needs of learners and toward corporate interest. In this vein, community colleges have become entrepreneurial, expanding to include partnerships with businesses and industry. As institutions account for corporate interests and economic development, the nature of workforce training changes. Van Noy and others (2008) concur citing that the proliferation of community college workforce education with corporate connections, particularly in a climate of limited public funding, invokes questions about whose needs colleges seek to fulfill.

Levin (2005) argues that students, such as older dislocated workers in community colleges, may unknowingly find themselves in programs that promote business interests and social injustice. As the most disadvantaged students, those in non-credit education are systematically deprived of resources such as the dislocated workers in this study whose access to support services was minimal (Levin, 2007b). Further non-credit programs are often promoted as providing mobility, such as the ones that these participants partook, but may ultimately lead to less salary or further dislocation.

While the participants in the current study did not refer directly to corporate interests or being disadvantaged as students, their perceptions and inclinations imply political and corporate influence. Older adult dislocated workers indicated that their grant or funding providers exercised significant control over their academic choices, employment case managers were often predominate advisors, and college literature highlighted the institutions' roles in economic development and serving the needs of business. Participants' experiences reflect the chasm between workforce theory focused

on human capital and adult education theory focused on developing learners. In the case of businesses, short term non-credit workforce training provides them an alternative to incurring the costs of providing employees on-the-job training. These economic drivers, within a high-demand, low-supply job market, drive older adult dislocated workers to non-credit workforce training at community colleges. For their part, older adult dislocated workers perpetuate the attitude of learning for the sake of work, and in doing so these older adult dislocated workers experience community colleges not as adult education, but rather as workforce development.

Conclusion two: Older adult dislocated workers in community college non-credit workforce training obtain significant academic advising from outside of the college. While college officials might seem to best suited to provide academic advising, the participants in this study indicated that most of their advising came from peers and case managers outside of community college contexts. Prior research (Seftor & Turner, 2002; Van Noy et al., 2008) explain that non-credit programs typically do not provide student support services in the manner that is offered to credit or degree-bearing courses of study. Non-credit programs do not garner funding equivalent to credit programs nor do the students qualify for financial aid. Community colleges, like other forms of higher education, therefore focus much of their resources and supportive services on students in credit-bearing programs. As a result, older adult dislocated workers, who may be drawn to the convenience and flexibility of non-credit training programs, do not receive student support services that might inform their decision-making.

In lieu of formal college advising, older adult dislocated workers in the current

study turned to their networks of friends, dislocated peers, employment agents, and anticipated outcomes, as well as informal engagement with teachers, to inform academic choices. Prior research studies claim that non-credit students do not engage student life due to their busy lives outside of college (Ortiz, 1995) and because of the absence of student support services for non-credit programs (Heidcamp & Van Horn, 2008). Older adult dislocated workers do not view their training experiences as academic and the lack of coordination amongst workforce development partners only reinforces this view.

In this study, participants' stories indicated a lack of student services for older adult dislocated workers in non-credit programs at all stages. Participants explained how provisions such as early intervention, academic assistance, counseling, and other supportive services might have benefitted them as they participated in training. These services might have mediated the challenges shared such as lack of academic and technical preparation and incomplete knowledge of the community college environment. The services indicated by participants in the study align with three key forms of student services. House (1981) posited that instrumental, informational, and appraisal support enhances adult students' learning and development.

In the case of older adult dislocated workers, instrumental support in the form of college grants or financial aid would have improved financial hardships experienced by students, but were not available through college student services since financial aid is not offered to non-credit students. Their instrumental support, in the form of unemployment benefits of training assistance typically came from workforce or employment agencies. Therefore, older adult dislocated workers turned to employment case managers and other

related funding agencies to inform academic decisions. The current study further suggests that older adult dislocated workers may not have solicited academic advising from community college staff because they did not view their experiences as academic. Older adult dislocated workers view non-credit training as work-related, and as such, sought advising on matters that were actually academic, from individuals outside of the community college. Participants described entering programs that they may not have been academically prepared to complete or for which they did not have an interest based on non-academic advising such as employment projections, dislocated colleagues who had obtained employment in a given field, and grant providers who only funded specific training programs.

In addition, older adult dislocated workers received informational support from outside of community colleges. Participants noted that information used to make academic decisions came from workforce case managers or peer older adult dislocated workers. In particular, the participants in this study did not possess a college degree, and with limited college experience, their understanding of the college environment was based on external perspectives (Ortiz, 1995). While participants stressed that early interventions on the part of college staff would have provided knowledge about how to better navigate community college contexts, most sought funding and unemployment insurance from non-college agencies at the onset of dislocation. When dislocation occurs, older adult dislocated workers are connected to employment agencies at the onset because of the dearth of documentation and importance of maintaining income. Due to this critical first step, and because of the lack of college support services, older adult

dislocated workers do not receive valuable information about college services and academic decision-making. Their life-worlds, as defined by Bean & Metzner (1985), are focused on managing their employment cases, their connections to other older adult dislocated workers, and their personal commitments.

In terms of appraisal support, most participants depended upon networks of peer dislocated workers for praise and emotional support, but did acknowledge the role that instructors play in providing encouragement and accommodations for their learning needs. Older adult dislocated workers in this study offered new understandings about the role of the classroom in shaping their student experiences. Previous research studies (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Donaldson & Graham, 1999; Tinto, 1993) have uncovered the pivotal role of classroom experiences for adult learners who may not engage student life. The current study, however, challenges and extends that knowledge, by suggesting that not all classroom experiences are equally significant in the minds of older adult dislocated workers. Older adult dislocated workers demonstrated a preference for more experienced instructors who continued to work in the profession and taught part-time. They felt that instructors who possessed real-world experience were more sensitive to and better able to support their needs as adult learners. In their courses, participants were able to connect to other older adult dislocated workers who served as peer support systems, appraising and encouraging their success. Participants maintained social and academic relationships with these peers but did not engage other areas of student life.

Several of the participants also attended non-credit workforce training at satellite centers of community colleges. The centers provide space for specialized training, but

serve to disenfranchise older adult dislocated workers further. Off-campus sites constrain college resources not allowing them to provide comprehensive services or staff. Cohen and Brawer (2003) purport that these satellite locations reach students who might not otherwise attend because of smaller environments and proximity. However, these locations further remove older adult dislocated workers from the community college context and closer to the community. Based on the theory of student involvement, when students are not involved in student life, it may negatively impact their academic decision making (Astin, 1984). In order to make academic decisions, older adult dislocated workers therefore, turn to available advisement from case managers and others in their situation.

While workforce agencies and community colleges derive much of their funding from the same federal sources, their goals and performance measures are not congruent. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 provided for job training assistance to fund dislocated workers to update their skills. Yet, performance measures tied to job training assistance focus on the outcome of gainful employment, as quickly as possible, at wages consistent with pre-dislocation employment. These performance measures largely ignore prevailing knowledge regarding education for older adult learners and dislocated workers that indicates longer term study (Simmons, 1995); programs of study consistent with interest, learning styles, and ability (Knowles, 1980); and engagement with the academic environment (Chaves, 2006). Because their ties are much stronger with older adult dislocated workers, with employment agencies and other dislocated peers inform the academic decision-making of older adult dislocated workers.

Conclusion three: Part-time instructors, who maintain a connection to their professions, facilitate the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers in non-credit workforce training. While older adult dislocated workers are more connected to the environment outside of community colleges, participants did demonstrate a relationship with their part-time instructors, particularly those instructors who possessed work experience. Older adult dislocated workers in this study relied on part-time instructors to teach them about the accepted practices of the professions and believed that part-time instructors, who have experience in the real-world, better understood the challenges faced by older adult dislocated workers.

Community colleges rely on more part-time instruction than any other form of higher education (Banachowski, 1996). Part-time instructors represent as much as sixty-five percent of community college faculty, and within in non-credit, the proportion is much higher (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). In the community college context, part-time instructors are employed to keep staffing costs low, to cover flexible or odd schedules (McGuire, 1993). In addition, the employment of part-time instructors advances the colleges' relationships in the community and increases local employment opportunities (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Still, prevailing literature discourages the use of part-time instructors, purporting that they negatively impact student outcomes and dilute the professoriate (Benjet & Loweth, 1989; Jacoby, 2006).

Limited literature confirms the value of part-time instructors in teaching the tacit knowledge regarding a profession (Phelan, 1986), while predominant literature puts forth that part-time instructors may not understand the profession of teaching (McGuire, 1993).

Older adult dislocated workers value the expertise of part-time instructors. They are drawn to instructors with practical experience in the profession for which they train. Older adult dislocated workers in the study were able to model practical instruction offered by adjuncts and garner knowledge regarding the norms and values of the field they prepared to enter. The experiences of older adult dislocated workers in community college non-credit workforce training are consistent with the theory of situated-cognition. Situated-cognition recognizes that learning is connected to doing (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Collins & Duguid, 1989); Learning is based upon enacting knowledge rather than absorbing facts. In the current study, participants discussed favoring practical applications related to course work including labs, clinical practice, and work experiences. They felt part-time instructors who had performed the work were better able to help them learn and develop the skills necessary to obtain employment in the professions. Stevenson (2003) supports the belief that developing professional expertise is the principle role of vocational education. Older adult dislocated workers' learning focused on understanding the norms within their anticipated careers as represented by their part-time instructors.

Furthermore, this study indicates that part-time instructors, with experience in their fields, are better able to relate and respond to the specific needs of older adult dislocated workers. According to these older adult dislocated workers, part-time, working instructors were more sensitive to their needs and respective of their prior experiences. In the stories of older adult dislocated workers, some of their instructors had actually experienced dislocation or understood the notion of entering a new profession because

they had entered teaching after initiating work in their other professions. The experiences of older adult dislocated workers align with communities of practice. As Lave and Wenger (1991) describe it, a community of practice is formed around a group of people with common vocational interests. As novices enter the community of practice, they learn from veterans in the particular field. In this way, older adult dislocated workers develop as they pattern the behaviors and practices demonstrated by their part-time instructors. Participants in the current study favored this mode of experiential learning.

The central roles instructors play in engaging adult learners has been confirmed by other studies within university and community college settings (Tinto, 1993; Bean & Metzner, 1985). Yet, for part-time instructors in non-credit community college settings, this presents an interesting paradox. Non-credit part-time instructors may be more closely aligned with their students. Because part-time instructors are viewed as outsiders to the teaching profession in higher education (McGuire, 1993) and are further away from central college activity due to their non-credit status, their experiences may complement those of older adult dislocated workers who are outside of the traditional academic sphere. Unlike full-time faculty, part-time instructors in non-credit training generally must maintain student enrollment sufficient to offer a course. Part-time instructors' biographies may be more similar to older adult dislocated workers. Not only do they form communities of practice, older adult dislocated workers and their part-time, non-credit instructors may enact McMillan and Chavis' (1986) a sense of community. Sense of community is based upon four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and a shared emotional connection. Older adult dislocated workers

in the current study suggest that part-time instructors in the professions provided them a feeling of belonging and emotional support based on shared experience. While further research would be needed to understand how part-time instructors experience the sense of community, their continuing to teach in addition to their full-time work would indicate that they reciprocally are fulfilled by the relationship.

Conclusion four: Older adult dislocated workers are hindered by outdated models of community college non-credit workforce training. Older adult dislocated workers are attracted to non-credit training as it is lauded as a pathway to employment amidst economic recession. Modern workforce policy and popular rhetoric tout training as the fix for unemployment (Davis, 2008). However, non-credit training has not changed to respond to the economic realities present in today's global world. In the seminal text regarding community colleges, Cohen and Brawer (2003) postulate the founding of community colleges was based most prominently on the following: "the need for trained workers to operate the nation's *expanding* industries" (p. 1). This tradition of training workers pervades community college missions, yet much has changed in the global economy since they first opened their doors. Older adult dislocated workers exist at the crux of community colleges' role to train workers when the nation's industries are shrinking *not expanding*. Moreover, jobs that are available now require more sophisticated technical skills.

Most community colleges began as industrial training centers offering vocational training (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Community college non-credit workforce training programs were designed to provide rapid, short-term training for individuals to enter the

industrial workforce or update skills. The program models were developed to respond to a robust and expanding industrial economy that needed workers with vocational skills. Trained workers were ensured employment opportunity. Yet, in the present economy, that guarantee exists no longer. As Dellow and Romando (2006) explain, jobs that community college non-credit workforce address are the types of jobs that are the most susceptible to outsourcing. A shrinking workforce has meant that many jobs common to the United States' market are no longer available. Older adult dislocated workers, who may not have worried about job displacement in the past, are increasingly losing jobs. Heidkamp and Van Horn (2008) affirm that older workers now are more vulnerable to dislocation; for the past three decades as the global economy has expanded, job displacement amongst older workers has increased. Older workers, particularly those over fifty, are now more likely than younger workers to be displaced (Heidkamp & Van Horn).

Not only are older adult dislocated workers now more inclined to retrain to reenter the workforce, the workforce landscape itself has changed, and older adult dislocated workers may obtain poor returns on their investment in training. Studies indicated prolonged unemployment and poor job prospects for older adult dislocated workers (Farber, 2003). Participants in the current study also pointed to perceived age discrimination and the possibility of entry-level status as further detractors to their success. Thus reality of the scarcity of jobs inclines older adult dislocated workers to stop-out of training even though it is considered within public rhetoric as an avenue to better employment. Simmons (1995) found that the academic performance and

employment outlooks of dislocated workers from the timber industry were improved by full-time and long-term study that incorporated basic skills and computer training. However, non-credit training programs today still typically do not offer prolonged engagement or placement testing to determine students' academic levels or needs. Most non-credit workforce training programs remain open enrollment, providing opportunity for underprepared students or those whose interests do not match to participate in training. Literature for programs in this study, as do most non-credit workforce training programs, promoted quicker and shorter-term training to prepare for employment, without regard for the skills or abilities of participants.

Some studies argue that adult learners are self-directed and prefer to find their way through discovery (Knowles, 1984). Community college non-credit workforce training is based upon the notion that adult learners are more resourceful and prepared to make decisions. Older adult dislocated workers' experiences in the current study do reflect self-direction as they take risks in navigating community college contexts. Proponents of current models of non-credit workforce training posit that older adults are used to taking initiative and seeking answers. Yet, participants' stories suggest a lack of academic and technical preparation as well as unresolved issues that may have been addressed through supportive services. The particular experiences of older adult dislocated workers in this study may be related to the fact that the participants' did not possess a college degree, as many participants in non-credit workforce training do not have a formal college education.

Researchers suggest that working class, minority, and nontraditional students are

channeled into community colleges and vocational education (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). The claim is that institutions such as the community college reproduce society by relegating classes into predetermined educational tracks and occupations (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). As older adult dislocated workers participate in non-credit training, they increase their risks for dislocation and poverty as many of the jobs they train for either face significant risk of off-shoring or provide low-wages. Participants in this study demonstrated subtle acknowledgement of hegemony involved in their experiences. Participants noted the economy and unemployment as problematic and also expressed anger or disappointment at greed in business. Keily, Sandmann, and Truluck (2004) indicate that even if students may not be cognizant of the social forces at play in their circumstances, it is critical for adult educators to be aware of institutionalized oppression and to advocate for marginalized groups.

Several participants in the current study indicated a strong willingness to stop-out of non-credit workforce training if an employment opportunity presented, while others attempted to balance part-time employment. As participants understood it, full-time employment would mean that they would have to quit their non-credit training programs. Non-credit training programs, while short-term, do not generally offer alternative routes to completion if a participant must stop-out for employment (Van Noy et al., 2008). This may result in path dependence on the part of older adult dislocated workers. Path dependence occurs as past decisions influence the decisions one must make in the present, repetitively, such that individuals find themselves facing the same issues over and over (Pierson, 2000). Older adult dislocated workers enter training because their

skills no longer match the needs of employers; then when employment presents during training, they quit to find themselves within the same cyclical path. Options that allow for older adult dislocated workers to reenter the workforce and to complete training over time may improve the success of older adult dislocated workers and the retention rates of community colleges.

Community colleges are recognizing and beginning to respond to the changes brought on by a new economy, but their reforms may further hinder older adult dislocated workers in non-credit training. Alternative routes to completion and curriculum modularization are appearing in the context of community college credit-bearing programs (Lassen, 2007), but still have not been readily applied to the non-credit context. Globalization has inclined community colleges to expand to provide a broad spectrum of courses of study that can be delivered locally. Community colleges have expanded their offerings to emphasize distance education or online learning, university transfer studies, and baccalaureate degrees. But, with increased programs, resources are further constrained, and non-credit occupational training programs, which typically garner less funding and cost more, are negatively impacted (Dougherty & Townsend, 2006). Alssid and others (2002) also found that non-credit programs are often isolated within institutions and lack coordination with internal and external partners involved in workforce development. Add to that, occupational students, such as the older dislocated workers in this study, represent disadvantaged backgrounds at a much higher rate than academic track students (Bailey & Morest, 2003). Levin (2007b) posits also that non-credit programs are undervalued by institutions as they are stripped of student resources

and recognition by institutions. Further Levin asserts that community colleges provide access but not accommodation to non-credit students by limiting student services and offering training that does not provide them upward mobility in continuing their educations or entering the workforce. Participants in the current study, in large part, were training for employment in fields that, while perceived as stable, represent low-wage fields that do not match pre-displacement salaries.

Not only are program models outdated, the formulas that fund them hinder the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers. As was the case for the southeastern community college system where this study occurred, community college non-credit workforce training programs are funded based on retention and not completion. In general, community college non-credit workforce programs receive funding by a formula based on the number of students enrolled and the duration of the courses. These formulas typically recognize retention as the number of students enrolled at the census date of a course (Rosenthal, 2006). For the community college system in this study, census date was determined as the 10% point of the course. Colleges in the study received funding for any students enrolled at the census point even if the student stopped-out, did not satisfactorily complete the course, or did not obtain the expected learning outcomes. Funding based on retention at the census date does not encourage interventions on the part of colleges that would enhance student learning and completion. If non-credit workforce training funding formulas, and funding mechanisms for all curricula in general, were revised to account for successful course completion, community colleges would be encouraged to innovate and provide student interventions

that promote learning and development. Such interventions, as noted from this study, might include academic advising, academic assistance, tutoring, student support groups, counseling, and collaboration with other workforce agencies.

In review, current models of community college non-credit training are outdated and thus hinder the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers because current models do not provide student support services, do not accommodate or provide routes to completion for students who obtain employment, lack formal pathways to prevent students from being relegated to low pay jobs, and are funded by methods that do not support student completion. For non-credit workforce training to best meet the needs identified by older adult dislocated workers in this study, training must be reformed to include integration of foundational academic and technical skills, student support services, including practices that acknowledge older adult dislocated workers' emphasis on work; and funding formulas that support non-credit workforce training must advance outcomes and completion.

Implications

There are implications for theory and practice that may be drawn from the findings related to the experiences of these older adult dislocated workers. The findings may inform educators, workforce development practitioners, policy-makers, and other dislocated workers. This study may also enhance the existing knowledge of adult education and workforce development.

Implications for theory. The findings of this study suggest that there is room for additional research as it relates to older adult student development. To my knowledge,

this study is the first of its kind to explore the experiences of older dislocated workers as non-credit students in community colleges, giving voice to the stories of adults forty and older who navigate training after displacement. This study illuminates several new understandings about older dislocated workers as students.

While most student development theory concerning community colleges is based upon adult learning and education models, older adult dislocated workers are influenced by workforce development understandings including economics, human capital, and work values. Student development theories that undergird community college practice may need to be broadened to account for the dual identity of older adult dislocated workers as both students and professionals. Within adult education, older adults learners are universally understood as being financially stable and learning for personal interests (Chen, Kim, Moon, & Merriam, 2008). Yet the current study indicates that older adult dislocated workers experience distress and hardships and the population of older adult learners in the current economic landscape includes those who are not able to retire and are starkly focused on learning for work. As well, older adult dislocated workers reflect identities more strongly connected to working than to learning, and existing student development theory does not account fully for their perspectives.

In addition, the study indicates that older adult dislocated workers learn differently than other students. Older adult dislocated workers' academic choices are focused on knowledge related to obtaining employment. They are interested in tacit learning manifested through communities of practice within the classroom. Older adult dislocated workers differentiate between practical and theory-based knowledge and a

more concerned with know-how than knowledge of facts. At the same time, older adult dislocated workers are not fully prepared academically or technically to meet the requirements expected from training and new economy professions. Updated models of non-credit workforce training must respond to accommodate older adult dislocated workers' desire for rapid, experiential vocational training and their need to enhance foundational skills.

Finally, research must acknowledge the voices of older adult dislocated workers. While limited research exists regarding their experiences, their participation in non-credit workforce training will continue to grow. And, the extant research emphasizes the roles and experiences of institutions and agencies that serve older adult dislocated workers without a deep understanding of the challenges encountered by older adult dislocated workers. Existing policies and practices are based on anecdotal, and sometimes stereotypical, images of unemployment rather than their actual perceptions and experiences. The narratives within this study uncover discursive practices evident in the stories of older adult dislocated workers. Further research from a critical perspective may serve to uncover implicit and hidden issues of power, dominant structures, and social forces present in the experiences of older adult dislocated workers.

Implications for practice. This research study indicates that, while older adult dislocated workers seek to learn, reemployment is the primary impetus for training. As a result, practices may need to be reformed within community college contexts and on the part of policy-makers. As well, older adult dislocated workers may garner new knowledge from the current study that can inform their decision-making.

Implications for community college administrators and faculty. Among the implications for community college administrators and faculty, the study demonstrated that community colleges can better support older dislocated workers by offering student services geared to their unique needs and life experiences, targeted in the classroom or program level. Since, in general, non-credit programs do not provide formal support services, colleges may consider the value of establishing support networks for students as a part of campus life in order to support older dislocated workers and as a way to involve them in college student life and program orientations that provide insight into academic choices and expectations. Other institutions may see the value of offering formal support services to the level of degree programs that facilitate academic and career pathways for students. In addition, the study indicates that academic support targeted toward foundational academic and technical skills should benefit older adult dislocated workers who have been out of school for some time.

In the study, several participants referred to stopping-out of training including dropping out because of lack of funding or planning to quit if an employment opportunity arose. All participants indicated work as a greater priority than school, but valued school. Colleges and students would be served by initiating programs that allow students to complete credits for courses in which they have been successfully participating at the time they stop-out. If a student finds a job, has performed well in school, and wants to complete the credit, there may be a way in which colleges can provide course completion options by modularizing the curriculum or offering school-to-work transition services.

Implications for policy-makers and analysts. Beeghley (2007) argues that because so little research exists about the experiences of dislocated workers policies are developed with limited understanding and are bolstered by stereotypes of unemployed individuals exploiting public aid rather than scientific knowledge. For policy-makers, this study offers insight into knowledge that may be valuable in designing social programs and policies for older dislocated workers. The study indicates that older dislocated workers receive significant academic advising from outside of the community college, in particular, from employment case managers. The Workforce Investment Act addressed steps to encourage coordination of workforce development efforts and agencies by establishing one-stop service centers for clients. However, one-stop centers are focused on centralizing services, and less emphasis has been placed on actual coordination of efforts between agencies. As the current study suggests, one-stop centers do not ensure that agencies are working together. Employment case managers may be advising older adult dislocated workers to take programs that meet performance guidelines tied to workforce policies such as employment in high-demand fields or training for jobs that will meet specific salary earnings criteria. Activities and performance measures for workforce development programs and community college training programs do not always align, and often one entity does not understand the policy guidelines of the other agencies.

Implications for older adult dislocated workers in community college non-credit training. As well, this study provides insight that may be valuable to older dislocated workers making decisions about training. Since older adult dislocated workers

in community college non-credit training programs is a modern phenomenon, the body of knowledge about their stories is very limited. Older adult dislocated workers in the context of this study experienced stress when transitioning from the workforce to the classroom. This study may provide stories that older workers can relate to or gain from as they navigate through community colleges. It may also offer ideas such as personal and social support networks, pursuing course work that offer practical experience, and maintaining work routines schedules, that may assist older dislocated workers as students. It is also the intention of this research to give voice to older adult dislocated workers through their narratives. As such, the research may encourage older adult dislocated workers to advocate for the supportive services they would like.

Recommendations

To address the implications of this study, three recommendations are offered for research and three recommendations are offered regarding practice. These recommendations address future research opportunities and possibilities for improving practice.

Recommendations for research. Since dislocated workers are minimized with available scholarly literature, there are myriad of opportunities to expand future research, but based on the particular implications of this study, there are three significant recommendations.

The first recommendation is further research that examines the particular experiences of older adult dislocated workers in other settings and circumstances to determine if their experiences are similar to those in this study. Some examples might

include older dislocated workers in credit programs, segmented age groups of older adult dislocated workers, or older adult dislocated workers with the capacity to retire. In addition, the varying understandings of older adulthood also indicates that additional research may be necessary to older adult dislocated workers within varying environments and cultures. This study focused on southeastern United States community colleges. Further research might examine other geographic areas or other forms of higher education.

The second recommendation is further research regarding part-time instructors and their roles in non-credit workforce education also will inform the practice of non-credit training for older adult dislocated workers. Although non-credit programs rely more heavily on part-time instructors, literature concerning part-time community college faculty has focused, in large part, on degree program faculty rather than those within non-credit programs. Enhanced understandings about the role of part-time instructors in non-credit training will allow community colleges to make more informed decisions regarding non-credit instruction. As well, additional research may position part-time instructors' experiences as salient to the community college story.

The third recommendation is expanded research as it relates to delivery of non-credit education may offer additional models that better serve older adult dislocated workers and are more congruent with a global economy. New knowledge about non-credit training may inform program planning that accounts for the academic needs of older adult dislocated workers as well as their desire to reenter the workforce quickly. If non-credit workforce training is to be held as the answer for structural unemployment,

research must investigate how to provide training that prepares and empowers older adult dislocated workers.

Recommendations for practice. Much is unknown about how programs can best serve older adult dislocated workers, but the implications of this study point to three key recommendations for practice.

The first recommendation involves early interventions to better inform older adult dislocated workers. If older adult dislocated workers receive appropriate academic information early in the dislocation process, they can better utilize available funding and extend their educational options. In addition, community colleges may be able to better understand and advise older adult dislocated workers. The relationship between community colleges and older adult dislocated workers must begin at the onset of dislocation. To do so may mean state workforce strategies will have to reform in order to include community colleges in the early stages of and response strategies for company closures.

The second recommendation is that educational pathways must be designed to better support student success and employment outcomes of older adult dislocated workers. Programs may be improved by adding academic and technical training, credit toward degree programs for non-credit instruction, and educational ladders that provide further training to advance in careers. Educational pathways can only occur when credit and non-credit areas of community colleges collaborate. Colleges may need to examine organizational structures and practices that encourage cooperation and planning between credit and non-credit teams. The goals of businesses and industry must not overly

influence community college planning such that the needs of older adult dislocated workers and other students are subverted. States may also need to review funding formulas to incentivize innovative educational pathways.

The third recommendation is that workforce services should be redesigned to better coordinate services between agencies involved in workforce development. Currently, Workforce Investment Act guidelines call for centralized workforce services through one-stop centers in local workforce areas, but this does not ensure coordination of efforts. While all partner agencies may provide services at one-stop centers, those services often remain isolated to the staff within those represented agencies. Workforce entities must strive to understand the missions and best practices from one another. Common performance measures and integrated client information management systems between agencies may serve to improve coordination.

Chapter Summary

This chapter addressed the summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations that emerged from the study of the experiences of ten older dislocated workers who participated in community college non-credit workforce training programs in a southeastern community college system. The study engaged ten older adult dislocated workers, forty and older, that participated in community college non-credit hindered or facilitated their learning and development. Utilizing interpretive narratives, the study examined participants' experiences, as well as how they navigated the community college contexts, and what hindered or facilitated their learning and development. Data were collected from the study through participant demographic forms,

semi-structured interviewing, observations, and documents reviews. The data were analyzed using narrative analysis to develop narrative profiles, coding, and hermeneutics. Methods were utilized to ensure validity and reliability to include: prolonged engagement, verification, and triangulation; as well as rich, thick description, audit trails, and reflexivity. Minimal literature exists concerning the experiences of older adult dislocated workers even while an increasing number are attending community colleges. This study offered findings regarding older adult dislocated workers, and these findings were presented as twelve themes and fifteen subthemes based on the research questions.

From those findings, four major conclusions were drawn. The conclusions that were discussed in this chapter were a) older adult dislocated workers experience community college non-credit workforce training as workforce development rather than adult education, b) older adult dislocated workers in community college non-credit workforce training obtain significant academic advising from outside of community colleges and c) part-time instructors, who maintain a connection to their professions, facilitate the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers in non-credit workforce training, and d) the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers are hindered by outdated models of community college non-credit workforce training. The chapter also included a discussion of the conclusions and the connection to the extant literature regarding adult education and workforce development. Following discussion, implications for theory and practice were outlined and suggested that additional research is necessary as it appears older adult dislocated workers may learn and develop differently than is commonly understood within adult education literature.

As well, the study implies that educators, administrators, policy-makers, and older adult dislocated workers may inform their decisions and change their practices based on the findings. The chapter concluded by offering recommendations for further research and practice. For research, the study recommends additional studies within other settings to determine if experiences are similar, further investigation part-time instructors and their roles in non-credit education, and expanded research to determine improved delivery models of non-credit workforce training. In terms of practice, the study recommends early interventions for older adult dislocated workers on the part of community colleges, establishing educational pathways to improve outcomes for older adult dislocated workers in non-credit workforce training, and coordination of workforce services and agencies.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MATERIALS FOR IDENTIFYING PARTICIPANTS

In this appendix, I include materials for identifying participants. These materials are an informational letter request for participant nomination to organizations, a corresponding nomination form, and a flyer for wide distribution, as well as a letter request for participation.

Letter Request for Participant Nomination

Date

First Name Last Name

Agency

Address

Dear Sir/Madam:

Greetings! As a doctoral student at North Carolina State University, I am embarking on a research study to explore and understand the experiences of dislocated workers who are age forty and older that participate in non-credit workforce training. I am interested particularly in how older dislocated workers navigate the community college context and what facilitates or hinders their experiences as non-credit students. Specifically, this study necessitates the participation of dislocated workers who meet the following criteria:

- Forty years old or older
- Dislocated worker (workers who have lost their jobs by no cause of their own)
- Does not possess a college degree
- Currently participating in non-credit workforce training

Thus, I am requesting your assistance in identifying and nominating dislocated workers who may be interested in participating in this research study. Based on your nominations, I will send a formal letter providing more detail about the study and follow-up with a phone call to potential participants.

Please submit your nominations via telephone or by email to swiliams@cccc.edu. Thank you so much for your assistance in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Stelfanie Williams

Response Form for Nominations

I/We, _____ nominate the following persons to be considered for the research study on older dislocated workers who participate in non-credit training at community colleges.

Name: _____
Affiliation: _____
Address: _____
Telephone: _____
Email: _____

Name: _____
Affiliation: _____
Address: _____
Telephone: _____
Email: _____

Name: _____
Affiliation: _____
Address: _____
Telephone: _____
Email: _____

Dislocated Workers in Workforce Training at Community Colleges

Participate in research that will bring forth the voices of workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

WHO: We are recruiting adult dislocated workers (workers who have lost their jobs by no fault of their own) who are ages 40 and older to participate in a research study about dislocated workers who participate in workforce training. To participate, the individual must meet the following criteria:

- age forty or older
- dislocated from employment
- do not possess a college degree
- currently enrolled in non-credit workforce training, also known as continuing education

WHY: This research is being done to explore the experiences of adult dislocated workers who enter community college workforce training programs to better understand what facilitates and hinders their experiences.

WHAT: This study involves interviews, observations, and documents reviews. Participants will be expected to participate in at least one interview that will last between one to two hours. In addition, participants may be asked for follow-up interviews and may provide documents related to dislocation or education.

HOW: If you or anyone you know may be interested in participating in this research study or for more information, please contact Stelfanie Williams at 919-718-7254 or swilliams@cccc.edu

APPENDIX B: INFORMATIONAL AND CONSENT FORMS

Letter Request for Participation

Dear Student:

My name is Stelfanie Williams. I am a doctoral student in Adult and Higher Education in the Department of Adult and Community College Education at North Carolina State University. I have completed the course work, and I am beginning to conduct research for my dissertation. My research will explore the experiences of dislocated workers (workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own).

The study focuses on dislocated workers in community college training programs. I would like to understand the experiences of dislocated workers who have chosen to enter community college non-credit workforce training programs including what facilitates or hinders their experiences and how they describe those experiences. This research may help researchers and practitioners to understand better workforce training experiences. My hope is that this research will provide knowledge about how to develop and deliver programs that serve dislocated workers.

If you are a dislocated worker age forty or older who is currently participating in non-credit workforce training program, and if you would like to participate, please contact me. If you decide to participate, I will send you a consent form to complete. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview, which will take approximately 1 to 2 hours. The interviews will consist of structured questions, but may also include questions that emerge during the interview. The interviews will be taped.

Please be assured that your responses in the study will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. You will select a pseudonym (fake name) for the study. The questionnaires and interview transcripts will be stored and locked when not in use. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact the Office of Sponsored Programs and Regulatory Compliance (919)-515-4514. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact the person(s) below:

Stelfanie Williams
(919) 718-7254
swilliams@cccc.edu

Dr. Tuere Bowles
tuere_bowles@ncsu.edu

If you would like to participate, I would appreciate your response by July 15, 2010. Thank you for your time and I hope that you decide to contribute your story to this study.

Sincerely,

Stelfanie Williams

Informational Sheet for Research Participants

North Carolina State University

Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research

PLEASE READ ALL OF THIS INFORMATION CAREFULLY PRIOR TO COMPLETING THE CONSENT FORM

An informed consent statement has two purposes: 1) to provide adequate information to potential research subjects to make an informed choice as to their participation in a study, and 2) to document their decisions to participate. In order to make an informed choice, potential subjects must understand the study, how they are involved in the study, what sorts of risks it poses to them, and who they can contact if a problem arises (see informed consent checklist for a full listing of required elements of consent). Please note that the language used to describe these factors must be understandable to all potential subjects, which typically means an eighth grade reading level. The informed consent form is to be read and signed by each subject who participates in the study before they begin participation in the study. A duplicate copy is to be provided to each subject.

If subjects are minors (i.e. any subject under the age of 18) use the following guidelines for obtaining consent:

- 0-5 years old—requires signature of parent(s)/guardian/legal representative
- 6-10 years old—requires signature of parent(s)/guardian/legal representative and verbal consent from the minor. In this case a minor assent transcript should be prepared and submitted along with a parental consent form
- 11-17 years old—requires signature of both minor and parent(s)/guardian/legal representative

If the subject or legal representative is unable to read and/or understand the written consent form, it must be verbally presented in an understandable manner and witnessed (with a signature of witness). If there is a good chance that your intended subjects will not be able to read and/or understand the written consent form, please contact the IRB office at 919-515-4514 for further instructions.

North Carolina State University

INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: The Experiences of Older Dislocated Workers in Community College Non-Credit Workforce Training Programs

Principal Investigator: Stelfanie Williams

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Tuere Bowles

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate, or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form, it is your right to ask the researcher to explain it or provide more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

What is the purpose of this study?

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to describe the experiences of dislocated workers who attend non-credit workforce training programs at community colleges. Dislocated workers are workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. This research is important because there is little qualitative research on the experiences of dislocated workers who have participated in training at community colleges.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that may also include providing your resume. You will be asked to participate in face-to-face interviews. It is expected that you will participate in an interview that will last between one and two hours and participate in a follow-up interview if necessary. After the interviews have been transcribed, I will ask you to review the transcripts for accuracy. The interviews will be conducted during the fall 2010 semester.

RISKS

In this study, there may be minimal discomfort or stress due to participation. Minimal risks refer to those that are no greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. During the interviews, some sensitive information may be revealed. Your name and any other identifiers associated with you personally will not be used.

BENEFITS

This study will document your experiences as a dislocated worker attending community college. You will not benefit directly from the research. However, the experiences you share may provide insight into how to best develop programs to serve dislocated workers (workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own) who attend community college training programs.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your confidentiality will be maintained at all times throughout the research. Your name and any other identifiers associated with you personally will not be used. I will remind you before we begin the interview that you may stop at any time. The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. Audiotapes from the interviews will be retained throughout the research, and destroyed three years after the study. Identifiers will be removed from study data such as transcripts and interview notes. Data will be stored securely in a locked file cabinet. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. Pseudonyms (fake names) will be assigned to all participants.

COMPENSATION

You will not receive any compensation for your participation in this study.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Stelfanie Williams at swilliams@cccc.edu or 919/718-7254.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

RIGHTS

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study while understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

Subject's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS FORM

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Participant Pseudonym (fake name):

2. How old are you? _____

3. What is your gender? _____

4. What is your marital status? _____

5. Do you have children who live with you? _____ How many? _____

6. Do you have other dependents that live with you? _____

7. What is your employment status? _____

8. Are you seeking employment? _____

8. How long have you been dislocated? _____

9. What was your type of employment prior to dislocation? _____

10. Do you possess a college degree? _____

11. Which type of workforce training program are you in? _____

12. Are you receiving financial assistance to attend training? _____

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE, OBSERVATION PROTOCOL, AND
DOCUMENTS REVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

Participant Pseudonym:

Date:

Location:

Start Time:

End Time:

Introduction/Biography

1. Tell me about yourself
 - a. Family background
 - b. School experiences
 - c. Work experiences
2. Tell me about your dislocation from work
 - a. What factors led to your dislocation?
 - b. How did the dislocation impact your life?
 - c. In your own description, being dislocated is like what?
3. What were your options after dislocation?
4. Why did you choose to attend community college training?
 - a. Why non-credit training in particular?
5. Tell me about the process to decide to attend community college
6. Were there influences on your decision to attend?
7. What did you do to prepare to enter training?

RQ2: What are the experiences of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training programs?

8. Walk me through a typical day as a student.
9. What is it like being in class?
10. What is it like as a student outside of class?
11. How has your everyday life changed as a result of being a student?
12. What has been most meaningful in your experience?
13. If you had to compare being a student to something, what would you compare it to?
14. Tell me about your plans after training?

RQ2: How do older adult dislocated workers, who attend non-credit workforce training programs, navigate the community college context?

15. What is it like for you being a student, on campus and in life in general?
16. Tell me about any strategies you use to balance your role as a student.
17. How is your experience different than other students you know?
 - a. credit students
 - b. non-credit students
 - c. dislocated
 - d. not dislocated
18. What have you learned the most from your training program?
19. Tell me about your interactions with others on campus.
 - a. teachers

- b. administrators
- c. other students

22. How is your experience when you began your class different from how it is now?

RQ3: What facilitates the learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training programs?

- 20. What other aspects of your life influence your experience as a student?
- 21. Who has supported your learning or being a student?
- 22. What helps you make it?
- 23. How have you changed personally as a result of this program?

RQ4: What hinders learning and development of older adult dislocated workers who attend community college non-credit workforce training programs?

- 24. What obstacles do you face as a student?
- 25. What is most difficult about being a student?
- 26. What do you do when you face a challenge as a student?
- 27. What would you change about your experience?
- 28. How would you describe your overall experience?

The following probes suggested by Bogden and Biklen (2002) may be used:

What do you mean?

I'm not sure that I am following you.

Would you explain that?

What did you say then?

Give me an example.

Tell me more about it.

What were you thinking at that time?

Take me through the experience.

Observation Protocol

Descriptive Notes:

Date of Observation:

Time:

Location:

Purpose:

Participants present:

Others present:

Activities and Interactions:

Reflective Notes

What were the issues and themes that emerged?

What questions could be asked concerning this observation?

What strikes me as salient or illuminating?

If I were to observe this setting again, what new questions might I consider?

Adapted based on:

Miles & Huberman (1994); Cresswell (2003).

Document Review Guide

Date:

Document Title:

Document Format:

Document Author:

Date of Authorship/Creation:

Public or Private Document:

Purpose of Document:

Intended Audience of Document:

Is the document typical of others of this sort?

What information is included in the documents?

What information is not present in the document?

What questions does this document generate?

APPENDIX E: REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH

“Dislocated”

Without cause

Unknowing

Drowning in debt and stress

Second class

Help wanted as a student

Jumping in

Getting feet wet

Spinning

Like a gerbil on a wheel

On the periphery

Making it work

Looking in

Trying to understand--

Trying to make it

Defending

Hoping

Believing

Let the words of my mouth be acceptable