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Exploring an Accelerated College Program for Adult Learners:

A Program Evaluation

by

Charlene Engleking

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

Exploring an Accelerated College Program for Adult Learners:

A Program Evaluation.

by

Charlene Engleking

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

Dr. Susan Isenberg, Dissertation Chair — 11/13/15 Date

Dr. Rita Kottmeyer, Committee Member — 11/13/15 Date

Dr. Luke Bobo, Committee Member — 11/13/2015 Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Charlene Kay Engleking

Signature: Charlene K Engleking Date: 11-13-15

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Abstract

Many colleges and universities have expanded their mission to include adult learners. Programs range from scheduling traditional courses in the evening to designing new programs tailored to meet the needs of working adults. Program designers have relied on theorists such, as Mezirow (1991), Houle (1996), and Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (1998), to develop programs that apply adult learning theory. Lindenwood College, now Lindenwood University, established The Lindenwood College for Individualized Education (LCIE) in 1975 to serve adult students in the St. Louis metropolitan area. The program has evolved over the course of 40 years, and this program evaluation evaluated the program effectiveness in its current delivery format.

This program evaluation employed a mixed-method design to answer one main research question and two sub-questions. The main research question asked, How does LCIE, in its current incarnation, address the ideals of adult learning theory, the needs of busy contemporary adult students, and the requirements of the accrediting agency? Sub-question #1 asked, How have LCIE learning processes evolved since 1975? Sub-question #2 asked, Is there congruency between LCIE mission and practice?

The outcome measurement data was gathered through a comparison of pre-test and post-test data collected by the university to assess critical thinking skills of entering and graduating students. The university employed the ETS Proficiency Profile, and a sample of 30 students was extracted from that data set for comparison for this study. The findings showed that the differences between pre-test and post-test scores were not significant.

The process measurement data was gathered through interviews with volunteer faculty (3) and students (9) from the program. A series of interview questions was posed, and the responses coded to identify three emerging themes. The three themes were general satisfaction, the importance of job preparation and career mobility, and program rigor.

The program evaluation found that LCIE is currently applying adult learning theory and there is congruency between the program mission statement and the program practice. The answer to sub-question 1 concerning the changes in the program was inconclusive as the students had not experienced the changes and therefore felt unqualified to comment.

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Chapter One

Background of the Study

Education was valued in the United States as essential to maintaining a literate citizenry and functioning democracy. Public schools developed as a natural outgrowth of the desire to bring civilization, as the colonists and their descendants defined it, to the colonies and settlements of the new world. Religious groups established colleges and universities to maintain their practices in an otherwise undeveloped frontier. While colleges and universities for women, African Americans, Native Americans, and other specific groups were also established, one constant identified through all of these institutions was the understanding that formal education generally ended by the age of 25 (Carey, 1961).

There were exceptions to the traditional ending age, such as the extension programs offered by many institutions. These courses were generally not for college credit, but rather for personal enrichment, or in some cases to assist immigrants in acclimation (Sterling, 1967). An example of personal enrichment, Chautauqua meetings and lecturers were common entertainment, but were considered personal development rather than education. Founded in 1874 by Methodist bishop Vincent, The Chautauqua Movement was originally designed to train Sunday school teachers (Vincent, 1959). As the movement expanded, Vincent (1959) was adamant that it not be considered a mission project. In 1886, he wrote,

> Chautauqua is not one of the 'associated charities,' nor is it a department of 'home missions.' It comes to the door of want and of wealth, with proffered blessings for both as it is as likely to gain entrance at one door as at the other. . . .

> Education, once the peculiar privilege of the few, must in our best earthly estate become the valued possession of the many. (p. 63)

Vincent's (1959) essay emphasized the importance of education for all people, describing it as the vehicle by which anyone could better themselves. The first principle was, "The whole of life is a school" (Vincent, 1959, p. 72) and citizens, particularly religious believers, needed to promote and partake of the opportunities that presented themselves.

The Chautauqua tradition continued with the founding of the Chautauqua Institution (2014) in Chautauqua, New York. Each summer guests attended, "a unique mix of fine and performing arts, lectures, interfaith worship and programs, and recreational activities" (Chautauqua Institution, 2014, para. 1). At the time of this writing, the sessions were no longer offered across the country except as historical reenactments, but the institute offered discounted ticket opportunities to open the programs to the general public (Chautauqua Institution, 2014).

The Chautauqua Movement spurred one of the first-identified distance learning programs and inspired Harper, the president of the University of Chicago Extension Service, to expand the offerings to college-level learning in 1892 (Moore, 2003). A Baptist minister, Harper (1959), was involved in the movement and believed that correspondence programs could reach the underserved learner even more effectively than the limited Chautauqua programs. Harper (1959) designed a program that included the lesson, with instructions concerning the best way to proceed, additional information about the most complicated parts of the assignment, assistance should it be needed, and an examination paper to assess the learning.

Harper (1959) cited several disadvantages of correspondence, such as the loss of interaction with, “the personal magnetism” of the instructor and the interaction with peers (p. 77). He also noted that the student might be tempted “to use illegitimate helps, and to misuse legitimate ones” (p. 78). This concern continued to be raised when one discussed distance or online learning. Despite the disadvantages, Harper still advocated for distance learning. He predicted:

> The day is coming when the work done by correspondence will be greater in amount than that done in the class-rooms (sic) of our academies and colleges: when the students who shall recite by correspondence will far outnumber those who make oral recitations. (p. 83)

Harper (1959) could not have imagined the growth of online educational opportunities, but would undoubtedly embrace them as they allowed learners to pursue education that would otherwise be geographically impossible.

While self-reliance, self-efficacy, and education are naturally linked in American culture, Rachal wrote that lack of opportunity was the primary barrier for adults wanting further education (as cited by Brockett, 1989). He noted it was not until the 1980s that education, continuing education in particular, became mandatory for certain careers. He saw this as a positive development, expecting the emphasis on education to increase the focus on lifelong learning.

The GI Bill removed many barriers at the end of World War II. The development of the GI Bill changed campus demographics. While the average college student was still 18 to 23 years-old and single, this student was joined by many who were older and may be married with children. As early as 1944, Nason wrote of the impact returning GIs had on the academic community. While his references primarily focused on military involvement in program development and the adjustments required by both academic and military cultures, he noted that "the thoughtful educator . . . recognizes that colleges and universities can return to their traditional practices and attitudes only at their own peril" (Nason, 1944, p. 294). As with many prognostications concerning education, this was overlooked for longer than expected.

Carey (1961) discussed adult learners, but noted that despite the proliferation of programs, "the number of programs that have been modified for the special adult audience is miniscule" (p. 44). Many adults taking advantage of the GI Bill attended classes with the traditional students (18 to 22-years-old), adjusting their schedules to fit school rather than waiting for the school to adjust courses to fit the schedule of a working adult. This changed over the next 15 to 20 years, as institutions recognized the adult market could provide revenue not previously accessed. Financial feasibility motivated many institutions that had not adjusted schedules to change delivery formats for the new market.

Whether or not colleges were adapting programs originally designed to meet the needs of 18 to 22-year-olds to meet the needs of adults, adult-centered programs were considered an important emerging field in the 1960s. In Jenson, Liveright, and Hallenbeck's work (1964), Liveright stated, "It is an exciting and challenging field of research and operation and it provides an opportunity for creativity and innovation which has probably not been matched by any other education in the last half of this century" (p. 3). Despite the barriers adult education continued to bump against, the optimism expressed by the theorists and practitioners of the 1960s was infectious. Many established institutions developed alternative programs not only for adults, but to offer alternatives to traditional education, which typically offered classes during the day and required full-time enrollment.

The Open University, or Open Program, was first offered in South Africa, although Great Britain laid claim to the well-known program (Granger, 1990). Such programs were established as a means for nontraditional, adults returning to school, or underserved students, who for either geographic or economic reasons had not previously pursued college educations, to enter the college setting without meeting the requirements for traditional programs. One open-university program, established in 1969, existed in a format similar to Johnston College, at the time of this writing known as Johnston Center for Integrative Studies, at The University of Redlands (2013). The school offered contract degrees, narrative transcripts, and a collegial educational environment limited to 200 students (University of Redlands, 2013). Unlike many alternative programs, Johnston College was designed for, and at the time of this writing still catered to, traditional-aged students.

The University of Memphis (2013) opened the University College in 1975 as, “an innovative, individualized college embedded in an otherwise traditional public institution” (Maehl, 1999, p. 58). The program was designed as an interdisciplinary and professional studies program for adults. The program still existed at the time of this writing, offering the same two degrees, professional studies and liberal studies, but students could choose from 25 ‘degree concentrations’, including contract degrees they designed with assistance from advisors, and three online options (University of Memphis, 2013).

Another traditional school that leveraged an adult education program into one of the larger programs in the United States was Regis University (2013b). Established in 1877 by Jesuits, the accelerated program was added in 1977. The program grew through online availability offered in five and eight-week terms, and claimed over 10,000 students (Regis University, 2013b). In addition to online learning, Regis offered directed-study opportunities for “motivated, focused students who prefer to work independently, who travel frequently or who have special interests they wish to pursue” (Regis University, 2013a, para. 1).

Alverno College in Milwaukee was a typical example of an adult-centered program that offered, and continued to offer at the time of this writing, lifelong learning opportunities, rather than college credit (Alverno College, 2013). A Catholic school for women, the outreach program opened the school to male enrollment. Established in 1980, the program continued strictly as enrichment and continuing education (Alverno College, 2013). This model had more in common with the original Chautauqua offerings than with the accelerated, for-credit options more recently available.

While many of these experimental programs failed to survive, beginning in the 1970s, colleges and universities realized the adult learner presented a market that had not been tapped. Many institutions entered this market seeing a financial opportunity not pursued, but most focused on adult learning theory and developed programs accordingly (Lawler, 1991). The focus on adult learning created a variety of program delivery formats.

A side benefit of this development was that such programs served inadvertently as labs, confirming the efficacy of the adult learning model. Adult learning, as a sociopsychological construct, gained ground as educators began to study this growing group of students. Merriam and Caffarella (2001) cited a 1962 study by Johnstone and Rivera which, "sought to describe participation in formal and informal educational activities, assess attitudes and opinions held by adults concerning education" as integral to understanding why adults pursue education and where they pursue it (pp. 99 −100).

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL, 2013) was established in 1974, and became an important driver in the field of adult learning, supporting and encouraging research of the adult learner and assessing the efficacy and appropriateness of adult-centered programs. The nonprofit organization embraced a broad mission, ranging from assisting adults looking to enter higher education to developing and promoting public policy changes that supported adult education (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 2013).

This focus led to the development of alternate models established to meet the needs of adults. Through the next 40 years, programs for adults developed, evolved, and closed. Most were offered on an evening and/or weekend schedule. Many were degree-completion programs for adults who left school and were now ready to return. Many of these programs were delivered in accelerated formats, enabling adults to complete degrees as quickly as possible. They also included an experiential component to acknowledge the work and life experiences adults brought to the classroom (Husson & Kennedy, 2003).

Specifically, accelerated referred to any program that could be completed in a shorter-than-conventional time period. Wlodkowski (2003) defined accelerated programs as "structured for students to take less time than conventional (often referred to as traditional) programs to attain university credits, certificates, or degrees" (p. 6). He added a remark that the "core element in accelerated learning programs is the accelerated course" (p. 6). While the remark stated the obvious, the accelerated courses were offered in a variety of formats.

Early in the development of university-based programs for adults, Hartnett (1972) perceived the development of programs for adult learners as a double-edged sword. Although he praised the institutions that adapted programs to meet the needs of this previously underserved population, he also worried that money was a primary driver. The issue, as he perceived it, was that the institution that entered the arena with a cash outcome in mind would worry less about the product it was offering. This concern continued to arise whenever nontraditional delivery formats were discussed.

Despite some pushback against nontraditional programs, they have continued to proliferate. While the delivery format and course offerings varied, there was some agreement about the needs of the adult learner, based upon the literature provided by early theorists. Brown (2004) summed up what seemed to be the consensus concerning adult learning programs. Such programs should address, or at least consider, four general needs of adult students: (a) such programs should be offered at convenient times in convenient formats; (b) financial aid must be readily available; (c) a variety of creative completion options should be offered; and (d) adult students needed proactive advising from professionals who recognized that the needs of adults differ from their traditional counterparts.

Hartnett (1972) noted, "It will be essential to convince others who might be wary. . . that flexible, non-traditional programs can still be rigorous, and demanding, resulting in graduates of quality" (p. 31). This concern still resonated at the time of this writing as accrediting agencies reviewed nontraditional formats to insure that they were indeed as rigorous as the programs offered to traditional-aged students, delivered in a traditional format.

Accreditation was central to identity in the academic world. Regional accreditation assured the community that the institution met basic standards accepted as integral to the educational process. Eaton (2009) stated, "U.S. accreditation is built on a core set of traditional academic values and beliefs" (p. 81).

Once the accrediting agencies were created, academia and the accompanying constituents relied on them for assurance that member schools met basic standards and were providing the education that they claimed. Oden (2009), president of Carleton College in Minnesota, maintained that the accreditation process offered more than a guarantee of a solid education. According to Oden (2009), accreditation pressured institutions to review educational processes, thus insuring that educators did not become complacent or rely on past successes for future growth.

The accreditation system was based on a review by peers, insuring that members of similar institutions worked with the college or university under review to direct the educational decisions, maintain standards that emphasized programs grounded in the educational mission statement of each member institution, and promoted academic freedom of all members (Eaton, 2009). Despite meeting requirements for accreditation, many alternative programs were and continued to be considered suspect by members of academia, as various agencies, ranging from the general public to the U.S. Congress, questioned the ability of nontraditional programs to deliver a valid education equivalent to a traditional college degree. Programs that allowed students to transfer work experience toward graduation, complete a degree attending fewer hours per week than typical programs required, or complete a degree in under four years were open to close review.

Established in the mid-1970s, the Lindenwood College for Individual Education (LCIE) evolved from a writing intensive program with narrative transcripts to a testing format with more rigid curricula and delivery (Lindenwood College, 1975). LCIE was the adult program offered by Lindenwood University, a liberal arts university affiliated with the Presbyterian Church in St. Charles, Missouri. Lindenwood was founded in 1829 as a school for girls, expanded into a college, and eventually opened enrollment to men in 1967 (Lindenwood University, 2013). Unlike many adult programs established during the 1970's, LCIE thrived, even if the original design was modified to meet new guidelines set by the academic community and the marketplace. LCIE classes were scheduled in nine-credit clusters, meeting one night per week for 12 weeks. Students who matriculated with no transfer credits could complete a bachelor's degree in three and a half years. At the time of this study, LCIE offered 13 undergraduate majors (Lindenwood University, 2013).

Strongly aligned with the goals of the university, LCIE addressed one of the points made by Carey (1961), who believed that adult-centered programs built as a recognized school or department within the larger institution were more likely to thrive. Carey's observations were proven accurate, as far as the LCIE program was concerned. It was tightly aligned with the liberal arts institution within which it was developed. As the program evolved, it never moved far in its orbit from the parent university. While not always equal in status to the traditional program, LCIE seemed to remain in sync with the goals of the institution. A review of past catalogs, and catalogs current at the time of this study confirmed that the mission statements of the institution and its program were always closely aligned (Lindenwood College, 1975; Lindenwood University, 2013).

The LCIE program was a successful model for 40 years, evolving as the population and market evolved. It stood as a good example of an alternative program regularly scrutinized, not only because it was nontraditional and accelerated, but also, perhaps because it was successful. Many of the recommendations made by theorists, (Knowles, 1984; Maehl, 1999; Tough, 1971) were implemented in LCIE; small class size, relevant curricula, affirming environment, thus creating a program which could serve as a working example of these recommendations. Yet, detractors still questioned the quality of the average student and the level of rigor in the program.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation of an accelerated college program designed for adult learners – The Lindenwood College for Individualized Education (LCIE). As an accelerated program designed for adult learners, LCIE provided a strong platform for evaluation of theory application and nontraditional delivery formats. The data from the interviews conducted during the study provided firsthand views from then-current and former students and faculty, and functioned as the process measurement for this study. Educational Testing Service (ETS) Proficiency Profile surveys provided pre- and post-test data concerning knowledge acquisition and provided the outcome measurement for this study.

Rationale

Concerns about academic rigor, grade inflation, and tuition costs tightened the accreditation processes for all institutions. Bardo (2009) stated, "It is clear that members of Congress from both sides of the political aisle are demanding accountability for many aspects of higher education's operations" (p. 48). This was true of nontraditional programs, which were routinely accredited by these agencies in the past, were experiencing increased scrutiny by other constituencies, which in turn increased the scrutiny by accrediting agencies. This created a disconnect between agencies and academics. As Eaton (2009) pointed out, "U.S. accreditation is built on a core set of traditional academic values and beliefs . . . and that institutional autonomy is essential to sustaining and enhancing academic quality" (p. 81).

Institutional ability to design and deliver programs may be affected by the conservative nature of accrediting agencies. To better insure that institutions remain free to develop and/or maintain alternative programs, one must understand the development of nontraditional programs, which is best done through review of adult learning theory. Most nontraditional programs relied on the theories of Cross (1981), Knowles et al. (1998), Maehl (2000), Mezirow (1991), Merriam (1993), and others to design the format and curriculum of adult centered programs. Programs were usually scheduled in the evening or on weekends to accommodate an adult's work and family schedule. The curricula were often facilitated in an accelerated or abbreviated format. Many programs focused on a learner-centered delivery, with the student responsible for his or her progress-towards-degree completion.

Balancing the goal of remaining learner-centered against two other demands, accreditation and curriculum requirements, led to a variety of evolutions in nontraditional programs. A discussion of these programs provides a historic view to better understand LCIE and its evolution. This discussion, in turn, provides context for the review of applications of accreditation requirements current at the time of this writing for nontraditional programs in general and LCIE specifically.

Johnson and Christensen (2004) stated that a case study provided the researcher the ability to consider the collected data in context and was best pursued using a mixed-methods approach. This observation holds true for a program evaluation. As a mixed-methods study, this program evaluation was able to synthesize the outcome measurements in context with the process measurements, creating a broader view of the program studied.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study employed a mixed-method program evaluation design to address the following questions:

Main Research Question: How does LCIE, in its current incarnation, address the ideals of adult learning theory, the needs of busy contemporary adult students, and the requirements of the accrediting agency?

Sub-question #1: How have LCIE learning processes evolved since 1975?

Sub-question #2: Is there congruency between LCIE mission and practice?

The null hypothesis: The mean testing scores achieved in a sample population of LCIE students will not change between a pre-test administration and a post-test administration of the ETS Proficiency Profile.

Alternate hypothesis: A comparison of the pre- and post-test scores on the ETS Proficiency Profile will show an increase (considered valid if the difference between the pre- and post-test scores reflect a minimum improvement of 10%, as evidenced through a *t*-test).

Limitations

One potential limitation of this study was that the ages of the participants would not be considered in the discussion of outcomes. The outcome data did not include that information, so no direct comparisons could be made. This data could have supported consideration of participant age as a discussion point. The range in participant ages did reflect the demographics of the program population, but the number of participants was too few for valid assumptions to be drawn. Because age was integral to adult learning theory, this was one limitation in this study.

Another potential limitation of this study was that it did not include online education. While online programs were growing, and could offer an andragogical model allowing students to pursue education on their own time and at their own pace, the only common thread was that the degree could be completed online. The variations involved in online educational formats were beyond the scope of this study. Online education will most likely become the dominant provider for adult-centered programs in the future, and it would be useful to assess how closely these programs were adhering to their mission statements and how well they were providing the education they claimed.

In addition to limiting the scope of this study by neglecting a growing section of adult-centered education systems, omitting online education created a secondary shortcoming. It was the growth in these online programs that spurred the scrutiny of all nontraditional formats. Accelerated and distance programs grew steadily over the 40 years preceding this study, with few questions raised beyond those of the larger institution. It was assumed that if the traditional arm of the program was valid and healthy, that the nontraditional format would be as well. This would be fine, but many of the online programs stood alone, without the support, or history, of a sponsoring brick-and-mortar institution. This lack of accredited history, coupled with a newly developed delivery format, created the target for those questioning the rigor of academic institutions.

Brittingham (2009) reinforced this idea stating,

> as accreditation mastered the task of admitting institutions to membership while accommodating an increasing array of institutional types, it also began to wrestle with the task of making the accreditation exercise valuable for institutions for which meeting the basic requirements is not (likely) at issue and the related task of ensuring accreditation fulfills its role of quality improvement for the full array of institutions. (p. 20)

In contrast, Bardo (2009) stated that the focus on accountability changed from program overviews to a review of student learning outcomes. He pointed to the No Child Left Behind movement in K-12 programs as creating a testing initiative that could be applied to higher education institutions. The nontraditional or accelerated format could adopt some of these approaches, but for some, they were antithetical to the program. For example, if a program focused on individual learning outcomes, each student's plan could require a different assessment method.

Definition of Terms

Accelerated. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to any program that can be completed in a shorter-than-conventional time period. Wlodkowski (2003) defined accelerated programs as those that allowed students to complete their education more quickly than in a traditional setting. She noted the "core element in accelerated learning programs is the accelerated course" (p. 6). Accelerated and nontraditional will be used interchangeably in reference to any program that does not follow traditional Carnegie hour definitions.

Adult learner. Maehl (2000) wrote that the adult learner was generally identified as a student over the age of 25. Knowles et al. (1998) offered four definitions for the adult learner: (a) the biological definition which applies once a person is able to reproduce; (b) the legal definition which is the point at which a person can vote, sign legal documents, and marry without parental permission; (c) the social definition which applies when a person assumes the roles of an adult, working full time and/or living away from parents; and (d) the psychological definition. This referred to what Knowles et al. (1998) termed "the process of gaining a self-concept" (p. 64).

The term, adult learner, for this study, will refer to a student for whom education, even if it is full-time in an accelerated program, is secondary to work and/or family. While there are exceptions, for the purposes of this discussion, both Maehl's (1999) identification of an adult as being 25 or older will be applied and Knowles' et al.'s (1998) social definition of a person who is fulfilling the roles commonly considered required of adulthood.

The Carnegie hour. Created by The Carnegie Foundation in 1906, “The unit is traditionally defined as one hour of faculty-student contact per week and two hours of outside work over a 15-week semester” (Berrett, 2012, p. A25).

Non-traditional student. For the purposes of this study, this term is used interchangeably with adult learner.

Traditional student. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to college students between the ages of 18 and 22, who are attending college full-time and working part-time, or not working at all.

Non-traditional program. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to any educational program delivered in a format other than the traditional semester or quarter-length program, tied to Carnegie hour measurements.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the process and outcomes of an accelerated college program designed for adult learners – The LCIE. Higher education evolved over the 60 years previous to this study as a college degree became more necessary for employment and/or advancement. Consequently, the marketplace changed to include a more diverse population (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). Colleges and universities emerged or expanded to meet the needs of adult, minority, international, academically underprepared, and special needs students who might not have considered a college education in 1950. Institutions developed a variety of nontraditional approaches to meet the needs of these students, particularly working adults.

The pressures created by broadening demographic participation and more competition may only increase. Growth and inclusion were important goals for institutions both academically and fiscally. It was at the intersection of these two objectives that the accrediting agencies scrutinized the mission and outcomes of the colleges and universities they stamped as worthy institutions (Higher Learning Commission [HLC], 2013). The institution must meet the projected student learning outcomes at the same time it relies on nontraditional programs to remain fiscally viable. The program, The LCIE was established in 1975 and, at the time of this study, was preparing for review by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The program evaluation research of LCIE process and outcomes may provide insight for the leaders of this program as they approach the new accreditation process, and perhaps for other nontraditional program leaders.

This study specifically addressed questions raised about the efficacy of nontraditional programs as they adapted to changing expectations from the academia and new constituents. A discussion of adult learning theory and a brief historical review created context for the evolution of college programs designed for adults. An explanation of current accreditation processes provided a platform to understand the scrutiny that nontraditional formats experienced. Ultimately, academia and its constituents needed to be reassured that such programs could retain their value, even as they shift to meet new expectations and adapt to external forces that may or may not be supportive of the continued existence of nontraditional programs.

One of the primary questions asked by educators was whether a program was congruent with its mission. A program evaluation of a representative program, the Lindenwood College of Individualized Education (LCIE), was conducted to examine the evolution of an adult program and to assess whether this program was achieving its purported outcomes and retaining its original mission. Such programs were often considered suspect because of nontraditional delivery systems, reliance on adjunct faculty, and perceived lack of preparation of its students, and this program evaluation may answer some of the concerns raised by these constituents.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

Adult education programs were built on good intentions, developed to reach new markets, and designed to apply adult learning theory. Some programs met the needs of adult learners, while others fell short. Without an understanding of history, program developers are more likely to repeat mistakes or develop programs designed to meet institutional goals without considering the constituents those programs are supposed to reach. This chapter includes a review of the research literature including theories, as well as examples of theory application.

Adult Learning Foundations

Before Knowles' (1984) assumptions became a cornerstone for adult learning theorists, Jensen et al. (1964) cautioned educators about adopting a comprehensive theory of adult education. He maintained that adults and their situations were too diverse to be pigeon-holed into a single typology and to create a theory broad enough to encompass all of the typologies would be meaningless because of its size and contradictions. That said, he introduced the final section of that particular book, *The Role of Adult Education in Society,* and its chapters on adult education theory, noting that the authors' views provided useful insight into adult education.

One approach that helped differentiate learners by characteristics, and thus tangentially by age, was to consider other theories of the learning process. Birkenholz (1999) identified four approaches to adult learning: (a) the Behaviorist Theory which focused on behavioral change, (b) the Cognitive Theory which focused on mental processes and knowledge acquisition, (c) the Humanist Theory which focused on the interaction between cognitive and perceptual processes, and (d) Social Learning Theory which considered the context in which the learning took place. Each had its strength and weakness, and most programs apply an approach built of a combination of these theories.

Jensen et al. (1964) would likely approve of the evolution of adult learning theory. Adult learning theories focused on self-directedness, sociocultural aspects, age and demographic-driven theories, and competency-based approaches, to name just a few areas of study. Many theorists built upon earlier developmental theories of Erikson (2000), Kohlberg (1981), and Piaget (1967), extending those ideas to describe adult development. Life experiences complicated many of these discussions, reinforcing the point made by Jensen et al. (1964). Knowles et al. (1998) built upon Lindeman (1989) and others to develop the theory of andragogy.

Andragogy

While adult learning theory was first explored 200 years previous to this writing, and was an area of study since the early 1900s, the focus did not find its voice until the work of Knowles et al. (1998) in the 1970s, in the United States. Lindeman (1989) developed a theory of adult education that presented five assumptions concerning the adult learner. These focused on motivation, life experience, and self-directedness (Lindeman, 1989, pp. 3-9). Lindeman (1989) separated the adult learner from the conventional learner recognizing that adults might have different motivators than the traditional learner. The importance of life experience and self-directedness was the key to understanding those differences.

Knowles (1984) embraced Lindeman’s (1989) theories, and building on the works of behavioral and developmental psychologists, such as Skinner (1953) and Piaget (1967), set the standard and the trajectory for the study of adult learning with his research of how adults learned and what they valued (Knowles, 1984). Applying the label andragogy, as opposed to the traditional term pedagogy, Knowles (1984) maintained that adult learning holds six assumptions: (a) the concept of the learner as self-directed; (b) the understanding that the learner brings not only a great deal of experience but a different level of experience than that brought by the traditional-aged student; (c) readiness to learn is often triggered by a life event, although that trigger may be nurtured through career training or other evidence of relevance; (d) the adult learner's orientation to learning will be focused on problem solving and immediacy; (e) the most effective motivators are intrinsic, although extrinsic motivators can be applied; (f) relevance, the adult learner needs to understand the usefulness of the learning (pp. 9-13). Knowles (1984) believed that, if embraced these assumptions could guide program development, thus improving adult learning success.

Knowles (1984) was not the first to differentiate between pedagogy and andragogy, but he remained one of the most recognized adult learning theorists. Many theorists who followed him either supported or refuted his theories; he cannot be excluded. The six assumptions continued to drive the design and delivery of adult programs. Lawler (1991) described andragogy as changing the teacher-student relationship to a professional-client relationship. The relationship was less hierarchical with shared decision-making. Self-directed adults would not need an authority figure dictating their curriculum or educational progress. Students expected the educator to recognize that they were not blank slates waiting to be written upon. A professional-client relationship signified a more equal and balanced relationship, a team approach with both parties working towards the common good.

The importance of context was exemplified by Tough (1971) who discussed the concepts of self-directed learning through a consideration of the context of learning. Tough discussed adult learners as pursuing “the realization of their enormous potential” (p. 3). Learning, according to Tough (1971), was often part of “major efforts to change himself” (p. 2). One must consider the environment and the motivating factors when considering why and to what extent adults pursue education.

Adult learning theorists may have considered Jensen et al.’s (1964) admonitions about adopting theories that could prove to be too narrow, but more used Knowles et al.’s (1998) framework as a foundation for their own findings. Chen, Young, Moon, and Merriam (2008) reviewed 93 articles between 1980 and 2006 to determine the trends in the portrayals of the adult learner in research journals. They found that adults were often grouped as a single entity, ignoring the variety of experiences they bring to the classroom. Just considering the range in age the term adult student encompassed illustrates the limits of one size fits all. The 35-year-old, single parent of a 10-year-old has a different set of experiences and obligations than a 45-year-old whose children may also be in college.

Chen et al. (2008) also found that self-directedness and motivation continued to be key discussion points on the topic of adult learning. This is not surprising, considering that many adults who returned to school did so for personal reasons. While some may feel mandated by employers, thus being extrinsically motivated, others were driven by the internal desire to improve their employability, income, and/or status.

Precisely identifying the characteristics of the adult learner was not as simple as Knowles et al.’s (1998) devotees may have touted. Slotnick, Pelton, Fuller, and Tabor

(1993) wrote that adults “returning to school . . . often feel powerless and alienated” (p. 37), which described the other side of the adult learner. They suggested there were no perceived instructional preferences differentiating adult learners from traditional learners. Because adults had myriad reasons for leaving school initially and returning to school when they did, it was difficult to lump them into a homogenous group.

Caffarella (1993) rebutted that idea, stating that “self-directed learning has contributed to our understanding of learning” by forcing practitioners to consider the adult experience of learning as different, “challenging us to define and debate the salient characteristics of adult learners . . . [thus] expanding our thinking in formal settings” (p. 27). This discussion becomes more important as the definition of the adult learner changed. Practitioners must assess whether a program can meet the needs of 22-year-old in the same way it addresses those of a 45-year-old. Theoretically, both students should be self-directed, as they may be facing the same life issues, single parenthood, or job loss, for example. Yet, while the 45-year-old may bring more maturity to the classroom, she may also bring more insecurity.

Justice (1997) did not consider the age ranges that programs current at the time of this writing addressed when he stated that adults “come to their education with more experiences and a greater sense of themselves” (p. 28). This would suggest that a sense of self would lead to self-directedness. The statement was still true in many ways, but, referring back to the 22-year-old, his sense of self was based on a much less complete set of experiences when compared to his 45-year-old peer. The two students also bring a different set of issues and motivators that should be addressed. While Justice stated the obvious, it is important to note that this observation, while supported by other researchers, was often not supported programmatically.

Most adult-centered programs targeted an older student population that would bring broader work experience to the classroom. As younger students matriculated, most bringing the same obligations of work and family but not the depth or breadth of work experience, it became more difficult to identify the typical student. This discussion is particularly relevant to andragogy. The reality of self-directedness may be greater or lesser-based on the age and motivation of the student. This should not change the application of adult learning theory, but rather should encourage a more flexible approach, perhaps applying a variety of theories and practices to best meet the student population at hand.

Homogenous group or not, it is still important to recognize some similarities, otherwise educational institutions would continue to provide adult education based on the model designed for the traditional-aged student. No matter what a student's reasons for returning to school, it is reasonable to make some adjustments in programming and scheduling to accommodate students who are working full-time and juggling work and family. Nineteen-year-olds with limited work experience and no family to provide for may share some characteristics, but likely have different goals than a 40-year-old who is planning a career change.

This focus meshes perfectly with Keeton, Sheckley, and Griggs (2002) who applied the analogy of the Olympic swimmer to the case of the adult learner. As with the swimmer, an amateur can enjoy the water (the learning), but with practice, the swimmer/learner can establish a love and habit of swimming/learning. Thus the self-directed learner in this analogy will need coaching at the outset, but quickly appreciate learning for its own sake and thus pursue the habit independently, as projected in the andragogical model.

Even practitioners who agreed with the general assumptions about the adult learner still raised questions about those assumptions. One term often used interchangeably with adult learner was self-directed learner. The idea that adults were generally more self-motivated than traditional-aged students was a recurring theme in the literature. Nemec (2011) typified the self-directed learner as being "curious, and motivated, or maybe even driven" (p. 71). She suggested that because it was impossible to separate the external motivating factors from the general characteristics, it was difficult to know at what point a learner assumed the characteristics of the self-directed learner.

Identifying the point at which an adult becomes self-directed would improve program delivery. Most programs designed for adults assumed self-directedness. The program may hold an orientation, or the student may have an initial meeting with an advisor, but generally most adults were on their own. Many early programs made few if any modifications to accommodate adults, although several, such as Empire State deftly balanced the student's autonomy against his or her need for support and direction (as cited by Maehl, 2000). Students planned their curricula, yet met with faculty advisors. Instructors were considered faculty mentors. Enrollment was allowed throughout the year, allowing adults to matriculate when it best fit their schedules (Maehl, 2000).

Sociocultural Learning

Prior to Mezirow's (1991) writing about transformative learning, similar ideas were discussed in the context of learning, self-directedness, and change. Active learning should ideally lead to changes in the way the adult sees him or herself and how he or she interacts with the world. Tough (1971) discussed the concepts of self-directed learning through a discussion of the context of learning. While the theory and application of transformative learning had yet to be codified, Tough believed that the context within which an adult learned cannot be separated from the learner. Learning, according to Tough, was often part of “major efforts to change himself” (p. 2). He discussed adult learners as pursuing “the realization of their enormous potential” (p. 3). Such changes did not have to equate to a pursuit of the American Dream, as defined by society at large, but rather the inner drive that every individual had to improve him or herself educationally if not economically.

Shor (1980) also linked education to the pursuit of the American Dream, referring not only to an improvement in the student’s economic opportunity, but the status that such an improvement would bring. He specifically attributed the rise of the community college and other educational offerings to the general drive for the American Dream. He tracked that dream first as the acquisition of land, then of jobs, next careers, and because of the difference between a job and a career, education. He noted that these students “came looking for learning that meant dignity, which brought respect, which restored them from the low self-image imposed by school and culture” (p. 13). While some may see the application of middle-class values as a negative outcome, upward mobility and earning potential were still strong motivators for most people who pursued higher education.

In earlier research, Miller (1964) exemplified this issue with his simple statement, “the adult educator . . . faces the task of *re*-socializing the adult” (p. 222). He was the well-meaning adult learning theorist who, perhaps because of the time period, did not question whether his goals were antithetical to those of the subcultures he was hoping to improve. He identified three factors that required such re-socialization, (a) technological change, (b) social mobility, and (c) geographical mobility (p. 222). Only the first factor, technological change, would avoid offending critics.

Whether desire for change was a motivating factor for an adult returning to school, change was inevitable for the adult student. Birkenholz (1999) discussed learning theory in the context of change. He wrote, “One universal truth . . . there are no universal truths” (p. 31). His point was that when working with adults, there was more diversity than one might find in a traditional classroom, primarily because of the life experiences that adults apply to their learning. This did not mean that learning theory and its application should be dropped, only that the practitioner must consider all of the ingredients necessary for the adult to be able to embrace the change that occurs with education.

Any discussion of change, however, reignited concerns about social engineering. Supporters and detractors of adult learning theory continued to discuss the purpose of education and whether the goal was homogenization. These concerns were dismissed, for the most part, with the assumption that if the dominant society embraced the value of education, non-mainstream society could not ignore that expectation, or those members would be doomed to live outside of the mainstream. One could argue that with greater participation, more diverse constructs could be represented and promoted.

Cross (1981) approached adult learning not as “a single act but the result of a chain of responses . . . a constantly flowing stream rather than a series of discrete events" (p. 125). She believed one must consider many variables when discussing adult learning patterns. The interaction between variables created the Chain of Response, which determined how the student would approach learning and the level of success the student may achieve (p. 124). Cross included self-evaluation, attitudes about education, support and/or attitudes of friends and loved ones, goals and expectations, and opportunities and barriers in the Chain of Responses. Cross noted that the Chain of Response was more useful as a descriptor of behavior, rather than as a predictor of behavior, but it did provide the researcher with a solid framework for studying adult learning and applying adult theory.

Those designing programs for adults seemed to have considered Cross' (1981) observations. Lawler (1991) noted that, "the available knowledge and the practical implications of adult education and adult learning can be a rich resource for administrators and faculty in meeting the challenge this population brings to our campuses" (para. 5). The CAEL (Flint, 1999) commended several schools for delivering programs focused on student engagement in the planning and learning process. One example was Marylhurst University in Oregon, which developed, "a Learning Assessment Center (LAC) designed to assist adult learners with additional educational planning [and] assessment of prior learning" (as cited by Mancuso et al., 1999, p. 61).

Courtney (1989) developed a holistic theory using the term adult education, rather than adult learning. This semantic shift signified a theory that considered the student within the learning context. Courtney considered the physical, as well as the theoretical context of learning. He identified five categories used by theorists to define the learning process: (a) it is the product of organized "institutions and organizations," (b) the focus is on the relationship between the learner and the facilitator, (c) it is recognized as a true discipline, (d) its genesis and development can be traced historically, and (e) the "goals and functions" set it apart from other educational processes (p. 17). Despite the semantic changes in terms, most of the concepts remained similar, if not the same. This shift to include more than just the learner in the process provided an important distinction when discussing programming choices.

For most adult learning theorists, the application of learning theories extended beyond the classroom. As stated earlier in this review, no student learns in a vacuum, but adults bring a different set of experiences and obligations to the classroom. In his studies and statement of theory of adult learners, Donaldson (2001) offered a Model of College Outcomes which consisted of six components that should be included to properly address the needs of adult students: "(a) prior experience and personal biographies, (b) psycho-social and values orientations, (c) adult cognition, (d) the connecting classroom, (e) life-world environment, and (f) college outcomes" (para. 4).

While all facets of Donaldson's (2001) theory could be applied to many adult programs, the concepts of the Connecting Classroom and Life-World Environments were particularly relevant. Both concepts involved making connections between the classroom and the outside environment. Class size, instructors who were also practitioners in their fields, and classmates who shared work experiences combined to extend the classroom lesson into a workplace application. That relevance was particularly important to adult learners. As recognized by Knowles (1984), the relevance of the education was essential for the adult student making sacrifices to pursue the education.

In recognition of the experiences adults bring to school, as well as to bring graduation closer many colleges and universities encouraged students to submit work experiences to support academic learning. A career/staff training class, for example might require that students create a training exercise they could apply at work. The marketing class could require that each student create a marketing plan. Students may be encouraged to create a plan for their then-current employers or for something they would personally like to pursue. Such relevance enhanced the learning experience through application, and allowed students to share personal expertise with peers.

Not all adult learning research was positive. Social critics attacked the growth in adult education programs as motivated not by the desire to uplift and balance American opportunity, but rather to homogenize society and to promote middle class values and lifestyles through education. In this context, one must ask what the practitioner meant by transformative. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) noted,

> Those adults who have been socialized into valuing and acquiring the attitudes and skills of the middle class will be the ones to take advantage of learning opportunities. Since most providers of such opportunities are themselves middle-class, little effort is expended trying to understand and provide for other populations. (p. 75)

These researchers confirmed the goal may be homogenization, rather than transformation.

Sharing personal expertise can both encourage and hinder the adult learner. It was important that the student move beyond personal knowledge and synthesize that knowledge with new learning. Lamb (2011) discussed the difficulty of challenging adults. He wrote that there was a “kind of resistance that is fueled by anxiety generated when an adult's existing knowledge and beliefs are challenged, especially knowledge that is closely associated with the individual's sense of identity and competence" (para. 16). He later stated, "The challenge for faculty is to promote the examination of students' own assumptions and beliefs and thus to [encourage them] to think more deeply" (para. 22).

Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow (1991) believed adults must have a motivating reason and a context within which the learning is pursued. He presented adult learning theory from both psychological and sociological viewpoints. The label referred to learning that transformed the learner's understanding of the world. The first step was "reflective learning [that] involves assessment or reassessment of assumptions" (p. 6). This may be precipitated by a crisis which forced the adult to question long-held assumptions or expectations. It became a transformative experience because it shifted the learner's view to a new understanding. Mezirow stated, "Becoming aware of our limitations can help us learn how to compensate for them" (p. 119).

The second step in transformative learning was to validate the new understanding, to synthesize the new knowledge with previously-held understandings through critical reflection. Specifically, Mezirow (1991) stated, "The process of organizing the self-involved a synthesis between valued aspects of the old perspective and insights of the new" (p. 179). He also stressed the importance of gaining "both emotional and cognitive freedom from old realities" (p. 179). Again, transformative learning required a transformative experience. The cognitive understanding might be easy to grasp, but the emotional disequilibrium that rises from the new understanding must also be addressed before the transformation can be completed.

Finally, the third step is "self-acceptance, the experience of insight that recognizes and accepts a truth about the self that previously has been unacknowledged at the rational level" (p. 179). Thus, according to Mezirow (1991), the adult experienced the learning as transformative, a learning that changed her understanding of herself and her worldview. For the adult learner, this was particularly important because, as stated earlier in this review, according to Mezirow, adults needed a reason to pursue education. Transformation completes the circle. The student did more than accrue information; he integrated the knowledge emotionally, as well as cognitively.

Program Development

Adult-centered programs were established and evolved as varied as the adult learning theories that prompted and molded them. As previously stated in this review, many programs developed as extensions of the traditional institutions that hosted them, but even within that model such programs attempted to implement the theories of the corresponding period. As an example, College of New Rochelle, School of New Resources delivered a two-track program. One track had fixed requirements, while the other was more flexible (as cited by Mancuso et al., 1999).

According to Sterling (1967), the first true evening programs were offered in urban areas by municipal or community colleges or through the military. These institutions bridged the gap between adult continuing education, adult literacy, and true college education. Carey (1961) suggested that adult education was one of the few areas about which business leaders and social workers agreed. The immigrants needed to be integrated into American society, and education was necessary for assimilation. He identified one of the first outreach programs not as urban, but as a product of the

University of Wisconsin's extension service, precisely to improve immigrant literacy. Business leaders in Milwaukee, at first suspicious, eventually supported the training that would improve the productivity of their factory workers.

Massachusetts followed Wisconsin, with several of its best known universities providing courses that could be completed via extension to earn an Associate in Art degree, with the first degrees awarded in 1912-1913 (Carey, 1961). The extension system grew quickly, and by 1914 "thirty state universities had organized extension services with permanent director or committee . . . and by 1915 every state west of the Rocky Mountains had a state university . . . [and] an established extension division" (pp. 24-25). The extension system continued to provide education ranging from high school completion to farming techniques. Many of these extension courses evolved for delivery through television broadcast and later to online programs.

If language and vocational programs for immigrant and underserved populations were logical choices for governmental agencies to offer, it was not a giant leap from basic outreach to college-level education for adults. This trend continued to the present day, noted at the time of this writing. Some private colleges eventually developed programs for reasons ranging from community outreach to financial gain. Otherwise, the status quo remained pretty constant until the post-World War II years, when the GI Bill changed every aspect of higher education (Lawler, 1991).

While Nason discussed a program that tailored the curricula to meet the needs of the GI's, most programs were not adjusted to meet the schedules of the adult student (as cited by Grunau, 2005). Most expected the students to attend classes on regular schedules and meet the same requirements of the traditional students. There were exceptions. Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, for example, offered an evening and weekend college as early as 1947 for those receiving the GI Bill (as cited by Grunau, 2005).

Programs continued trying to balance what could reasonably be provided against what adult students needed. This was often more difficult than programmers expected. Differentiating between what adults professed to need and what they actually needed was not always clearly defined. Conflicting theories of adult learning and its applications further confused the process. Academia pivoted between the desire to set the agenda for all education processes and the habit of maintaining the status quo. Developers of nontraditional formats and adapted programs found themselves straddling these divides, advocating for alternative programs that would meet the needs of the adult students, while at the same time would be acceptable to the sponsoring college or university.

Providers and design. Hiemstra (1976) identified a variety of formats adopted by early programs designed specifically for adults. As with most early programs, the focus was on literacy. According to his research, the largest providers of adult education were church and religious organizations at 37.2% (p. 47). This was followed by the YMCA at 27.8%-, civic organizations at 10.7%, social service groups at 20.9%, and cultural and other groups at 3.4% (p. 47). Most of these programs offered only in-service trainings, recreational activities, and community betterment programs, but some dealt with skill and knowledge building. Hiemstra (1976) also pointed out that "libraries, museums, and art galleries . . . employ adult educations and community specialists . . . [and] some museum and art galleries hold adult classes, administer field trips, and offer special lecture series" (p. 49). Beyond these informal offerings, adult basic education provided by public school systems, community colleges, and university extension programs were the first to offer organized programs in knowledge-based education (Hiemstra, 1976).

Donaldson (2001) returned to Courtney's (1989) categories, particularly the emphasis on relationships and recognizing adult learning theory as a true discipline, noting that an assessment of each would improve program development and delivery of adult education. He noted that Courtney's categories recognized that the adult student, perhaps more so than the traditional student, brings a variety of skills and experiences that needed acknowledgement for better adjustment into academia, and that academia should adjust appropriately based on this recognition.

In the mid-20th century, The Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults surveyed universities and extension programs to identify available programs and determine the number of participants, as Carey (1961) pointed out, because many were not keeping data about their programs, the surveys returned were often incomplete. Researchers visited 18 schools included in the final report. Initially, they found that more students were enrolled in noncredit courses than college courses, and that the majority of students overall were enrolled in correspondence courses. It is important to note that many of the students enrolled in correspondence courses were pursuing high school diplomas. Those seeking college level courses were studying the liberal arts. Anecdotally, the emphasis seemed to be on more vocationally-centered majors, such as business or information technology.

Further review of the data determined that of "996,000 [adults], 34% (338,640) would be not for credit; [and] the remaining 66% (657,360) would be for credit" (Carey, 1961, p. 46). Carey (1961) offered the caveat that the number was unreliable, but probably the best available under the circumstances. Carey (1961) also noted that despite the proliferation of programs, "the number of programs that have been modified for the special adult audience is miniscule" (p. 44). As administrators recognized the potential adult market, the number of programs designed for adults, rather than simply modified from existing programs, blossomed.

Demographic shifts in the actual participant population also created shifts in theories and approaches. Discussions of adult learning theory needed to expand further to include the younger demographic, as well as to address the varied delivery formats. For example, a cornerstone of adult learning theory was the assumption that an adult would be a more self-directed student, if only because of the maturity and life experience the adult brings to class. This assumption may be misplaced as younger adults matriculated into adult programs changing the basic assumptions about the students attracted to such programs.

Formats and delivery systems. Applying adult learning theory fostered a variety of formats and delivery systems. Burman (1970) believed challenging students and exposing them to new ideas and knowledge was an important factor when designing an adult centered program. Burman (1970) observed that education was too often a "receiving" rather than a "perceiving" process (p. 47). He believed it was important that adults be offered a format that recognized the experience and knowledge they brought to class so they could become partners in their own education, and thus better engage in the process. Younger students may have left school because of their lack of engagement.

Shifting the experience from a receiving format to a perceiving format was a major step to shifting the entire educational experience.

Jensen et al.'s (1964) view was broader. He discussed, "the dynamic relationship" between societal change and the need for education (p. 9). He stated, "The affinity between adult education and change has been apparent at many times in many ways" (p. 9). He referred primarily to extension and continuing education; however, his observations were accurate in 1964, and could be applied to 2013, as society again underwent change and adults pursued education in response to that change. Earlier concerns that linking education to an American Dream defined by the middle class quieted as college campuses became less representative of the status quo and were viewed as agents of change.

As colleges adjusted to the changes in society occurring in the 1960s, learning theorists adjusted their expectations in light of those changes. Hiemstra (1976) reviewed program development and added his own recommendations. He noted, "Increased support must be found, new resources for education must be developed, and education must be made purposeful, convenient, and integrated with the normal pursuits of living" (p. 28). Almost 40 years following his stated views, academia listened, but adjustments were not necessarily admired as applications of adult learning theory, but rather questioned because at that time they differed from the norm.

Program availability and academic versus vocational focus. Pushback against adult programs, whether based on format or focus, may have limited the adaptation of traditional programs to meet the principles established by various agencies and educators. Ellwood (1976) noted that in Great Britain, the difference between vocational and liberal arts education was the difference between the gentleman and the laborer. This idea was also documented in a 1919 report that identified support for vocational training, but not university education for the general population. While this served the purpose of training people for jobs, it also maintained the stratification then-present in British society. Granted, that report circulated 100 years previous, but many of the concerns remained relevant in times recent to this writing.

The observation concerning British programs could be made in the U.S. Shor (1980) labeled the availability of education as a “significant dysfunction in a network designed to reproduce stratification” (p. 21). He suggested that as women and minorities earned degrees and entered the workplace, they would attain status and “de-legitimize their own cheap-labor status” (p. 21). He predicted, not surprisingly, that racism and sexism would erect barriers slowing the progress of the graduates, but in the end society would change because of access to education. It is important to add, that Shor (1980) saw these developments as positive and inevitable.

No matter how successful a program became, detractors not only questioned the ability of nontraditional formats to adequately cover the curriculum, but also the quality of the student who matriculated into such programs. These questions arose in discussions of any programs serving adults. Before the proliferation of programs specifically designed for adults, community colleges were the first programs uniformly aligned to provide education to the underserved (Shor, 1980). Vocational programs seemed most logical as they could prepare students for the job market, but they also raised the issue of classism by limiting the degrees these adults could pursue. As Shor (1980) pointed out, “Because the curriculum evolved as a careerist mirror of the job market, the college programs were vocationally weighted and regionally oriented to meet the needs of local business and government" (p. 15). While vocational programs had their place in adult education, the goals differed so widely from the liberal arts approach that many of these programs did not offer the upward mobility adults were hoping to experience from furthering their educations.

Carey (1961) identified four attitudes that directed the development of education in the U.S. He stated that education "should be inspired by practical needs . . . [and] is a powerful and effective tool to meet those needs. It should be available to every prospective citizen . . . [and it] is a governmental responsibility" (p. 14). Carey applied these core attitudes to adult education, suggesting they were as applicable to adults as they were to education systems at large. Carey would not be surprised that the government continued to support literacy and outreach programs for adults. More formal college programs continued to be delivered through community colleges, private, or proprietary institutions.

In some ways, these attitudes were more applicable to adults than to traditional-aged students. While students of all ages were expected to grow socially and intellectually, traditional-aged students were expected to test vocational options as they pursued their educations. At the same time, adults were more pragmatic, looking for specific education or training to further their then-current careers or change careers entirely. Program accessibility is less critical at the time of this writing than it was in 1961, particularly with the advent of online and hybrid programs, but even these did not completely address the constraints many adult students faced. Government support for most adult students meant subsidized loans.

Carey (1961) wrote with some frustration about what he described as the lack of an organized approach to the study of adult learning programs. He cited the variety of programs and delivery formats as key to this problem. He asked, “How can one compare the highly diverse activities of urban evening colleges and state extension divisions?” (p. 39). He noted that the data collection was further complicated by the overlap of agencies and the government’s lack of consistency when collecting that data, failing to differentiate between full and part-time attendance and between continuing education versus post-secondary education programs.

Carey’s point was well-taken. The growth in the adult education market complicated the situation. The U.S. Department of Education (2012a), National Center for Education Statistics noted, “Between 2000 and 2010, [postsecondary] enrollment increased 37%” with the largest contributing group adults aged 25 and older (para. 1). According to the same source, the projected full-time enrollment for adults aged 25 and older was expected to grow from 2,951, 000 in 2010 to 3,548,000 in 2020 (pp. 58-61). This projected growth would only complicate research further, as online and hybrid programs develop in a variety of combinations.

Assuming that the U.S. Department of Education’s (2012b) projections were on target, the growth current at the time of this writing in programs for the adult learner was logical. Educational institutions tapped into this market to establish their reach. The proliferation of theories and approaches kept pace with the proliferation of programs. Liveright and DeCrow (1963) discussed seven early programs designed for adults. Five of the seven were designed specifically for adults either as degree completion or complete programs. The other two were graduate programs designed for adults wanting to change careers. Johns Hopkins sponsored a Masters in Liberal Arts and San Francisco Theological Seminary offered a doctorate in Scientific Theology designed for a limited population (Liveright & DeCrow, 1963).

The programs highlighted shared many of the same goals and characteristics. They were designed for students who worked a normal schedule, allowing them to attend at convenient times, evenings and weekends (Liveright & DeCrow, 1963). They offered extensive counseling and nonacademic support to supplement the academic program, because the founders of the programs believed adult students would bring different issues to the educational experience than their younger counterparts. Entrance and graduation requirements were adjusted to improve the likelihood of success. For example, residency requirements were waived in most if not all cases. Learning objectives were clearly stated, based on the assumption that adults were more goal directed than the average 19-year-old. They all used a variety of delivery formats, taking advantage of "educational TV, programmed learning, tapes, and correspondence study" (p. 8).

Demographic issues and program development. Further complicating program development and delivery options was the changing demographic for adult-centered programs. Many institutions that offered programs for the adult learner once set a specific age, sometimes a certain number of years as a full-time employee, and sometimes a combination of the two. However, a review of several websites found no limiting restrictions related to age or work experience. As traditional-aged students joined the full-time job market at age 18 or 19, they also began enrolling in alternative higher education programs previously reserved for the working adult assumed to be 25 years-or older.

Burman (1970) offered four additional components necessary for a successful environment for the adult learner, further illustrating the application of adult learning theory. The first was, “A learning experience must be personally meaningful if individuals are to become actively involved” (p. 49). This was an extension of his statement about shifting to a perceiving format. This was a circular process. The student was involved in the process, and therefore found the material more meaningful, and applicable, and therefore became more involved in the process.

The second component identified by Burman (1970) was the need for a supportive environment. Again, this was closely related to his other statements. A student who felt secure was able to take risks, and the student who took risks was more likely to learn from new and often strange experiences. This component both leads to and supports the third component which involves honesty. This was a major factor in a supportive environment. The student must feel that instructors and administrators were honest in their interactions, and in turn, the student could feel safe being honest. It was difficult for many students to admit they did not know an answer or did not understand a concept, and even more was at stake for the adult learner. An environment that supported, even demanded honesty, was more conducive to learning.

Finally, the fourth component posited by Burman (1970) was that practitioners must have an understanding of adult learning theory and the environments from which these students came. Indeed, another quasi-obvious statement; however, as adult education became a commodity and students became clients, or worse customers, it was perhaps tempting to offer a packaged program without considering the different needs of the learners in a particular program. At that point, the education provider was merely offering courses and not a true adult-centered program. Adults who did not succeeded in the past would enroll in another delivery format that mirrored what they experienced in the past. It was realistic to assume they would fight the same battles they lost earlier in their educational careers, rather than experiencing a program that acknowledged what they brought to the classroom educationally, vocationally, and socially.

Program delivery and scheduling. Weisel (1980) also acknowledged that adults brought different experiences to the classroom. He stated that as adults move "through various life phases, their learning style will be altered. Adult developmental stages indicate that an individual will return to education with a more fully developed learning style than the first time around" (p. 27). The returning student who was out of high school for four years would bring a more limited set of experiences than the older student. Conversely, the younger student may be more self-confident of his or her abilities and more secure about returning to school. This demographic shift may require a shift in program design and delivery. Hybrid and online programs may be better-suited for this younger group of adult students.

Even so, most adult-centered programs were delivered in the evening or on weekends, and often on an accelerated schedule because that was the time and format most accessible for the adult student. This led to the question of whether institutions were entering the adult education market primarily to reach an underserved market or whether the institution was merely seeking a new revenue stream. Of course, the two could not be separated, but the focus could generally determine the quality of the program.

Houle (1996) noted, because adults came with a broad range of experiences and goals, “any effort to build a system of educational process on the work of a specific goal, method of practice, or institution is limited” (p. 4). Programs ranged from traditional formats shifted to an evening schedule to structured cohort programs requiring students to progress with an assigned group. The advent of online and hybrid programs allowed more flexibility in program offerings and delivery options.

Husson and Kennedy (2003) considered the components necessary in regard to establishing programs in a traditional setting. They presented the same attributes as other researchers but added “a passion for quality” as a necessary attribute (p. 52). It was not the inclusion of quality as a necessary ingredient that was unusual, rather it was the addition of the term, passion, which implied a greater focus on quality. Quality was the recurring issue raised by critics of adult and accelerated programs. These detractors did not believe that quality education could be consistently delivered in a nontraditional format or setting. Relying on the sanctity of the Carnegie Hour, they possibly overlooked the compensations that made to create and maintain an accelerated or alternative program.

Returning to Keeton et al.’s (2002) swimmer analogy, the key was to find the optimum starting point to begin instruction to encourage growth and self-directedness. Part of the coaching process involved nurturing a sense of efficacy and success. Recognizing the knowledge the student brings, and used as a foundation, may improve the likelihood of success. Acknowledging the student’s experiences creates an affirming environment that reassures the student the institution recognized that he or she arrived with valuable knowledge to be expanded through further education.

Kasworm (2008) followed the same path as Keeton et al. (2002), noting, "The first act of hope for adult learners is seeking entry to college" (Kasworm, 2008, p. 28). She continued with the idea that many adults enrolled in school following a crisis, which colored their expectations of themselves and the institution. They "display emotional chaos as they develop a student identity" which further complicates the educational process (Kasworm, 2008, p. 28). This has implications for program development. The student who entered college in response to a crisis, personal or vocational, may already be insecure about him or herself and the abilities he or she brings to the classroom. Kasworm (2008) continued, "This place [the classroom] validates their other sense of self as knowledgeable and competent adult actors" (p. 30). Accepting Kasworm's (2003, 2008) ideas as sound, many program developers considered the need to create an environment both supportive and freeing.

Program structure and academic components. Carey (1961) found that institutions that already maintained a solid traditional liberal arts program and later added adult programs were more likely to sustain successful adult programs in the liberal arts. Undoubtedly, adhering to the school's original mission statement may have been a factor in retaining the liberal arts focus in the nontraditional program. In addition, Carey determined that adult programs that were treated as divisions within the institution were more likely to thrive. Again, the legitimacy added by departmental recognition publicly reinforced institutional support. Carey made an observation that extension divisions were more likely to have a program director dedicated to development and oversight than evening programs. He attributed this to the size and longevity of extension programs. When he was writing in 1961, evening colleges were a relatively new phenomenon.

In the mid-20th century, Liveright and DeCrow (1963) reviewed the expanding offerings for adults. While they saw most of the growth in literacy and immigrant programs, the three factors influencing the growth in adult education were applicable to post-secondary programs. The first factor they identified was the “rising level of general knowledge required for prospective participation in the activities of society at large” (p. v). The shift to a technology-based society following the Sputnik era was well documented. To remain relevant, adults had no choice but to update their knowledge base to remain employable. This may be even more relevant today, at the time of this writing. The adult who was not familiar with word processing and simple Excel applications may have found him or herself unemployable.

The second and third factors focused on the delivery systems. The ability to study from home through “programmed learning resources” and the “growing practice of validating college credit by examination” (Liveright & DeCrow, 1963, p. v) both gave access to adults who were possibly not able to pursue education because of geography, schedule, or financial constraints. A primary example of the application of these ideas was the distance learning and assessment through exams, which flourished in the military, allowing students to accrue college credit while serving at various bases or overseas. The growth in the number of active military participants increased the application for these credits at institutions throughout the U.S.

Many institutions accepted such learning and allowed transfer credits from online institutions. As the field continued to evolve, institutions adapted to the various learning platforms students were using. In some instances, the traditional format may adapt more quickly as students completed more AP classes and CLEP exams. Cost, as well as convenience could only drive the trend further.

Learner-centered delivery. Liveright and DeCrow (1963) argued for a special format to bridge the gap between expediency and theory. They believed an alternative format and modified requirements were essential for adult students. They argued that the experience an adult brought to the classroom should count towards graduation requirements. It was this experience that made them strong students. They recommended changing both method and material, capitalizing on adult experiences by moving beyond the vocational aspects of their experiences and by teaching adults how to learn, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Astin (1989) focused on the importance of creating those feedback mechanisms or connections between student and institution, and student and faculty. And, although Astin focused on traditional-aged students, Mackeracher (2004) reinforced this element in adult education as essential to success for the older student, as well. He stated, “Very little learning occurs without a relationship of some sort” (p. 151). Building a culture of connectedness would enhance the likelihood that relationships could develop.

One avenue for creating such a culture would be through governance. Mancuso et al. (1999) pointed out, “Institutional decision-making at the Adult Learning Focused Institution is a shared responsibility” (p. 48). One example discussed was Athabasca University, which developed a program that included student involvement as a cornerstone. “Athabasca students, faculty, and administrative personnel participate in a variety of constituencies at the University” (as cited by Mancuso et al., p. 51). By involving adult students in the governance process, the university created ownership for the program and a relationship outside the classroom.

One review found that use of andragogical models produced no improvement over more traditional methods. Rachel (1994) reviewed research comparing traditional delivery methods with andragogical instructional methods in a nursing setting. He did acknowledge shortcomings of several of the studies, however in 10 out of 16 of the studies he reviewed, the learning outcomes were not significantly improved in the andragogical models. His recommendation that tighter controls be applied was well considered.

Whether the program was delivered using andragogical or pedagogical principles was often a secondary focus, after the consideration of the more tangible and measurable aspects, specifically content and delivery format. While andragogs may ask if the courses were student-centered and allowed students to be self-directed, practitioners focused on the delivery formats of evening or weekends, accelerated or traditional semester, and degree completion or full curriculum. The second issue, curriculum, was also described as market-driven without identifying what that meant, beyond offering a business major or a degree that was vocationally directed. The perfect program would include both aspects, a delivery system that considered adult needs, and a curriculum that led to employment or promotion, as well as personal enrichment.

Many researchers explored program design that best met the needs of adult students. Birkenholz (1999) identified five general program types designed for adults: compensatory, adult basic education; liberal adult education, often delivered by liberal arts institutions; occupational, vocationally oriented; scholastic, specific subject matter;

and self-help, often community based. While such categorization was necessary for accreditation and clarification, there was overlap between such categories. For example, compensatory and vocational programs were often combined to prepare students more quickly for a new career.

Keeton et al. (2002) suggested that while andragogical principles could easily be adapted to academic programs, they were not automatically included in program design. No matter what the program design, they suggested the student must find “the best place” to begin (p. 37). In other words, the program must meet the student where he or she is ready to learn. They also suggested that assistance must be clearly available and consistent. They found that weaker students were less likely to request help, because they perceived it as proof of their weakness (p. 39). This circular reasoning was almost a guarantee for failure, which was why these researchers believed that an adult program must include built-in supports that encouraged students to seek the help they needed.

Model programs. Accelerated and evening programs were the most common response to these needs. Many liberal arts institutions tapped into the market, thus saving the traditional campus that supported the new adult format. Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, is an interesting example. Founded in 1852, it closed during the Civil War for financial reasons, found its footing after the war, and by the 1970s recreated itself as Antioch University, opening colleges to educate a wide range of underserved adult learners, including miners and migrant workers (as cited by Hayford, 2011).

> Moving from a small liberal arts institution, Antioch University grew to enrollments of over twenty-four hundred in the 1970s [which] fell to about eleven hundred in the early 1980s and then continued to drop until stabilizing around five

> hundred by the mid-1990s. Retention rates at Antioch were never strong, and by 2006 enrollment was under four hundred. (Hayford, 2011, p. 69)

While the separate campuses remained viable, the parent school closed its traditional campus in 2008, planning to reopen after a restructuring. At the time of this writing, it stood as a separate entity from Antioch University, which remained based in Yellow Springs, but offered credit through five other campuses. If not for a technology company established at Antioch in the 1940s the original school would not have risen, while the online and nontraditional offerings continued to operate and grow (Biemiller, 2012).

Another institution with a successful adult program, Elmhurst College in Illinois embraced the concept of collaborative learning when it designed an accelerated program in communications for adult students (Lynott, 1998). Because the group matriculated as a cohort, the program designers believed the first skill students needed was the ability to communicate with each other. The program combined collaborative learning with active learning, and focused on listening skills, critical evaluation of student presentations and the messages they conveyed, and appropriate feedback techniques. Lynott (1998) stated that the accelerated format created challenges, but she believed that the “first rate teachers” were essential (p. 26). Specifically, she wrote, “instructors in accelerated programs must make the best use of every moment that they have to interact with their class” (p. 26).

Kasworm (2003) identified four elements within an accelerated program necessary for success. She noted that all four elements should combine to improve learning. That they mirrored Burman’s (1970) recommendation was no surprise. As a practitioner of adult learning theories, the concept that education should be perceiving rather than receiving would resonate with Kasworm (2003). Adult learning theory dictated the first, which was that the environment must be supportive. The second and third, that it should foster relationships between students and encourage students to develop a learning identity, also paralleled adult learning theory. The fourth element, that it should promote recognition of the value not just of learning but of learning in an accelerated format, was merely an extension of the application that promoted lifelong learning to the idea that this could best be done through an accelerated delivery system.

It is the accelerated nature of most such programs that raised the most opposition. Critics questioned whether students could absorb nine credits of college curricula in a 12 week program. Applying Kasworm's (2003, 2008) principles strengthened the answer that learning at that pace was possible. To counter some of the concerns, many programs fostered a supportive environment, strong relationships between students and faculty, and lifelong learning habits. Cohort programs, in particular, were designed to force a collaborative and supportive environment.

Boyd (2004) concurred with Kasworm (2003, 2008) about the importance of supportive programs. He offered several "Tips for Teaching in Accelerated Programs" (p. 42). The common sense tips included, suggestions to build, "positive and trusting relationships . . . promote a holistic approach to learning . . . draw on learner's experiences . . . [and] encourage students to engage regularly in reflection on what they are learning" (p. 42). While the tips did not offer groundbreaking recommendations, they did reflect best practices, which were often repeated in discussions of adult accelerated programs.

Singh and Martin (2004) reviewed the growth in adult-centered programs and noted that while most institutions with such programs assumed that adults preferred accelerated evening programs, the researchers asked whether any program developers asked adults what they preferred. Generally, they found that most developed the program that was most logical and/or convenient for the institution. One could argue that planning programs on evening and weekends was adequate at program inception, and as online opportunities were added, institutions may become more adult-centered in terms of delivery formats and scheduling.

As programs implemented more online and hybrid options, researchers would be able to expand upon Singh and Martin’s (2004) conclusions and determine if adult programs were being more student-driven then in the past. One possible conclusion, evident in many adult centered programs, was that the market drove program evolution. When weekend classes were offered, many programs moved from an evening to a weekend format. As online programs proliferated, better established brick and mortar programs added online components.

No matter what format the program adopted, Billington (2000) identified “seven characteristics of highly effective adult learning programs” (p. 1). The first characteristic was that “the student feel safe and supported” (p. 1). The second required that the “environment fosters intellectual freedom” (p. 1). The third characteristic stated that the program should create “an environment where faculty treats adult students as peers” (p. 1). The fourth focused on self-directed learning. The fifth recommended that the scholastic challenge be “just beyond their present level of ability” (p. 2). The sixth characteristic required active rather than passive learning, and the seventh stressed "regular feedback mechanisms" (p. 2).

Scott (2003) identified another set of characteristics for an effective adult education program in, Four Attributes of High-Quality Learning Experiences, in a chapter from *Accelerated Learning for Adults: The Promise and Practice of Intensive Educational Formats*. The four attributes he presented were: Instructor characteristics, teaching methods, classroom environment, and evaluation (pp. 30-34). This dovetails well with the principles endorsed by the CAEL (2013). The attributes would combine to create safe but vibrant environments that challenged without frustrating learners. Scott (2003) stated that communication was essential to the learning process. Limited lectures, a variety of assignments, and assessment that focused on, "written papers, hands-on projects, and class presentation" would encourage students to synthesize the material for application (p. 34).

Cohort learning programs. Hugo (2002) emphasized the importance of community in adult education. She noted that in some cases informal programs were attempts to create community. She also pointed out that historically most learning communities were purposive, bringing learners together for a single goal. One common means of creating a cohesive educational group was the cohort program. Such programs were established to provide adult students with a supportive group that would matriculate and progress through the program together.

Spaid and Duff (2009) discussed cohorts as one of the most common delivery formats to foster community. They cited behaviorist and humanist theories as most supportive of the cohort concept. Such groups could provide encouragement between peers at the same time they provided students with a safer environment for risk-taking. They stated that cohorts could contribute to student success, but they "must be purposely formed and structured to evolve into cohesive working groups" (para.3). They also suggested "cohorts afford students stability and continuity that the traditional college format cannot provide" (para. 3).

In reference to cohort programs, Lawrence (2002) stated, "Although forming a learning community may not be their primary reason for choosing a program, most come with an expectation and willingness to work collaboratively" (p. 83). The cohort design required that students form a community of sorts. They entered the program knowing the same group would progress towards graduation. The extent to which the cohort members collaborated or merely attended classes together was defined by the program design.

Whatever the level of collaboration, Lawrence (2002) added, "I have found that the synergy created by cohort groups actually represents multiple knowledges [sic]" (p. 85). The collaborative process encouraged students to capitalize on the various strengths and experiences that the members brought to the classroom. A clear proponent of the cohort system, Lawrence closed with, "The cohort group offers an opportunity to develop skills in communication, accountability, respect, love, conflict resolution, and commitment. Cohorts foster collective knowledge and wisdom that sustains us as thoughtful and active participants in our world" (p. 91).

In a longitudinal study of a cohort program for early child educators, Whitebook, Sakai, Kipnis, Bellm, and Almaraz (2010) found that in the second year the participants identified the cohort structure as more important for their progress. The researchers concluded that the cohort system was successfully creating a supportive community for the students. They noted that because most of the students were returning students, and many did not speak English as a first language, the community aspect of the cohort was particularly important.

Not every report of cohort programs was positive. Spaid and Duff (2009) stated that the logistics of juggling cohort building and faculty selection and oversight could be daunting. They suggested that because most cohort programs were accelerated, preparing schedules and arranging adjuncts was an on-going chore, rather than the biannual cycle of traditional formats.

While many students did find support, and thus success, through cohorts and communities, Owenby (2002) noted that as with any group learning, power structures could impede learning for some members of the group. He referred primarily to corporate learning settings, but the concerns could be applied to a college cohort setting. Sexism, racism, and classism could all create hierarchies that limited learning outcomes. It was not unusual for students to complain about group dynamics when working on a joint project. The difference between a group project and a full cohort program, however was that the latter worked to create a community that extended beyond a single course or project, thus ideally creating support rather than dissension.

Curriculum

Another point of discussion in an adult program was designing and/or choosing the curriculum. Designers must choose whether the adult learning program would offer primarily a vocational curriculum which may be more likely lead to employment, whether there would be a liberal arts focus, or whether a program focused only on generalist degrees, business, communications, or human resource management, for example, or offered the same variety of majors available through traditional formats. Jensen (1970) suggested “maybe we should forget about the 3Rs and just help people change” (p. 19). Jensen offered a deceptively simple statement. Education was change. The key to an adult learner’s success was the ability to embrace that change. While many universities advertised that the way to change was to pursue a degree, the average adult would probably not be interested in a program that just promised change in general.

Miller identified curriculum as a major issue in 1964 (as cited by Bergevin, McKinley, & Smith, 1964). He wrote about the importance of setting objectives based on the stated needs of adult students. He noted, however, that if practitioners, such as himself, believed that the goal of adult education was to facilitate change or adaptation to change, a set curriculum is antithetical to that purpose. Program administrators, therefore must be aware of developments in society and the shifting needs of the program’s constituents.

At the time of this study, the proliferation of adult programs made it much easier to find relevant curriculum that targeted the adult learner. Textbooks included examples that an adult in the workplace would recognize. Unlike textbooks directed at 19-year-olds, these books avoided condescension by addressing the student whose challenges included juggling family, rather than dates, mortgages in addition to cell phone bills, and full-time careers rather than part-time jobs. Programs must still balance the needs of the underprepared student against the student who excels, but that would always be an issue faced by educational institutions.

Bergevin et al. (1964) discussed the importance of latent content in the adult learning process. They defined latent content as the cognitive knowledge that adults bring to the classroom from earlier educational experiences, as well as the knowledge they bring from their work and life experiences. The key to the learning process was connecting these latent contents with the then-current content the student was acquiring. This focus was integral to most adult learning theory. Adult students needed to know their experiences were valued, and that the new learning would dovetail with prior learning to make them more effective in their careers.

Although Mackeracher (2004) discussed curriculum and its relevance, he moved beyond the curriculum and identified five steps in the basic learning cycle. The first step was exposure to the information or material. The second was finding meaning “through using pattern-recognition and meaning-making cognitive and affective processes” (p. 53). The third was to use that knowledge in “problem-solving and decision-making,” the fourth was “to implement action plans,” and the fifth was to “receive feedback” and to observe “one’s own behavior” (p. 53).

While Mackeracher (2004) made these statements over 10 years previous to this writing, the five steps he identified became common practice. Case studies and simulations were cornerstones of most adult programs. Application was as important as regurgitation of facts. Textbooks still provided test banks, but even multiple choice questions were as likely to pose a how question, as opposed to a what question. Such learning was more relevant to the adult who may complain about memorizing theories, but was happy to apply a theory to a problem.

Student Support Services in Accelerated College Programs

One of the greatest difficulties in designing an adult-centered program was balancing the needs of adult learners, as identified by andragogical theory, against the needs of the institution in regards to delivery options and assessment. Programs could easily be scheduled in the evenings and on the weekends to coincide with adult student availability, but the other factors that would improve the likelihood of success may not be automatically included in the program. In many ways, student support services for adults could be much more complicated, if only because their work and social lives were often completely separated from their academic lives.

For example, while support for both traditional and nontraditional students might include time management or writing skills workshops, time management for adults included balancing work and family, as well as personal life and studies. Strategic partnerships for traditional students might refer to the availability of internships, but adult students would need partnerships that could recognize not only the coursework the students just completed, but also the experiences these students brought to the workplace. It was not surprising that many traditional institutions that added adult centered programs may have simply extended the services they offered to traditional students without adjusting those services to meet what could be additional needs required by adults.

Boylston and Blair (2009) conducted research on other factors and identified a supportive environment as one such factor. They noted that orientation, academic advising, tutoring, and clear financial aid information were integral to student retention and success. Many institutions, particularly with evening or multi-site campuses, fell short in providing these components. While a nontraditional student could generally access the services provided to the traditional students during traditional business hours, it was not convenient.

Kelson and Lesick (2000) believed the most important facet of the program was the admissions process. Initially, adults had fewer choices, both because there were fewer options and, because they were less likely to be able to relocate to pursue their education. Online programs capitalized on flexibility, advertising that students could pursue the kind of education they wanted when they wanted it. Providing convenience did not negate the importance of providing ancillary components that traditional students took for granted. Whether the program was online or on ground, however, the institution must be able to meet the needs of the students, academically, financially, and socially.

To best support students, The College of New Rochelle's School of New Resources established an ACCESS Center for the adult students (as cited by Flint, 1999). "ACCESS stands for Adult Career Counseling, Education and Support Services" (Flint, 1999, p. 41). The goal of the ACCESS Center was to provide a single resource center for the commuter. In addition to support services, developmental courses were taught through the center and classes were available at no charge to bridge the transition to college.

Another group, The CAEL, (2011) established eight principles that should be addressed when working with adults, (a) outreach, (b) life and career planning, (c) financing, (d) assessment of learning outcomes, (e) teaching-learning process, (f) students support systems, (g) strategic partnerships, and (h) transitions. These principles were less theoretical and more programmatic. Most programs seemed to include some form of each of these principles, but it was unclear how intentional that inclusion was as programs developed. For example, all programs, whether traditional or nontraditional, included most of these principles in some form as services to the traditional students at the institution. The point of discussion arises as to whether these services were tailored to meet the needs of the adult student.

Accreditation and Institutional Oversight of Accelerated College Programs

Liveright and DeCrow (1963) added several prerequisites for program success. Their recommendations were more institutionally centered than other researchers.' They believed that the administration must truly support the program ideologically and financially. Accreditation relied on having the proper support that only the governing groups of the institution could guarantee. Regular faculty must be highly involved in program development and delivery. Rigor, consistency, and evaluation were best completed by full-time members of the community with an understanding of the academic community and the students that it served. This was another area in which the many adult programs both met and fell short of expectations. While there may be strong support from the administration, most such programs relied heavily on adjunct faculty. A strong core of full-time program directors or faculty may develop curricula, supervise adjuncts, and advise students, but program delivery would ultimately rely on part-time faculty. Some consistency may be gained through established learning outcomes and long term adjuncts, but in the end, that consistency and rigor was determined on a class-by-class basis, or by the extent to which local administrators oversaw what may be a distance learning site.

While the curricula for adult programs remained relatively constant, detractors continued to question the rigor and efficacy of varied delivery methods. Measurements that depended on seat time, Carnegie hours, and traditional delivery systems could not be applied to nontraditional approaches. Ironically, the growth of online programs both brightened the spotlight on nontraditional formats and raised new questions about their efficacy. In an interview with Stevens, associate professor of education at Stanford University, Blumenstyk (2010) noted, "there has always been a bit of a fiction about credit hours as a universal measure of education . . . the credit hour by itself, [Stevens] stated, 'isn't a measure of quality, it's about quantity'" (para. 16-18). Accountability remained the most contentious area of argument. It was thought that detractors would never accept that an accelerated format could be rigorous enough to attain the claimed learning outcomes, and supporters were left to either make a case for alternative assessment practices, or more likely to adjust assessment practices to apply to the nontraditional format.

At this point, because there was disagreement over the accreditation process of traditional programs, it was unrealistic to expect adaptations for nontraditional programs. Critics diverged when the topic of assessment arose. McDaniel (2008) raised concerns that assessmania, as he termed it, was moving from the K-12 level to the college level without anyone questioning the purpose of such assessments. His concern was not that accrediting agencies were requiring accountability, but that outside entities were determining what and how learning would be assessed.

According to Brittingham (2009) the U.S. was unique in its accreditation processes. The first agency, which would become one of the six regional accrediting agencies, New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), was established in 1885 (Brittingham, 2009, p. 14). This was followed in 1887, by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Universities, and in 1895, by the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges and the Southern Associate of Colleges and Schools (SACS) (Brittingham, 2009, p. 14).

Blumenstyk (2010) also raised questions about the new focus on assessment practice. He went one step further than McDaniel (2008), asking if this would stifle creativity in educational programming. He conceded that the focus was then-currently on proprietary colleges, many of which offered nontraditional and accelerated programs, but he did not see the assessment movement ending at their boundaries. Twigg noted that "the challenge . . . is to find a way to measure course content 'whether it's delivered at a distance or in an accelerated format . . . the fact that it's called an 'hour' is a problem" (as cited by Blumensyk, 2010, para. 11).

In 1905, The Carnegie Foundation for Higher Education published "a list of recognized colleges" and developed the "Carnegie Unit" thus quantifying the standard by which educational processes would be reviewed (as cited by Brittingham, 2009, p. 8). In 1913, The North Central Association codified requirements for institutional eligibility, and in 1915, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) was established (Brittingham, 2009, p. 8). With the quantification of parameters such as the Carnegie unit, the accreditation process was created and began its evolution. In 1922, the American Council on Education held a "standardizing conference" and in 1925, "the American Library Association publishe[d] a list of accredited schools" (Brittingham, 2009, p. 14). Finally, in 1949, the National Commission on Accrediting (NAC) was created to ease and simplify the procedures to achieve accreditation (Brittingham, 2009, p. 9).

At the time of Eaton's writings, there were four types of accrediting organizations. One group was regional, consisting of NEASC, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Universities, the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges, SACS, WASC, and NAC, which reviewed "mainly nonprofit and degree-granting, two- and four-year institutions" (Eaton, 2009, p. 80). Two others were national: one accredited faith-related institutions while the other accredited career–related institution. The final was "programmatic" which accredited schools for specific professions or "free-standing" professional schools: "such as law, medicine, engineering, and the health professions" (Eaton, 2009, p. 80).

Eaton (2009) stated that "accreditation carries out four major roles" (p. 80). The first, was "quality assurance" (p. 80). Even if they did not understand the process, the general public knew that the school was legitimate if it had full accreditation. The second role was to gain access to state and federal financial aid. Financial aid was the driver for many incoming students as they made educational decisions. Accreditation assured the government and private lenders that the institution could and would deliver on promises made about the education they offered. The third role was that "accreditation engenders private sector confidence in higher education" (p. 81). Employers could recruit and hire graduates, confident that those employees would have the knowledge represented by the diplomas they carried. Finally, the fourth role was that accreditation allowed students to transfer between institutions. School B could safely accept transfer credits from School A without requiring that the student repeat prerequisites from the original institution.

Once the accrediting agencies were created, academic institutions and the accompanying constituents relied on them for assurance that member schools met basic standards and were providing the education that they claimed. Oden (2009), president of Carleton College in Minnesota, maintained that the accreditation process offered more than a guarantee of a solid education. According to Oden (2009), accreditation pressured institutions to review educational processes, thus insuring that educators did not become complacent or rely on past successes for future growth.

Volkwein (2010) concurred, but cynically stated, "At most universities, it seems as if there is an unending stream of self-study documents and site visit teams from regional, state, and discipline-based bodies" (p. 5). He seemed to suggest that the focus shifted from academics to meeting accreditation requirements. Volkwein did concede at least one benefit. He pointed out, "At least these accreditation groups focus on the educational effectiveness rather than the latest guidebook ratings" (p. 5). Again, cynical, but it did highlight the difference between meeting standards versus allowing the marketing arm of the university to drive the academic programs.

While Oden (2009) considered the internal effects of the accreditation process, Eaton (2009) discussed the external forces. She cited the six standards set by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. These standards were established to give the Council guidelines for reviewing the accrediting organizations. The standards were written to insure that the accreditors remained true to their stated expectations guaranteeing that they would be fair, promote self-examination on the part of the institution under review, demonstrate accountability, and possess sufficient resources.

It was no surprise that accreditation became such a hot topic. More than one authority remarked about how well colleges and universities shifted the burden of accountability from the institution to the student. Shor (1980) presented one such shift as "the process of 'cooling out' . . . a sophisticated thought control. It transfers the locus of failure from the institution to the individual" (p. 17). He referred to a study by Clark, completed in 1959, that found that many community college graduates did not attain employment in their chosen field, even after obtaining a degree in that field. Shor (1980) predicted that cooling out would be even more problematic for adult learners. He believed that traditional-aged students who are unable to find employment in their area of expertise would be able to find work that was "new and good" while adults, already in the full-time workforce, would find themselves unable to change to a new field, thus finding the expectations raised by education dashed by reality (p. 39).

This concern became more pronounced with the growth in for-profit and online programs. While many of these programs followed the formats established by the early programs, evening and weekend, and accelerated format, they followed a different accreditation path based upon whether they focused primarily on vocational programs or more academic programs. The University of Phoenix became the poster child for any university planning to deliver programs designed primarily for the adult learner (Kinser, 2006).

Summary

Designing programs for the adult student presented a classic dichotomy. An adult who reentered the educational setting, often after having left because of a lack of success, may have found himself overwhelmed by the demands, or perceived demands, of school. Jensen (1970) identified the adult learner as "a person who wants to be independent and dependent at the same time" (p. 15). Jensen's point should be considered when creating programs for the adult learner. Equal portions of challenge and support should be built in to insure that the student is secure enough to take risks, but insecure enough to recognize the need to take those risks. The balance between paternalism and support must be held to avoid alienating learners from either end of the spectrum.

Boone (1985) reinforced Jensen's (1970) points believing exhaustive research was required of everything from the resources available to the constituents to be served. He wrote, "Our primary assumption is that all educational activity is aimed at bringing about individual change" (p. 129). For that reason, the focus should be on the individual and his or her needs specific to that desired change. He noted, however, that the structure must be supportive of those needs so that the student will feel safe enough to participate. This concept, that students must feel safe and supported, remains a recurring theme in program and curriculum development.

Chapter Three: Methodology

College programs for adult learners developed quickly over the 60 years previous to this writing, as colleges and universities recognized an underserved population that could build institutional reach and income. These programs were designed to meet the needs of the adult learner, were usually offered in the evening or on weekends, and were often delivered on an accelerated schedule. Critics of accelerated and experimental programs consistently questioned the efficacy of the nontraditional delivery systems, asking how academic material could be adequately covered in a compressed time period and whether such programs really achieved the learning goals they claimed. That many of these programs were financially lucrative and/or favored by for-profit schools did not improve the reception from academia.

All college and university programs were under greater scrutiny as rising costs and student debt load became regular topics for nightly news shows. Nontraditional programs were particularly easy targets. As they became more ubiquitous, so did the level of concern about their validity. The rise of online programs and the costs to students further pushed accrediting agencies to examine the outcomes that the institutions claimed.

At the time of this study, discussions of adult learning theory, the history of adult-focused programs, and the future development of adult-focused programs were discussed in the context of topics ranging from serving the adult student and accelerated education to student loan debt and the efficacy of nontraditional educational formats. A program evaluation of an accelerated adult program answered several of the concerns under discussion. The LCIE program, with its established record and relatively static format, was typical of many past and then-current programs, and thus a good subject for study.

The LCIE program exemplified the application of Burman's (1970) recommendations. Recognition of prior learning and experience was integral to the curriculum. Small class sizes and supportive faculty created a welcoming and secure learning environment. Core courses included curricula and activities that were relevant to the workplace. Format changes evolved based on the changing needs of adult students thus demonstrating the intentional design of the program.

This program evaluation examined the LCIE program by addressing one research question and two sub-questions.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study employed a mixed-method program evaluation design to address the following questions:

Main Research Question: How does LCIE, in its current incarnation, address the ideals of adult learning theory, the needs of busy contemporary adult students, and the requirements of the accrediting agency?

Sub-question #1: How have LCIE learning processes evolved since 1975?

Sub-question #2: Is there congruency between LCIE mission and practice?

The null hypothesis: The mean testing scores achieved in a sample population of LCIE students will not change between a pre-test administration and a post-test administration of the ETS Proficiency Profile.

Methodology

A mixed-method program evaluation design was chosen to best balance the strength of a hypothesis-based design with a question-based design. Frankel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) noted that "mixed-method studies can help to confirm or cross-validate relationships discovered between variables, as when quantitative and qualitative methods are compared to see if they converge on a single interpretation of a phenomenon" (p. 558). In this case, quantitative outcome data were used to verify the qualitative process data.

Participants

There were two groups of study participants. The first group was made up of then-current students and alumni. The second group consisted of faculty and administrators. The following sections describe each group in detail.

Student interview participants. The student participants generally reflected the diversity of the LCIE program. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to insure anonymity. Two of the alumni identified themselves as Caucasian. One, Maria, graduated in 2002, and was 52-years-old at the time of the interview, meaning she was 40-years-old when she graduated from LCIE. The other, Diane, graduated in 2011, and was 54-years-old at the time of the interview, making her 51-years-old at the time of graduation. The third alumna graduated in 2013, the month before the interview. Paula identified herself as African American and was 52-years-old at the time of the interview.

The then-current students were younger than the other interviewees. While this may be a limitation, it may also just reflect the changing demographics of the LCIE program. Sandra identified herself as African American and was 23-years-old at the time of the interview. She expected to graduate the quarter following the interview. Don, who also identified himself as African American, had been in the program for one year and hoped to graduate in 2016. He was 28-years-old at the time of the interview. Rhonda identified herself as Caucasian, had expected to graduate in Summer 2013, but was having difficulty finding the single course she was missing for graduation. She hoped to graduate in March 2014. She was 31-years-old at the time of the interview. Jeff was 30-years-old at the time of the interview and identified himself as Hispanic. He expected to graduate at the end of 2014.

Faculty interview participants. The administrator of the program, Dave, identified himself as Caucasian, and was 67-years-old at the time of the interview. He had been at Lindenwood since 1986. He was an alumnus of both the undergraduate and graduate programs in LCIE, taught as an adjunct instructor, was hired as a full-time instructor, and was named director of LCIE in 1997. Scott, adjunct instructor, had also been with the program for many years. He began teaching for LCIE in 1980, left to pursue other opportunities, and returned to LCIE in 1982. He identified himself as Caucasian and was 63-years-old at the time of the interview. John identified himself as Caucasian and was 55-years-old at the time of the interview. He had been a full-time instructor for less than a year in the LCIE program, but had taught in several other adult-centered programs prior to joining the LCIE faculty.

Figure 1 represents the gender of the research student participants and their self-identified ethnicity. White females represented the largest category, while male Hispanics represented the smallest.

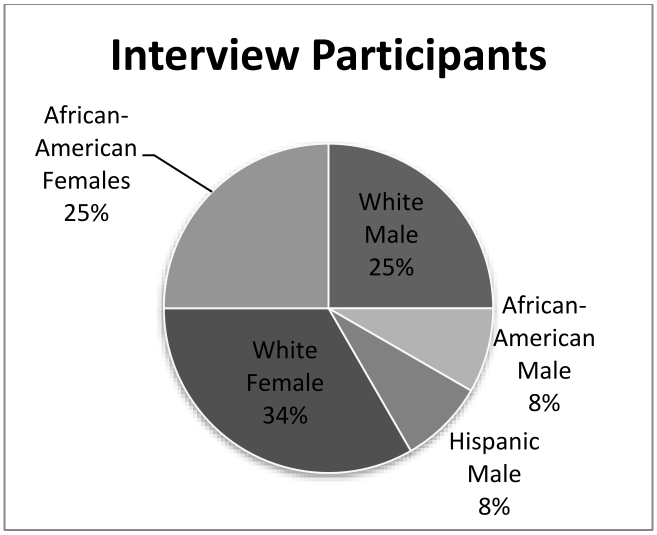

Figure 1. Participant gender and self-identified race.

Figure 2 represents the age of the interview participants, placed into categories of 20 to 29, 30 to 39, 50 to 59, and 60 to 69. The largest category of participation was 50 to 59-year-olds, while the smallest category was the 30 to 39-year-olds.

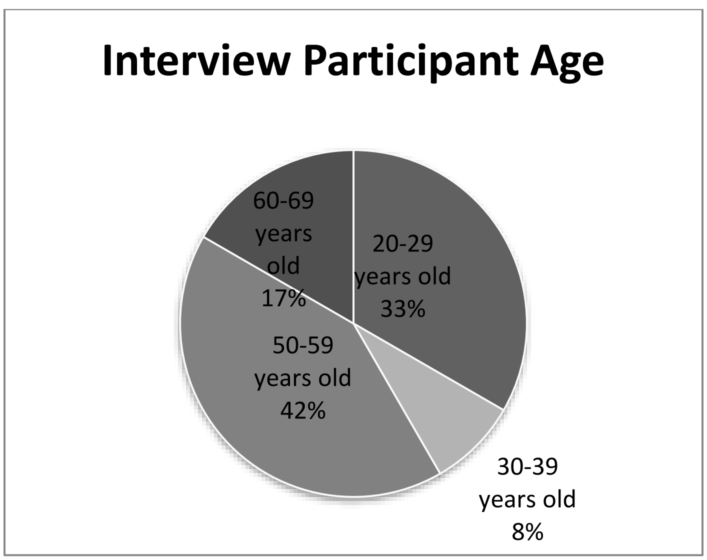

Figure 2. Age of participants at the time of the interview.

Outcome Measurement

The outcome measurement data were secondary, obtained from survey results collected as part of the LCIE assessment plan. This data were collected to address new accreditation expectations, more specifically, to identify areas for improvement and possible means to achieve improvement. At the time of this study, accreditation practices had shifted from a narrative approach measuring retention and graduation numbers, availability of research materials, student-instructor ratios, etc., to a more active/prescriptive approach. As Liu (2011) stated, “Over the past decade, attention to outcomes assessment for accountability purposes in higher education has increased exponentially” (p. 446). In response to these shifts, LCIE administrators reviewed various methods for assessing student outcomes to be in line with then-current practice. After this review, assessment officers determined an objective measure would strengthen claims about student learning outcomes for general education courses. As a result, the ETS Proficiency Profile was chosen, because the subject content of the instrument paralleled the student learning outcomes in the general education courses measured. The instrument reviewed basic knowledge in reading, math, history, and science, along with competence in critical thinking skills, thus covering the coursework included in LCIE’s general education curriculum.

An improvement in scores between the pre-test and post-test would support that the student learning outcomes established for critical thinking by the LCIE program were met. At the time of the study, LCIE general education program directors planned to implement programming in response to the data collected. This program evaluation did not assess any of the program changes that may or may not have been the result of the ETS testing results.

The LCIE assessment officer chose the ETS Proficiency Profile to measure critical thinking skills gained through the general education curriculum. According to the

Educational Testing Service (2013) website, "The ETS® Proficiency Profile test allows you to: gain a full perspective of the effectiveness of your general education program to meet requirements for accreditation and performance funding" (p. 1).

In addition to measuring proficiency in the general education areas of humanities, social science, mathematics, and natural science, the Proficiency Profile, developed and distributed by the Educational Testing Service (2013), assessed creative thinking abilities. A research study by Marr (1995) confirmed the validity of the Proficiency Profile. Using MANOVA analysis and Spearman rank correlations, Marr found that claims made about the survey were supported. The latest iteration of the Proficiency Profile also supported validity. Young (2007) noted, the validity of the survey was first established in 1990 and "since its format and structure are identical to the 2001 version of Academic Profile and similar to the 1990 version, we can assume that the validity evidence gathered for Academic Profile will likely be applicable for MAPP" (Educational Testing Service, 2013, p. 1).

Based on its content and validity, the ETS survey was chosen to support that students were meeting the student learning outcomes (SLOs) defined by the General Education Committee of Lindenwood University. The assumption was that increased scores on the surveys would demonstrate acquisition of the skills targeted by the SLOs. At the time of this study, the SLOs were:

1. Students will be aware of global history and diversity.
2. Students will develop a sense of responsible citizenship.
3. Students will communicate effectively.
4. Students should be able to draw from a variety of disciplines to arrive at

coherent, educated opinions.

5. Students will think critically and analytically.
6. Students will effectively engage in creative thinking. (General Education Committee, 2011, p. 5)

For accreditation purposes, LCIE focused specifically on the critical thinking scores, although the general education topics mirrored the general education requirements in the LCIE Program.

Originally, the LCIE assessment officer chose the 90-minute pencil-and-paper format assuming that the longer format would provide the most accurate information concerning student accomplishment. The computer format was not an option, because the surveys were administered during class. In July 2013, the assessment officer adopted the brief version of the pencil-and-paper format to better accommodate the instructors who were sacrificing instructional time to administer the ETS Proficiency Profile. This study used the results of the longer version only.

The ETS Proficiency Profile was administered to incoming LCIE students on the first day of class and to students enrolled in a capstone class required for graduation. LCIE assessment officers administered the standard pencil-and-paper version for the first two years of testing, and the abbreviated form of the same test for the remaining year. Beginning in December 2010, the ETS Proficiency Profile was administered to students during the first class meeting of a course required for every entering student. Because the survey was administered during class, participation was mandatory. The exit testing did not begin until July 2012, with the assumption that by that point the student learning outcomes assessed would be well established and the scores of the graduating students should reflect familiarity with those outcomes. Initially, graduating students were expected to sign up for a testing time the week before the capstone class began. The response was limited, primarily because there was no incentive to participate in the survey process. Beginning with Spring Quarter 2013, testing moved to the first meeting of the capstone class which doubled the participation from 44 in July 2012 to 85 in April 2013.

Permission to use the data for this program evaluation was granted by the university provost. At the point when the data were extracted for analysis for this study. 1,825 students had completed the survey as a pre-test and 244 students had completed the survey as a post-test before graduation. Of that group, 69 had taken both the pre-test and the post-test. To strengthen the comparison, a random sample of 30 students was selected from this group of 69 students, using an Excel 2010 random number generator. A *t*-test was applied to the data to compare outcomes between the pre-test and post-test scores, to determine if the improvement of scores was significant, and thus supporting that students were meeting the student learning outcome goals defined by the General Education Committee (2011) of Lindenwood University.

Process Measurement

The second facet of this study involved the collection of process measurement data from interviews with current and former students, faculty, and administrators of the LCIE program. Despite potential bias inherent in recruiting volunteers for interviews, the interview process was essential to the study to establish the narrative support to answer the research questions. Signs were posted in the campus building that housed the LCIE offices and at every off-site location where LCIE courses were taught. LCIE faculty advisors were encouraged to participate or refer students or alumni who might be interested in participating.

Relying on volunteers and referrals for interview candidates was a potential limitation of this study. Students who persisted in the LCIE program ostensibly did so because they were satisfied with the education they received. Alumni most likely to be referred were those with positive relationships with faculty advisors who remained in contact with them. Dissatisfied students were less likely to remain in contact, and therefore less likely to be available to participate in the interviews. They also may have expressed more positive opinions colored by distance from graduation. Then-current students may have been more likely to express dissatisfaction, but again, those students may have been less likely to volunteer.

With the approval of the Institutional Review Board of Lindenwood University, data were collected through interviews with then-current and former administrators, faculty, and students (see Appendices A and B for interview questions). Although LCIE was longer-lived than many adult programs, several of the early participants were still available for interviews. The interviewees provided invaluable insight into student perception of the mission and evolution of the program. Individuals were recruited through posted signs and referrals. Each agreed to an interview of 30 to 60 minutes in length. The questions were developed based on the published mission statement of LCIE and adult learning theory. Graduate students were excluded, as the focus of this study was on the undergraduate experience.

Interviews were held in the LUCC library, a neutral room in the building that housed the LCIE program; in the offices of the three faculty/administrator participants;

and in vacant classrooms at two off-site campuses. No other people were present during the interviews with one exception. One interviewee brought her six-year-old daughter. The recording reflected more than one pause when the mother responded to her daughter's needs. All participants were given the opportunity to change location if they were uncomfortable with the setting.

A standardized open-ended interview model was followed. As recommended by Fraenkel et al. (2012) this model promoted an increased probability of comparative answers, as well as the ability to follow-up on any answers that required clarification. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and evaluated using a rubric based on the research questions. Maxwell (2005) suggested a coding system that divided responses into, "organization, substantive, and theoretical categories" (p. 97). Organization referred to broad categories that could be used as a first step in the coding processes, large groups that could then be broken into smaller subgroups. Substantive categories "are primarily descriptive", relating the participants' responses as unadorned statements rather than as theoretical contributions to the study (p. 94). Maxwell (2005) stated, "They can be used in *developing* a more general theory of what's going on, but they don't *depend* on this theory" (p. 97). Theoretical categories were the opposite of substantive, as they contained the abstract concepts the researcher may be discussing.

Per design recommendations made by Fraenkel et al. (2012) responses were categorized first by question and then by pattern and frequency. This method allowed emerging patterns to be subdivided into more specific groups, re-categorized, and evaluated in light of new alignments between participant responses. The subdivisions highlighted comparable responses to questions, not only reinforcing the consistency of each individual's responses, but also reinforcing the consistencies within the group. This organizational method promoted the transition to the substantive and theoretical classifications recommended by Maxwell (2005).

Interview questions. The questions for the process measurement portion of this study were arranged in two sets. The first set was designed to parallel the research questions. They were: (a) How does LCIE, in its current incarnation address the needs of contemporary adult students?; (b) How have LCIE policies and practices evolved since 1975?; (c) Is there congruency between the LCIE mission and practice?; and (d) What is the relationship between the LCIE program and adult learning theory?

The second set of questions was designed more broadly with the intention of producing general answers that would generate additional themes and provide support or refutation of the research questions. They were: (1) Tell me about your experience in LCIE; (2) What do you consider the greatest strengths of LCIE?; (3) What do you consider the greatest weaknesses of LCIE?; and (4) Do you have any thoughts that you would like to add? Asking both categories of questions allowed the interviewees to focus on the topics specific to the study, as well as raise considerations not directly addressed by the original research questions.

Maxwell (2005) stated, "There is no way to mechanically 'convert' research questions into methods; your methods are the *means* to answering your research questions, not a logical translation of the latter" (p. 92). Therefore, the questions were designed as a combination of broad survey questions and more pointed and specific questions. The first question, What was your experience in LCIE?, was designed primarily to address the first research question, but the answers given by the interviewees provided data that answered the other questions as well. The same was true of the two questions that asked about LCIE strengths and weaknesses. The responses covered a variety of topics overlapping the more specific research questions.

The question concerning student assessment practices and the follow-up question asking if these practices were fair and valid, addressed both the specific information, was the interviewee aware of assessment practices, and the more subjective results, what were the interviewee’s perceptions of those practices. Both questions addressed whether LCIE practice reflected the needs of adult students and whether mission and practice were congruent. There was some confusion about the meaning of the term assessment, thus this question required further questions to clarify its meaning.

The questions about mission and practice were also designed to elicit both factual statements and opinions. These questions directly mirrored the research question posed. Most of the interviewees offered a response to the first question and were then given a copy of the mission statement before being asked the second. This process allowed the interviewer to ask first whether the interviewee felt that LCIE had achieved the mission as defined by the student and then as defined by the institution.

The question about changes in the program was also restated directly from the research questions. While the inclusion of the questions about the program’s mission produced applicable data, inclusion of this question proved the point made by Maxwell (2005) that questions prepared for the study were the means by which the research questions were answered, and were not automatically relevant to the process. The interviewees generally felt unable to answer this question. Only the administrator and the adjunct were associated with the program long enough to experience the changes and, therefore, felt competent to comment on them. The interviewees uniformly replied that the program they experienced was the only program they knew. Therefore, with a few exceptions, these two questions should have been reworded, or possibly omitted.

Finally, asking each participant at the end of each interview if he or she had any additional comments generally provided responses to earlier questions they had reconsidered and wanted to enhance. Most of the interviewees offered concluding statements to wrap up their comments. Fraenkel et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of rapport between interviewer and participant. Responses to the final question confirmed that the interviewer established the necessary rapport for participants to feel at ease.

Summary

At the time of this study, the LCIE program was evolving to meet the needs of the changing population and to adjust for the increased competition from other programs that served the adult learner. The mixed-method design of this study provided a solid platform to explore the attitudes of then-current students and past participants of the program and to compare the participants' perceived expectations of the program with the outcome measurements then-currently used for assessment purposes. The results are reported in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Results

Both the outcome measurements and process measurements are reported in this chapter. Each is reported separately. The outcome measurements were collected to address the hypothesis that adults in the LCIE program met the learning objectives of the program as measured by the ETS Proficiency Profile. To that end, 30 students were randomly selected from a sample of 69 students who had completed both the pre-test and the post-test survey. The findings of the t test were inconclusive. The process measurements (primary and secondary) were collected to answer the main research question and two sub-questions. To that end, LCIE students, alumni, and staff interview results were collected and analyzed (primary); and, alumni and student surveys that were collected in 2013 (secondary) were analyzed.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study employed a mixed-method program evaluation design to address the following questions:

Main Research Question: How does LCIE, in its current incarnation, address the ideals of adult learning theory, the needs of busy contemporary adult students, and the requirements of the accrediting agency?

Sub-question #1: How have LCIE learning processes evolved since 1975?

Sub-question #2: Is there congruency between LCIE mission and practice?

The null hypothesis: The mean testing scores achieved in a sample population of LCIE students will not change between a pre-test administration and a post-test administration of the ETS Proficiency Profile.

Quantitative Outcome Data Results

Table 1 contains the total raw score of each student on the pre-test and the post-test and the difference between the scores. Five of the 30 students scored the same overall score for both pre-test administration of the ETS Proficiency Profile and post-test administration of the ETS Proficiency Profile. These scores ranged from 400 to 457 on a scale of 400 to 500 points. Eight of the 30 students scored lower on the post-test than on the pre-test, and the remaining 17 students scored higher on the post-test than the pre-test. Within the remaining group, the shift in scores ranged from 1 point to 27 points. The broadest differences ranged from an improvement in score of 27 points for one student to a loss of 21 points for another. Six students showed no change in score from the pre-test to the post-test. The *t*-test for difference in means confirmed what a quick review of the chart suggested to the researcher; there was no significant score improvement from the pre-test to the post-test. The numbers were too random to identify a pattern of improvement or decline.

Table 1

Difference in ETS Proficiency Profile Pre and Post-test Scores in Sample Score Selection

Pre-test Score	Post-test Score	Difference
429	408	-21
436	421	-15
443	432	-11
423	418	-5
468	463	-5
458	454	-4
466	462	-4
416	412	-4
457	457	0
401	401	0
416	416	0
424	424	0
457	457	0
424	425	1
439	440	1
424	426	2
433	435	2
431	433	2
437	439	2
420	423	3
424	427	3
442	446	4
422	427	5
466	474	8
453	462	9
417	432	15
415	432	17
404	424	20
454	477	23
417	444	27

As indicated in Table 2, following a comparison of the *t*-test value to the *t*-critical value (0.505 to 2.002) and the *p*-value of the significance level (0.615 to 0.05), the null hypothesis, the mean testing scores achieved in a sample population of LCIE students will not change between a pre-test administration and a post-test administration of the

ETS Proficiency Profile, was not rejected. Data did not support a significant change in comparison of post-test scores to pre-test scores.

Table 2

t-Test: ETS Proficiency Profile – LCIE sample

	Post-test	*Pre-test*
Mean	436.367	433.867
Variance	380.309	353.568
Observations	30	30
Pooled Variance	366.939	
df	58	
t Stat	0.505	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.615	
t Critical two-tail	2.002	

A second test was applied after removing the outlier scores of 27 and -21. The findings were comparable to the first calculation and are found on Table 3. Removing the outliers did not change the resultant standard deviation to reflect a significant outcome (10.324 changed to 8.474).

Table 3

t-Test: ETS Proficiency Profile – Outliers Removed

	Post-test	*Pre-test*
Mean	437.107	434.643
Variance	375.951	367.720
Observations	28	28
Pooled Variance	371.835	
df	54	
t Stat	0.478	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.634	
t Critical two-tail	2.005	

Following a comparison of the *t*-test value to the *t*-critical value (0.0.478 to 2.005) and the *p*-value to the significance level (0.634 to 0.05), the null hypothesis, the mean testing scores achieved in a sample population, with removal of outliers, of LCIE students will not change between a pre-test administration and a post-test administration of the ETS Proficiency Profile, was not rejected. Data did not support a significant change in comparison of post-test scores to pre-test scores, with the removal of the outliers.

Review of the raw data analyzed by ETS did demonstrate an improvement in proficiency in critical thinking skills for the total population. According to ETS (2013), 1% of the participants who completed the pre-test (1,835) scored proficient in critical thinking skills. The post-test group was smaller (245 participants), but 3% of that group scored proficient in critical thinking skills.

Twenty-one members of the sample group identified as White, non-Hispanic, eight as African-American, and one as two or more races. No significant differences among those groups could be inferred from a comparison of post-test to pre-test scores. Table 4 indicates the results of a t-test for difference in means.

Table 4

t-Test: Whites and Non- Hispanics

	Post-test	*Pre-test*
Mean	432.428	434.476
Variance	342.257	304.961
Observations	21	21
Pearson Correlation	0.806	
t Stat	-0.835	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.413	
t Critical two-tail	2.085	

As shown by a comparison of the *t*-test value to the *t*-critical value (-0.0835 to 2.085) and the *p*-value to the significance level (0.413 to 0.05), the null hypothesis, the mean testing scores achieved in a sample of White and non-Hispanic students will not change between a pre-test administration and a post-test administration of the ETS Proficiency Profile, was not rejected. Data did not support a significant change in comparison of post-test scores to pre-test scores.

A second test was applied to a comparison of post-test scores to pre-test scores for the sample of non-White students. The findings were comparable to the calculation for the sample of White and non-Hispanic students and are found on Table 5.

Table 5

t-Test: Non-Whites

	Post-test	*Pre-test*
Mean	437.222	440.777
Variance	407.944	584.944
Observations	9	9
Pearson Correlation	0.945	
t Stat	-1.281	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.235	
t Critical two-tail	2.306	

As shown by a comparison of the *t*-test value to the *t*-critical value (-1.281 to 2.306) and the *p*-value to the significance level (0.235 to 0.05), the null hypothesis, the mean testing scores achieved in a sample of non-White students will not change between a pre-test administration and a post-test administration of the ETS Proficiency Profile, was not rejected. Data did not support a significant change in comparison of post-test scores to pre-test scores.

A separate *t*-test for difference in means was also calculated comparing post-tests to pre-tests for those who were first generation college students, as well as for those who were not first generation college students. Two of the members did not identify themselves as first generation or otherwise, however 11 were first generation and 17 were not.

As indicated on Table 6, results for the first generation college students did not indicate significant differences, as shown by a comparison of the *t*-test value to the *t*-critical value (1.377 to 2.228) and the *p*-value of the significance level (0.198 to 0.05), The null hypothesis, the mean testing scores achieved in a sample of first generation college students will not change between a pre-test administration and a post-test administration of the ETS Proficiency Profile, was not rejected.

Table 6

t-Test: First Generation College Students

	Post-test	*Pre-test*
Mean	436.727	433.727
Variance	414.018	417.818
Observations	11	11
Pearson Correlation	0.937	
t Stat	1.377	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.198	
t Critical two-tail	2.228	

As indicated on Table 7, results for the non-first generation college students did not indicate significant differences, as shown by a comparison of the *t*-test value to the *t*-critical value (-2.112 to 2.119) and the *p*-value of the significance level (0.050 to 0.05), The null hypothesis, the mean testing scores achieved in a sample of non-first generation college students will not change between a pre-test administration and a post-test administration of the ETS Proficiency Profile, was not rejected.

Table 7

t-Test: Non First Generation College Students

	Posttest	*Pre-test*
Mean	430.7059	436.470
Variance	295.220	328.139
Observations	17	17
Pearson Correlation	0.798	
t Stat	-2.112	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.050	
t Critical two-tail	2.119	

All 30 students in the sample had transferred credits to Lindenwood University when they matriculated. The least number transferred was four credits and the greatest number was 133. Lindenwood required 128 credits to complete a baccalaureate degree (Lindenwood University, 2013). The median number of credits transferred was 64. Even when the samples was divided by credits transferred, no notable pattern could be identified in comparison of pre-test to post-test scores.

Qualitative Process Measurement Data Results

Interviews of then-current students, alumni, and staff provided the most effective means of gathering data to answer the research questions. While the participant group was fairly diverse, the questions still elicited fairly homogenous responses. As stated earlier, the interview questions for the process measurement portion of this study were arranged in two sets. The first set was designed to parallel the main sub-research questions. They were as follows: (1) How does LCIE, in its current incarnation address the needs of contemporary adult students? (2) How have LCIE policies and practices evolved since 1975? (3) Is there congruency between the LCIE mission and practice? (4) How was your learning assessed? and (5) Was that assessment reliable and accurate?

The second set of interview questions was designed more broadly with the intention of producing general answers that might provide support or refutation of the research questions. They were as follows: (1) Tell me about your experience in LCIE. (2) What do you consider the greatest strengths of LCIE? (3) What do you consider the greatest weaknesses of LCIE? and (4) Do you have any thoughts that you would like to add?

Many of the interview responses were similar, which could mean the questions were leading to elicit specific responses. It is also possible the students, by their self-selection, were more inclined to answer positively to the questions concerning their experiences and estimations of the program. While there was strong evidence that interviewees will answer questions to appear in the best possible light (Bowman & Hill, 2011), in this research project, the relationship with the researcher seemed to create a comfortable environment that led to honesty. Fraenkel et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of boundaries between the interviewer and participant while still encouraging a comfortable rapport. They encouraged allowing participants to respond at their own pace, and asking questions in multiple ways to establish roles. A common rapport was evident in the give and take of the interviewer and interviewee, as evidenced by laughter and voice tone. Participant responses were consistent, also suggesting that honest rapport was established.

Interview question 1: How does LCIE, in its current incarnation address the needs of contemporary adult students? This question elicited a variety of responses, although the advantage of attending class, one night a week was mentioned most often. Student participant responses ranged from comments on homework expectations and class scheduling to family and work constraints. Generally, all of the students acknowledged they chose the LCIE program because of its accelerated format. Diane's response was the most straightforward. She stated, 'to be able to come to class one night a week . . . was a phenomenal approach that was taken.' Maria made the same observation. 'I was able to go one night a week, and was able to focus on the homework because of those four hours.'

Carla noted that the program was, 'available to working adults,' adding that she, "didn't have four, five days to commit to school . . . so the one night a week made it very possible for me to continue my education.' LCIE had long advertised the benefits of attending class one night per week. Scheduling the program for one night a week was a clear example of meeting the needs of the adult learner. Rhonda appreciated attending classes one night per week. She said, 'you can still get the full-time 36 [credits] in a year, because you got the four clusters.'

Jeff believed more hands on application of theories would have added to the rigor and made the coursework more meaningful. He stated, 'Like cool, you know in theory how to do this, so let's really test to see if you can do it.' This observation was not made by any of the other students, but Jeff was the only information technology major who participated in the study.

Paula noted, 'We had to demonstrate the techniques we were taught just so they could measure our learning.' She felt presentations were used most often to assess student abilities. Diane also mentioned presentations, but she saw them as a negative component of the program saying, 'I don't feel that we were given the guidance we needed to present.' This could reflect Rhonda's earlier statement concerning the difficulty of covering the material in 12 weeks.

Vocational usefulness was also mentioned by several interviewees. Jim mentioned the importance that LCIE 'give people a good accelerated education,' and give them the skills to find a job, but he specifically stated, 'when we educate them it will enable them to find better jobs, but we aren't a job service.' While Dave spoke of learning skills that could be applied at work, Jim paraphrased the statement saying, 'learn it today and use it tomorrow is not always possible.'

Jim added a faculty view of whether LCIE was meeting student needs. He stated, 'I think we're constantly shooting at the right target.' This suggested good intent, but not necessarily good outcomes. Dave was a little less positive. He stated, 'with some students I think we're doing very well, with others, not so well.' He did not think that was necessarily the fault of the program. Dave divided the unsuccessful students into two groups. The first, he said, 'just wants the credential' and the second, 'quite honestly understands the need to learn, but for some reason or another, can't negotiate the curriculum.' Dave again brought up the younger ages of the students, feeling, 'life gets in the way for them, and when it does, they struggle.' He noted they have the same burdens that the older students had but 'they're having this occur a lot younger,' suggesting their lack of maturity contributed to their inability to juggle school with their other responsibilities.

Interview question 2: How have LCIE policies and practices evolved since 1975? This question, while worthwhile, was not really addressed by the interviews; most likely because only two of the participants, the administrator and one of the instructors, felt qualified to answer that question. Most of the participants felt unqualified to answer the question because the program had not undergone what they considered to be major changes during their enrollment. Most of the student participants did mention the colloquium as the primary program change they were aware of. Until July 2013, students were required to complete an out-of-class learning experience during each quarter of enrollment. After that catalog year, the colloquium was dropped because it was not required for accreditation purposes. Jeff's response was consistent with other students, 'I was glad you guys decided to get rid of [the colloquium].' Don concurred. 'Yes, and I, please don't let them come back.'

Ironically, the colloquium was a good example of how the program paralleled adult learning theory. The premise behind the requirement, aside from adding additional instructional contact, was to establish a habit of lifelong learning. Theoretically, students would attend lectures, events, exhibits, and so forth that they would not under normal circumstances attend. This, in turn, would establish the pattern for attending learning activities. Conversely, many students shared Don's view that it was a burden added to an already heavy homework load.

Many of the responses mirrored Maria's response. Maria, who had been away from the program the longest of the student participants, said, 'I'm saying that in my short tenure when I was there, it stayed the same.' She did add that she believed that faculty were using more technology, but that was not specifically a program change.

Rhonda's response was similar, 'I was told there were a few . . . maybe the last two classes changed, but I didn't notice.' Diane said, 'I really don't remember. The changes were so subtle. I, I think I heard about them.' The point is that students felt they had only experienced the LCIE program as it existed during their tenure. Any changes that might have occurred were either before their enrollment, after their enrollment, or too minor to affect their experiences.

Sandra believed the program became more rigorous during her attendance. She noted, ‘it went from being a little lax to a bit more strict.’ This would conform to the program’s stated goal to tighten the curriculum for accreditation purposes. Sandra specifically said, ‘Like this year, I mean it was much stricter.’ One example she cited was more overlap in the assignments, ‘Like in the beginning, I had someone who did, uhm, one book each month . . . and it was so much easier.’ Diane agreed the program had become more rigorous, ‘I did hear my professors say, ‘you’re going to see this program become more rigorous’. . . so that’s what they’re telling me.’ She went on to say that she watched to see if that were true, but, ‘I, it’s hard to tell, because as I said, the more I learned, the harder I was on myself.’ When pressed, she felt it was difficult to separate her own expectations of herself from the program expectations.

Two of the participants noted the changes in the requirement for the math cluster. At the time of the study, a math placement test was introduced that required students to either pass the placement test or complete a refresher class before enrolling in the math cluster. The second change was that all math homework was completed online which, according to Paula, created a difficult transition for students. She said, ‘I was just part of the first class, the guinea pig class, to find out if Connect would work, and uhm, it worked for us.’

One of the changes in the program has been demographic. Originally, the program required that students be at least 25-years-old, and/or bring work experience to the program. At the time of the study, the age restrictions had been removed from the catalog, and younger students were being admitted, but Paula considered their presence an asset,

> You know we don't all think the same; you know. . . I can't say they didn't take it as serious as I did, but you know, I took it serious as I could because of my age. I'm a very competitive human being, and when they came in, and I'm looking at them, I'm like, oh, my, this young lady site next to me and she's 25. . . So when we team up, and, and I can add my life experience to her age, we make a pretty good pair, and we got it done.

Paula, an older student saw the younger students as adding a different and positive dimension to her learning. As she stated earlier,

> When we team up, and I can add my experience to her age we make a good pair, and we got it done. . . We look at things differently. They come from a whole different background. You know they're computer savvy . . . so they [young and old] can actually help each other. We kinda' keep them at a level tone because of our age.

None of the other students mentioned age when discussing any part of their experiences in the LCIE program. At 24, Sandra would have been admitted based on her years in the workforce, because she would have been younger than 25, the age threshold for admission to the program.

The non-students in the interview group were the most aware of the changes in the program. Dave, the administrator who was involved with the program since the 1980s, first as a student, then an adjunct, and finally a full-time faculty and administrator, would reasonably be expected to have experienced the most changes in the program. He felt that most of the program changes happened in the early years and more recent years. He stated, ‘I’d be willing to bet you that from 1989 and until 2007, the changes were minimal.’

Dave identified several changes as having the most impact on the LCIE program. The first was the influx of younger students. Referring to a demographic review of the program, he noted his surprise at the downward shift in age,

> I was shocked when we got the results back and that showed how many young students we had. And we had them as young as 19-years-old, and a 19 year old doesn’t approach learning like a 35 to 40 year old approaches learning.

He was concerned about this shift because he believed the older students brought more to the class.

> We used to say years ago we will teach you something in class tonight that you’ll use at your place of employment tomorrow. And that didn’t always come from the instructor. That came from both the instructor and the student, because they had a wealth of knowledge in that classroom. A twenty year old doesn’t have the wealth of knowledge.

Dave believed the work experience enhanced the curriculum and vice versa. The curriculum had to adjust to students who could not contribute to the discussion as readily as their predecessors had. He believed, ‘having the younger students cost us in the long run some of our older students.’

Dave was also concerned about the changes that were implemented for accreditation purposes. He specifically referred to a business accreditation that ‘more than doubles the number of employees that we have here . . . because that's what we needed to do.' While the increase in the number of advisors was a positive change, he was concerned about the additional cost. 'Whenever you double your manpower, you double the cost, and you have to double your revenue.' When the revenue did not increase, he believed the program suffered.

Dave also felt that integration with the traditional program created unnecessary changes in the program. 'There has to be an integration.' He believed the integration already existed, and that 'we were all working toward a common goal. You didn't have to prove that.' The required proof added a layer of reports he considered counterproductive and a burden on already overburdened faculty.

Jim noted the capstone courses in the majors had become more rigorous and better reflected the scope of the major. He said concerning students in one capstone, at least, students were now creating a business plan, 'Basically, each section of the business plan reflects a portion of the curriculum . . . I've seen students take this document and use it as a portfolio for [interviews].'

Scott, another faculty member, felt the greatest change came by 'involving the traditional school.' He felt there was limited understanding between the two formats, but integration was affecting the way that LCIE was viewed. 'You know I hear this all the time. 'How can you teach that?' . . . Is it perfect? No, it isn't perfect. It's hard.' He also felt grade inflation was a bigger issue than in the past, 'Are there people in our program that give out As that really don't use up the time? Yea, of course there are. That would be one change.' He also cited lack of promotion as a problem, although he did not address whether that was a change or not.

Interview question 3: Is there congruency between the LCIE mission and practice? The entire mission statement can be found in Appendix C, but several aspects should be included in a discussion of the congruency between adult learning theory and the LCIE program. The LCIE statement affirmed that the LCIE mission "is in alignment with the mission of the University" (Lindenwood University, 2013, p. 8). Several of the points in the overarching mission were repeated in the LCIE mission, such as a commitment to a liberal arts education and a focus on continued growth and "lifelong learning" (Lindenwood University, 2013, p. 8). Both also refer to the areas of study students may pursue, the importance of ethical or value-centered living, and vocational preparation. The LCIE portion adds, "using the Socratic method of learning . . . using a cluster format . . . [and] providing mentoring for every student" (Lindenwood University, 2013, p. 8).

Interview subjects were asked if they were familiar with the mission statement. Only the instructors and administrator were familiar with the document before the interview. Each student unfamiliar with the mission statement was asked to define the LCIE mission statement in his or her own words, and to explain how LCIE was or was not achieving that mission. Most of the statements defined by the interviewees contained at least some of the same points the official mission statement embraced. All of the participants felt that LCIE was achieving the mission as they defined it. Each interviewee was then provided with a copy of the official mission statement and asked if Lindenwood University in general and LCIE in particular were conforming to the published mission statements. Again, all of the interviewees believed that the University and the program were congruent with the stated mission.

Like many of the self-identified mission statements, Maria's was straightforward. She defined the mission as being 'for a good outcome, for the student's learning experience, so, and to graduate.' Jeff provided a single sentence, 'to give working students a chance to further their career through education.' Paula stated the same thing, albeit a bit wordier, 'I see the mission for LCIE . . . to create an opportunity for adults who don't have time to commit to going to school to further their education.' She added, 'to further their education . . . to broadening minds, changing lives, one at a time, which is happening.'

Diane and Sandra hit several of the mission points directly. Diane stated, 'Your mission is to offer a program for busy working adults.' Sandra was more specific saying,

> Well, it's definitely individualized education. . . . So, yes, uh, I think the mission is utilizing individual education and using commonality in networking and relationship between the teachers and the students.

Linda added another layer, 'I think the mission is . . . it makes the person much more aware of current events and surroundings, what's going on in the world today.'

In response to the question about the mission, Don leaned back in his chair and pointed to his shirt. 'I think Lindenwood do [sic] a wonderful job with this! I'm glad that it's here. You can see I have a Lindenwood T-shirt on. And I'll be in public. . . I'll be a walking billboard.' Don was excited to be in school and eager to share that experience with anyone.

Diane answered the same question stating, 'Absolutely! Contributing citizens to a global community? Yep, absolutely, that's what you provided for me.' She read the mission statement line-by-line, interjecting short comments.

> Focusing on talents and interests of the future of students? I think that happened a lot, [laughed] not all the time. I do think it happened a lot . . . promoting ethical lifestyles and developing adaptive thinking and problem solving skills? Oh, my goodness yes! That's critical thinking! Oh man, the program really pushes you to do that!

While Diane was the only student who covered the mission statement so meticulously, she was not alone in her affirmation that the program and its mission were congruent.

Laura mentioned the general education courses as 'providing a sound core in the liberal arts.' She specifically mentioned the Humanities class as well.

> I think they do a very good job . . . providing a sound core in the liberal arts . . . I have really enjoyed those classes. . . The Humanities! I had [adjunct's name] . . . I think she was just awesome! And it, just uhm, opened up a whole lot of things that you just don't think of in your day to day life.

That students had shifted from resenting the general education clusters to endorsing them suggested the program was successful in meeting the needs of students and with its stated mission.

The three faculty members were familiar with the mission statement and responded directly to the statement, rather than first to their understanding and second to the actual statement. Dave, former program administrator, brought up the importance of educating the whole person. Specifically, he said the mission was 'to educate our students both in the area of concentration . . . also in the liberal arts to make them a well-rounded student that lives the knowledge that practices what we teach.' He added, 'They can take everything that they learn at night when those light bulbs go on and illuminate as they go forward in their career.'

Scott, who had been with LCIE as long as Dave, also spoke of the total student, stating,

> [the] mission of Lindenwood is to create a global community . . . [with the ability] to communicate well . . . We teach them to write, to think, to talk. And those are things that they need to do out in the real world.

From that point, he focused on the need to teach students to write well rather than to focus on content area. He spoke of the importance of critical thinking learned through writing, 'It's a lifelong endeavor.' That endeavor, creating a lifelong learner with critical thinking and communication skills, was the core of the mission, according to Scott.

Interview question 4: How was your learning assessed? Most of the participants offered simple answers to both the fourth and fifth interview questions. Papers, tests, and group work were mentioned most often. As Laura said it was a 'typical school routine.' Sandra remembered 'a lot of quizzes.'

The only exception was the topic of group assignments. The participants uniformly disliked them. They repeatedly raised the concern that it added another obligation, and thus raised the time they had to commit to their homework. Diane listed group work as one of the greatest weaknesses of the program. For her, it was not just the additional time commitment but also the lack of direction from the instructor. She stated,

> Because the program is so rigorous, with working and taking classes, I didn't have time to get together with others in the group . . . You cannot pull together

> aah, a presentation of my standards without coming together at least once outside of class.

In addition, she stated, 'I certainly don't feel that . . . [instructors] were able to monitor group dynamics.'

Paula mentioned group assignments, but only as they related to assessment. She stated, as noted earlier, that working with younger students actually kept her on her toes, giving her the opportunity to lead from her maturity at the same time she learned from the younger students' technological expertise. Overall, Paula raised few concerns about the program. She felt it met her needs, and any concerns about the program.

Rigor was an important topic as participants mentioned the rigor of the program to varying degrees when they discussed assessment practices. Diane disagreed with Rhonda about the rigor of the program, but felt that she created much of the pressure herself. She did say of one instructor that, 'he pushed us way too hard.' Conversely, she credited that instructor with providing the most productive feedback, a key component for adult learning. She stated, 'He read my work! Now, all the assessment tests in the world didn't help me as much as this. I value feedback.'

Sandra also disagreed with Rhonda about the rigor of the program. Speaking specifically of the accounting and finance courses she said, 'Sometimes it can be overwhelming . . . I don't know. Sometimes it was really difficult.' She also noted the teachers seemed to struggle with the curriculum, trying to cover the material in 12 weeks, suggesting that the course load was equally heavy for instructors to prepare and present in such a short time period.

Disagreeing with the student participants, one of the instructors voiced the importance of assigning group work. Scott stated, 'I think the interaction where you can work in groups to help each other, I think that's good. I think that's excellent.' He believed that format gave the students the best exposure to real world application of the material.

The other instructors were also more aware of the role of assessment than the students. Dave talked about the Writing-Across-the-Curriculum program adopted by the entire university. He used "an impromptu writing assignment, and that showed whether or not you really got it.' He also noted that program directors developed learning objectives in the 1990's that were adapted as the courses evolved.

Because of his long tenure in the program, Dave discussed the shift from a writing intensive format to a 'skills assessment inventory . . . which was a fancy term for open-note or open-book test.' As the student participants stated, the program now [at the time of the study] included traditional tests and quizzes in its assessment practices. Dave stated that he 'hated to use the word test.' He preferred the program as a writing intensive program, believing that writing 'like everything else, it's a skill and if you don't use it on a regular basis . . . you can diminish that skill.' He did note, "We still use the writing,' but it was not the primary assessment tool in LCIE.

Jim said the key to good assessment was difficult, because true learning required synthesis of the material, but he noted, 'It's hard to see what they synthesize if they can't write so you understand it.' He thought students did not understand their deficiencies in basic skills, which made higher learning even more difficult. Both Jim and Scott echoed one of the students noting that feedback was the key to good assessment. Scott stated that students must understand the grades they received, and the only way to insure that understanding was through feedback.

Interview question 5: Was the assessment reliable/accurate? Interviewees were split about whether assessment practices were reliable, accurate, or adult learner compatible. Many of the answers included references to rigor in regards to other students earning better grades than what they may have deserved.

Don commented on his own grades, feeling that he needed to work harder, as well as raising concerns that students might have earned grades they did not deserve. Don noted that he ‘would see papers passed by, and I would see the A’s. And I would . . . just feel like I had to do it for me.’ He also mentioned a specific teacher who would write directive comments that helped him improve his writing. For example, the instructor wrote, ‘It wouldn’t just be like, ‘good job.’ It would be like ‘strong focus’ or you know, ‘sharp’ here . . . ‘solid research.’

Jeff’s comments about assessment paralleled his other observations of the program. He felt that more of the assessment should have focused ‘on hands-on practical application.’ As an IT major, be believed that a student could answer questions about computer processes without having the skills to successfully complete those processes.

Many brought up instructors and their roles in assessment. Jeff focused on his core instructors, praising them despite being somewhat frustrated with what he considered to be a theoretical approach to information technology. He stated that he ‘has a love/hate relationship with LCIE . . . the teachers, I believe, you all do an excellent job of picking them. They’re very knowledgeable in their field.’ But, he still felt that the program should provide a more vocationally based curriculum.

Sandra echoed Jeff's sentiment concerning the qualifications and preparedness of the instructors. Speaking of a specific instructor she said, 'He has businesses outside. . . he would show us things that he did personally that would relate to what we were learning in class.' Both Jeff and Sandra confirmed that adults appreciated instructors with real world experience. As a human resource management major, Sandra did not share Jeff's concerns about the applicability of the information that she learned in class.

Laura also mentioned a specific instructor, noting that she felt the teacher was unfair in general. She said she saw classmates from that class, and they responded, 'I remember you from that class, and they kind of roll their eyes and we're glad we got through it.' She said it 'was just in the way that the teacher presented it.' She did not provide a specific example of unfairness, but felt that the teacher 'made people feel more intimidated and uncomfortable' which affected their ability to understand and to complete the work.

Sandra's comment about open-book tests summed up the comments about assessment.

> It's even more difficult, and it is open book, and it's so hard, and what I mean with that . . . you're not assessing me, you're assessing what I can draw from the book, but I guess that's assessing me to determine what I can interpret from the readings overall.

This reinforced Jim's statement that students do not always understand the assessment process.

In answer to the preceding question (How do you assess?), Scott added a response that better answered this question. He questioned whether any assessment can be truly objective, but felt that feedback improved that possibility of objectivity and understanding. Jim shared his skepticism about the reliability of assessment. He said that the best approach was to 'give multiple assessments . . . [to] get a general impression of how people do.'

Dave shared Jim's opinion that good writing was the key to reliable assessment. He noted that LCIE had always relied on student writing to assess student learning. He stated, 'If they know how to write, they can pretty much do anything.' He conceded that writing assessments were more subjective, but basic skills were essential. Combining writing assessments with more objective assessments kept the program on course but tightened the question of reliability.

Interview question 6: Tell me about your experience in LCIE. This question produced responses that were applicable not only to the question posed, but to others as well. The most interesting answers involved specific clusters and instructors**.** Maria brought up a couple who had been teaching in the program for over 20 years. She was happy to see they are still teaching, because she felt that they made a difference in her LCIE experience. She was surprised they remembered her after her 10 years away.

Participant responses concerning the Humanities Cluster, which included literature, philosophy, and art, exemplified a point where mission and practice intersected. Ironically, this was a cluster many students initially considered a superfluous general education requirement, as opposed to a more vocationally related core cluster. Speaking of the Humanities Cluster, Don said,

> When I first heard that class, it was something like, 'that's gonna' be a hard class!' but . . . just going to that class, I look at art different. Like now, I look at

> art as, my favorite artist is Michelangelo . . . Man, I'm goin' to Rome one day! . . . The way that [the instructor] put it together, he did a good job!

Paula made the same statement that she intends to go to Rome specifically to see the Sistine Chapel. She said, 'I never really thought about going to the art museum as being pleasurable. Now I look forward to going to the art museum . . . It's changed my life and the way I look at art.' Paula and Don both took the Humanities Cluster from the same instructor although during different terms.

Laura also noted another class she particularly enjoyed and which she said changed some of her views. At the time of the study, the natural science cluster used a textbook that contained opposing viewpoints. Laura said,

> We had to present our side of the story . . . and we had to debate . . . that was one class, cluster, that I wish I had purchased all three of my books instead of renting them. Even the environmental issues was an awesome, awesome book.

Diane said, 'And I was in the program for probably three, two clusters, before I went, 'wait a minute! What is this program? This is fun! I'm really appreciating this, but what have I gotten myself into?'' She noted she was often overwhelmed, and considered transferring to another university, but 'no other school comes close to touching the uniqueness of what the LCIE program offers.'

Don was also effusive in response to this question stating, 'I love this experience.' He said it was well designed for adults with work and family. 'You just come in and . . . do your work, explain what you have to do, and that's it.' Also in response to this question, Laura noted that aside from her first cluster, she was very happy with the program. She said, 'I have had some excellent teachers that I've really learned a lot from.' Paula said, 'The LCIE program was challenging.' When asked if that was a positive or a negative statement, she replied, 'Yes, it challenged me to open my mind, to learn things, to relearn things, to get myself in a place where I could rearrange my time so I could do my homework.'

Sandra also felt the program was challenging, but she also discussed the importance of meeting people in the program. 'It was an experience just going back to school . . . of networking with different people from different walks of life.' She mentioned that she made many friends with whom she would schedule classes so that they could support each other through the program.

Rhonda was generally unhappy about her experience in the program. She said that many of the instructors 'don't actually know their material as well as some of the students that were here.' She labeled one instructor as 'worthless,' dropping the class and retaking it with another instructor at another site. She said the second instructor 'was nice and everything, but she didn't know the material.' She also believed that several of her courses were 'useless' and her children were learning the same material in high school. She said, 'If you can do basic literature, you shouldn't have to take it again.' She also was unhappy with the business office. She felt that she had been overcharged for a course she had dropped.

Dave, with his many years of experience in LCIE, commented primarily on his changing roles in LCIE. He noted that the position of director of LCIE required that he balance multiple roles. At the time of the study, he had narrowed the role to overseer of the program at large, as he had handed off the position of Program Director of Business, and no longer taught classes. He emphasized the administrative focus of the position, attending meetings, meeting deadlines, delegating, and completing paperwork.

Scott was also with LCIE for many years. He stated, 'I learned to change with the students.' He felt he had improved his own skills by adding technology, adopting backward design in his class preparation, and updating the material to remain relevant. Jim said that asking about his experience in LCIE was, 'a little bit like asking, 'American History is filled with changes; please explain!' He did talk about his adjustment to the accelerated program, and how different it was for him.

Interview question 7: What do you consider the greatest strengths of LCIE? Rhonda agreed the program design was a strength of the program, but at the same time she felt cheated in the education she received. She stated, 'these nine credit hour classes, they really seem like three credit hour classes.' Rhonda's responses do raise the question of whether the accelerated format does sacrifice rigor.

Most of the responses, however, followed the same themes. The format was mentioned most often as the LCIE's greatest strength. One meeting per week, the ability to earn nine credit hours, and small class sizes were all repeated as program strengths. The format was designed specifically to address one of the primary requirements of adult students, convenience.

Maria, Diane, Paula, and Jeff all noted the ability to attend class one night a week as the best feature. Diane said, 'to be able to come to class one night a week.' Jeff said, 'The fact that you get the classes you need one night a week.' Paula specifically stated, 'It's available to working adults.' She also noted at another point in the interview that the same format should be offered during the day for shift workers or people whose children could be in school, thus negating the need for childcare.

Don said, ‘The greatest strength is it’s a not big class. It’s just a mini-sized class . . . and you get to connect with that teacher.’ Sandra agreed stating, ‘Just being such small class size, I mean right away, your teacher can look up and know if you’re . . . participating or not.’ This echoes what other students said about the ability to create relationships with instructors and other students. While they may not have listed that aspect as the greatest strength, it was mentioned by others.

Laura mentioned cluster design as an element of the format she considered LCIE’s greatest strength. Laura said,

> I would say I like the cluster program because you can do the three classes that are linked together. I think you benefit from having three courses together because they interrelate with each other.

Several students felt that the overlap actually made the program more difficult, impeding rather than enhancing student learning. Those references were mostly toward the humanities, math/statistics, and accounting clusters.

While Rhonda believed LCIE’s greatest strength was the ability for students to earn 36 credits in 12 months, she also believed the cluster format was the source for a good part of what was wrong with the program. She said, ‘I gotta be honest, with the classes that I’ve taken here, three nine credit hour classes, they really seem like three credit hour classes.’ She did not feel she was challenged, and she felt unprepared students were getting by. She also believed that the cluster format meant that some courses were inadequately assessed. ‘Well, there are sometimes at which, for the entire class, it's like one paper. And you know, if you get a D on that paper . . . that's your entire grade whatever it is.'

Jim identified one of the greatest strengths of LCIE as 'the faculty concern for the student.' He believed that in an accelerated program, it was challenging 'to get time to do everything you want and to keep organized,' but this difficulty was ameliorated somewhat by the faculty-student relationship. Scott's answer conflicted with responses from several of the students. He believed the opportunity for group work and collaboration was the greatest strength. He also believed having practitioners teach the courses strengthened the instruction the students received. He felt the, 'student learns what's really out there.'

Dave's first response to this question was, 'the commitment of the students.' He felt that the commitment had shifted a bit with the enrollment of younger students, but he still felt the students made the program what it was, and the commitment they brought made it a strong program. He also mentioned the faculty-student relationship as integral to the success of the program. As students changed, he believed the faculty advisor role became more important, because students were not as established in their careers and thus needed more direction.

Interview question 8: What do you consider the greatest weaknesses of LCIE? As already mentioned, some of the strengths of the programs were also counted as possible weaknesses, although Maria, who had been away from the program longer than any of the other interviewees could not identify any weakness in the program.

> It was a strong program. So I, I don't really feel that there was a weakness. I felt like I got good teaching, a good learning experience from the faculty . . . I don't

> know if could say, oh I hated this class . . . I don't' know what the program's like [now], but back then it was a very strong program, and I absolutely was thrilled that I was able to complete it.

She did not need to state that she was proud of her degree. Her enthusiasm for the program was evident in all of her responses.

One weakness was noted by Jeff, an information technology major, who questioned whether the focus on theory was useful to an undergraduate student. He hoped for practical applications rather than theoretical concepts. He researched other area programs and felt that the local community colleges provided more hands-on curriculum. He specifically brought up the Project Management Cluster noting, 'Project managers have no idea what we do, so why do we really know what they do?' He was looking for more training in specific computer languages or computer training. 'That's why I said that maybe by teaching or offering a wider variety of IT classes it gives people the opportunity to spec, 'I'm a Java programmer' or 'here's my degree and certification and it's from Lindenwood University.' On the other hand, Jeff also noted the primary reason computer students pursued a degree was 'to prove that we know what we know.' He did believe his Lindenwood degree would provide that validation.

Rhonda was consistently negative concerning most of the aspects of her experience in LCIE. Instruction was no exception. She felt 'that they don't challenge anybody.' She was particularly outspoken about the Accounting Cluster, identifying both instructor and curriculum as combining to make the material overwhelming. She said,

> Literally, it was like a foreign language, and the way it was delivered! And she would scroll through it, and try to go back, and uh still the homework assignments that we would skip, and we would be really, really confused.

She did add a disclaimer, 'well, in the instructor's defense, I think it partially the curriculum.'

Rhonda also felt that she had not been challenged, 'I would say that the work is not hard . . . I would say that anybody with an IQ of 80 could do the work.' She was incredulous that classmates were unfamiliar with PowerPoint saying, 'My nine year old daughter for her school had to put together PowerPoint presentations.' She did note that perhaps she was better prepared than some of her classmates. Rhonda had been home-schooled before entering college and transferred an associate's degree to Lindenwood.

Sandra also transferred credits to LU, but disagreed with Rhonda's assessment of the rigor of the program. She identified the rigor as one of the weaknesses of the program, but from the opposite angle. 'Well, the greatest weakness would be, although that is the program, like, just the difficulty of some of the clusters . . . sometimes it can be extremely overwhelming.' As other students noted, the accounting cluster was particularly difficult. Speaking of the accounting cluster, Sandra said, 'I think that sometimes just the amount of information that had to be compacted was so difficult.'

Not surprisingly, Rhonda was vociferous in her dislike of group work stating, 'That was something that irritates the hell out of me, group work! Let me stand or fall on my own credentials.' She raised the same point about instructor preparation and oversight raised by Diane. Instructors, according to Rhonda, say, 'Oh, you have to do that in society.' Well, maybe so, but in society, there are bosses, and there are people making sure that you're pulling your own work!'

Dave was concerned about academic rigor. He said, 'I don't think that we focus on the importance of academia like we used to.' He worried that recruiting and graduating students was more important than the learning that the degree entailed, 'It's a shame, uh, when you consider the needs of the students and how important it is for them to learn. It sort of compromises the purpose of the program.'

He again brought up the age of the students saying, 'I just don't think some of the younger ones, they see the benefit of the credential; they don't see the benefit of the knowledge.' Scott agreed with Dave about the age of the student and its impact on the program. 'I don't think an eighteen year old would be successful in this program, because I don't think they're mature enough.' He added, 'Many of the students are older, and more mature, and they like to work on their own and at their own convenience.'

Paralleling his colleagues, Jim also brought up age and preparedness of the students as a weakness of the program. He stated,

> I think that we, in our effort to be as egalitarian as we can, we've probably let in too many people that are weak in writing, and I don't think, at this point in time, everybody is up to the task.

Returning to the original questions concerning congruence and meeting student needs, it is interesting to note the students involved in the study genuinely felt that despite the challenges, the program met their needs.

Interview question 9: Do you have any thoughts that you would like to add? This question prompted a variety of answers, although most of the interviewees referred back to an earlier comment as if to reinforce that idea. Jeff took the opportunity to complain about the lack of decent vending machines at all of the university sites. He believed that adding card readers to existing vending machines would be a small thing to improve student experiences.

He also suggested that students have more flexibility in class choices. He believed that adding certification opportunities to information technology curriculum would allow graduates to label themselves as specific programmers (JAVA for example). He said the program was too theoretical, ‘I expect more practical at the undergrad to really grasp the basics, and then it’s more the advanced theory, crafting and everything else.’

As Jeff had stated for an earlier question, he had hoped for more job-specific training that would help him find a job. Diane made a similar statement. She asked, ‘How [do] you use that? I don’t know. How it [class assignments] fit on your resume or something.’

Diane also mentioned the time commitment she made to the program. ‘I was so busy, what does this have to do with my life?’ She specifically brought up the math cluster, ‘I was drowning in stats. . . It was a nightmare, honestly!’ She noted the instructor, ‘worked hard every second of the time.’ She also mentioned the colloquium. She completed them all in the first quarters so she would be able to focus on her studies. She noted that students used class assignments to meet the colloquium requirement, which should not have been allowed.

Sandra talked about her faculty advisor. She said that she ‘heard horror stories’ about faculty advisors. ‘Whatever a faculty advisor is supposed to do, that’s what I received.' She also mentioned relationships with instructors who helped her through the program. 'So you get to build a relationship with the instructors, and in the future, I'd say, 'hey, you can vouch for me!'

Sandra also brought up facilities. She said that she was unaware of all of the resources available on campus until she attended class on the main campus. She said, 'The communication is kinda' lacking.' She felt she had missed being part of the campus community because she attended at two of the off-site locations. 'I just think my being in LCIE, and kinda' campus hoppers, and we don't realize that we're students and we get the same amount of everything that all the other students get too.'

Rhonda closed her interview with the same themes she had carried through every question. 'I've been very, very disappointed by the standards of Lindenwood.' She also agreed with Jeff that the program should be more vocationally oriented. She believed that Lindenwood, like the local community college 'really need to start weeding out those who can't do it.'

All three faculty members shared Rhonda's concerns about student preparation, but they saw that as a universal, rather than program specific issue. Dave said, 'The work ethic is not as strong as years ago. Accountability is not as strong as years ago.' He felt new requirements and adjustments for assessment were 'dumping' a lot of extra requirements on both students and faculty, making the situation more complex. That said, he felt, 'We just assumed that everyone was on the same page' and that accountability was confirming the good and providing information for making necessary changes.

Scott talked about the personnel and structural changes, suggesting that such were to be expected, and one had to adjust. He preferred the trimester format, which allowed additional time, and noted the extra time would be particularly useful with the changes in his discipline. In the end ‘I learned to change with the students.’ Jim emphasized the difference between education and training, and while students were pursuing an education to improve employability, he did not think the faculty advisor ‘role is to get people better jobs’ but, ‘hopefully, when we educate them, it will enable them to find better jobs.’

Secondary Research Findings

Many of the findings from these interviews were verified in a survey conducted by Coble (2013), LCIE Program Director for Marketing Clusters. Late spring, early summer of 2013, to collect student satisfaction data for accreditation purposes, Coble created and administered a survey of alumni and then-current students of the LCIE program, asking them about their experiences. Alumni (153) and then-current students (99) responded to the survey. An additional 12 people responded who were enrolled at the time of the study and had already earned at least one degree from Lindenwood University, and one respondent had left the university but had not earned a degree, bringing the total number of respondents to 265 Coble (2013). They represented graduating classes between 1977 and 2013. Many had more than one degree earned through the LCIE program. The majority were business majors, with human resource management majors as the second largest group.

The survey included questions about how valuable the respondents considered the education they received, whether the instructors were qualified and effective, and whether the course load was heavy. The survey also included questions about the facilities, the Saturday orientation, career networking opportunities, and alumni events. Responses to the first set of questions paralleled those of this study. The survey used a seven point Likert scale where 1 was ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 was ‘strongly agree.’

Coble (2013) found the majority of respondents believed the education they received was valuable and helped their careers. Then-current students were more likely to agree with the statement, ‘I consider my LCIE education to be worth the effort it took.’ Undergraduate students also agreed their instructors were qualified and effective. Graduate students did not agree with the final statement; which while important to the findings of Coble’s survey, was not relevant to this study.

The comments made by respondents to Coble’s (2013) survey mirrored many of the statements made by participants of this study. For example, while several students said it was important to, ‘keep the intensity’ of the course work or felt that, ‘it was well-balanced and appropriate for my degree,’ a few noted that LCIE needed to, ‘put the academic rigor back.’ One information technology major stated that LCIE needed to add, ‘more in depth work for information technology,’ which was the primary complaint of the information technology major interviewed for this study.

In response to the question of course load, one respondent to Coble’s (2013) commented that the course work was uneven.

> Consistency would be nice. I have had classes where there has been little to no homework and others where I have had to lock myself in a room every night to get it done.

This statement reflected the contradiction in responses from the participants interviewed for this study. Respondents to Coble's survey also made contradictory comments concerning the instructors, again mirroring the perceptions of participants of this study. One respondent stated that 'the instructor is organized' while another stated, 'much of the course work is busywork and unnecessary.'

The same limitations existed with Coble's (2013) survey that existed with this study. Only those students (and alumni) with strong feelings were likely to respond. Therefore, responses may be skewed. The survey also included responses from graduate students, which were not included in this discussion; however, that undergraduates were generally more satisfied with the program than were the graduate students strengthens the possibility that disgruntled undergraduates might have been as likely to respond as the satisfied students.

Emerging Themes

Three themes emerged from the interviews: general satisfaction with the program, the importance of job preparation and career mobility, and rigor. All of the participants, with one exception, valued the program and felt their investment was worthwhile. Whether participants referred to expectations that an LCIE education would improve employability, the applicability of course work to job duties, or the ability to network through education, the connection between education and vocation was a strong and often repeated theme. Students and faculty noted the importance of rigor to improve skill acquisition and to guarantee that the education would be respected by the community in general and employers in particular.

General satisfaction. The first theme was a generally positive response to the program and the education the students believed they received. While the responses did include negative comments, they were few and unique. Both faculty and student participants voiced the same or similar positive comments about their experiences in LCIE. The participants generally agreed the LCIE program offered a unique opportunity for them to earn or complete their degrees.

Two of the faculty participants were with LCIE for over 20 years each, which provided a historical view of the program. Both voiced some concerns about the program, but overall both were obviously committed to it and were positive about their experiences. Scott spoke of student responses to his classes. ‘I have students who will say, ‘Boy, you worked me hard; it was a tough class, but you taught me something.’ He also brought up a student who has published several books, ‘So, that’s exciting.’

The student participants mentioned everything from instructors, to convenience, to relationships. Sandra stated, ‘Overall, I had a wonderful experience in LCIE.’ One of her first comments was that all of her transfer credits were accepted. ‘I loved that my transcripts came in, and they counted! And that helped me move further along.’ Sandra also brought up the friends she had made, and the instructors, ‘Just different teaching styles was a great experience for me.’

In response to the question about the mission statement, Don stated, ‘I think Lindenwood does a wonderful job with this.’ He was wearing a Lindenwood T-shirt on the day of the interview and said, ‘I’ll be a walking billboard.’ He believed he needed to share his positive experiences with other potential students. In response to the same question, Laura replied, ‘I think they do a very good job. . . I think that you’re providing a sound core in the liberal arts.' Paula stated, 'They never thought it was possible [to go back to school] and now to do it. It's so exciting. It's life-changing.'

Table 8 provides a summary of key comments by both faculty and student participants, as related to the emerging theme of general satisfaction.

Table 8

Overview of Emerging Themes Responses: Theme 1

Emerging Theme 1: General Satisfaction		
	Interview Participant	Response
Faculty Participants	Jim	·Student comment: 'You worked me hard . . . but you taught me something'
Student Participants	Sandra	·Faculty is concerned with student progress. · 'Overall, I had a wonderful experience in LCIE.' ·Happy that transfer credits were accepted. ·Different instructor styles added to the positive experience.
	Don	· 'I think Lindenwood does a good job.' · [Wearing an LU T-Shirt] 'I'll be a walking billboard.'
	Laura	· 'I think they do a very good job . . . [especially] in the liberal arts.'
	Paula	·Students who didn't think school is possible are able to enroll. ·Enjoyed the age range of the students. 'They look at things differently.'
	Maria	· 'I loved what I did.' · 'I'm proud I'm an alum of Lindenwood.' ·Lindenwood, 'planted the seed . . . to continue education.'
	Diane	· 'I developed relationships with my instructors.'
	Jeff	·Tuition – 'standard university skill sets for the cost of a community college.'

All of Maria's comments were positive, 'I loved what I did. And I did love writing papers.' She 'loved discussing in class, and about the books, and about the message we got from the books we read.' Maria mentioned the Cross Cultural cluster and how much she enjoyed those courses, and her advisor and how helpful she had been. She concluded one answer with, 'I'm proud that I'm an alum of Lindenwood.' She also credits LCIE with planting, 'the seed that I wanted to continue my education.'

The importance of education for job preparation and career mobility. The second theme to emerge from the interviews was the importance of education for job preparation and career mobility. Most participants returned to school to improve their marketability, and with one exception, most felt that LCIE improved their skills and made them more marketable. Jeff, an information technology major, voiced concerns about his preparation, which may be attributed to the more vocational nature of that major, as opposed to general business or communications. He believed offering more certification preparation would make students more marketable. 'I think it would help enrich students.' Conversely, Maria, also an information technology major, credited her LU degree with furthering her career. Her LU degree, 'got me my first IT job.'

Diane, a communications major voiced a similar opinion. She stated that she initially struggled with how certain courses would help her vocationally. She visited the Career Services Office, and she said, 'I wish I would have had more guidance' when she chose her major. At the time of the study, she was applying for a new job, and she said, 'If I would have taken graphic arts, then I could come in and said, yes, I could start there.'

Dave said, 'We used to say, years ago, that we will teach you something in class tonight that you will use at your place of employment tomorrow.' He believed that while that was still somewhat true, with the influx of younger students, the truth diminished somewhat. 'A 20 year old doesn't have the wealth of knowledge in that classroom.' He was concerned that without the experiential knowledge brought to class, the class knowledge would be less relevant, and thus might affect final job search outcomes.

All of the student participants mentioned the importance of balancing work, family, and school. Linked to this issue is the topic of the LCIE format. That it is accelerated, meets one night a week, relies on small class sizes, and uses the Socratic Method, was often noted in the context of school/life balance. Students enrolled in LCIE specifically because they expected to be better able to achieve that balance through this format.

Paula's statement was typical. She appreciated the cluster format, 'It's available to working adults, because I didn't have four, five days to commit to going to school.' Laura enjoyed the cluster format, 'You can do the three classes that are linked together. . . All of the classes overlap.' Even Rhonda, who was generally dissatisfied with the program, praised the accelerated format, 'You can still get full-time 36 [credits] in a year, because you have the four clusters.'

Diane felt that the workload was overwhelming. She discussed the time she invested in the program, and in reference to group work, asked the question of how students with children managed it. The Math Cluster, in particular 'was a nightmare.' She added, though, that she recognized that she needed the course. She attended when the colloquium requirement was still in place and felt the colloquium requirement taxed her further. Again, by her own admission, she was not 'your normal student.' She took her coursework seriously, and set high standards for herself.

Table 9 provides a summary of key comments by both faculty and student participants, as related to the emerging theme of job preparation and job mobility.

Table 9

Overview of Emerging Themes Responses: Theme 2

Emerging Theme 2: Job Preparation and Job Mobility		
	Interview Participant	Response
Faculty Participants	Dave	·Originally the students 'learned today what they would use tomorrow.' Today, the age and experience of the student has changed that. · 'If you can't draw on the knowledge, you will never advance not matter how many credentials you have.'
Student Participants	Jeff	·Concerned that the IT program was not as vocationally centered as it could be. ·Recommended more IT certification options.
	Maria	·Conversely felt that her IT education was integral to achieving her goals.
	Diane	·Also concerned about vocational applicability of her education. ·Felt that additional career counseling would have improved applicability. · 'I was so busy! What does this have to do with my life?' · 'How do I fit this on my resume?'
	Don	'You get that one on one with the teacher.'
	Laura	· 'Opened up a whole lot of things that you just don't even really think about in your day to day life.'

Rigor. The final theme was two-tiered. Students and faculty cited the importance of rigor. For the most part, the consensus was that the program was rigorous. Again, the points at which the participants found it not to be rigorous varied from interview to interview. The discussion of rigor led back to the vocational aspect of the program. Those participants who questioned whether the program was rigorous also noted that lack of rigor would be detrimental to their vocational goals.

Diane mentioned critical thinking skills as part of the mission statement. ‘Yes, that program really pushes you to do that.’ Sandra said she ‘actually did work very, very hard.’ On the other side of the conversation, Rhonda consistently returned to her frustration with the lack of rigor in the program. ‘The standards of Lindenwood are really lacking. I think high schools have greater expectations.’

Several students mentioned the humanities cluster. Don said, ‘When I first heard [about] that class, it was something like that’s going to be a hard class.’ Paula mentioned the same class. Both said that the instructor inspired them to go to Rome someday to visit the Sistine Chapel. The math cluster was another cluster students labeled rigorous. Jeff noted that in the end, the instructor ‘really broke it down to where you could really understand it.’

All three faculty members brought up both the importance of writing, and the need to maintain rigorous standards for writing assignments. Dave noted that the first cluster, the communications cluster, was ‘the benchmark for continuation in the program.’ Students learn writing skills and move forward accordingly. He also worried that ‘younger ones [students] see the benefits of the credential; they don’t see the benefit of the knowledge.’ He went on to say, ‘If you can’t draw on the knowledge, you will never advance no matter how many credentials you have.’

Table 10 provides a summary of key comments by both faculty and student participants, as related to the emerging theme of program design and program rigor.

Table 10

Overview of Emerging Themes Responses: Theme 3

Emerging Theme 3: Program Design and Program Rigor		
	Interview Participant	Response
Faculty Participants	Dave	·The Communications Cluster was, 'the benchmark for continuation in the program.' ·Younger students may want the credential but not the knowledge.
Student Participants	Scott	·Speaking of the cluster: 'It's good the way we weave the different skills and different courses.' ·Cluster format allows for group work which is beneficial – student interaction. ·Weakness: 'Trying to squeeze everything into those 4 hours in 12 weeks.' · 'You have to keep your standards high.'
Student Participants	Paula	·Attending class one night a week made it possible for her to return to school. ·She noted the difficulty of the Humanities and Math Clusters.
	Laura	·She liked that, 'the courses were linked.'
	Rhonda	· 'You can get 36 credits in one year.' ·She also felt that rigor was lacking. 'I think high schools have greater expectations.' ·Students need to be better prepared before being admitted.
	Diane	·She was unsure how some students were able to balance school with family and work. ·She felt that the program, 'really pushes [critical thinking skills.'
	Sandra	·She stated she, 'actually did work very, very hard.' · 'Anytime you're making good grades, you feel positive.'
	Don	·He found Humanities particularly challenging.
	Jeff	·Noted that the math cluster was broken down, 'to where you really could understand it.' ·The greatest strength: Flexibility off classes.

Summary

When reviewed in isolation, the outcome measurements, measured by the ETS survey data, offered limited data for discussion. However, when reviewed in context with the process measurement outcomes, measured by student and faculty interviews, the data did provide information not provided through the interviews. The interviews, on the other hand, provided some insight into the attitudes of students and faculty involved with the LCIE program. Tables 8, 9, and 10 illustrate a summary overview of the emerging theme responses. The fact that the interviews complemented many of the findings from the external research conducted by Coble (2013), provided additional points of discussion for this study.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

Established in 1975, the LCIE program evolved to meet the needs of a changing group of students. While no longer as focused on individualized education, LCIE attempted to remain true to its mission to offer adults a meaningful and useful education. Narrative transcripts were replaced with a traditional grading system and academic transcripts. Writing remained central to the curriculum, but more objective evaluation tools were added. At the time of this study, classes still met one night per week, and students could still expect up to 20 hours of homework per week, but some of that homework might be completed online. Overall, despite program changes, the LCIE program continued to employ practices that fostered and/or supported contemporary adult learning theory and the mission statement reflected the program's root values, both on paper and in practice.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions and hypotheses focused on this evolution and whether the program reflected the mission statement. The program evaluation asked the following questions.

Main Research Question: How does LCIE, in its current incarnation, address the ideals of adult learning theory, the needs of busy contemporary adult students, and the requirements of the accrediting agency?

Sub-question #1: How have LCIE learning processes evolved since 1975?

Sub-question #2: Is there congruency between LCIE mission and practice?

The null hypothesis: The mean testing scores achieved in a sample population of LCIE students will not change between a pre-test administration and a post-test administration of the ETS Proficiency Profile.

Alternate hypothesis: A comparison of the pre- and post-test scores on the ETS Proficiency Profile will show an increase (considered valid if the difference between the pre- and post-test scores reflect a minimum improvement of 10%, as evidenced through a *t*-test).

Quantitative Outcome Measurement Results Discussion

The adoption of the ETS Proficiency Profile by LCIE administrators was a logical choice for assessment purposes. Because of the varied level of previous education and innate skills brought to the classroom by adult learners and the range of information covered by general education courses, measuring critical thinking skills provided a platform that could extend across the curriculum and produce valid outcome data. Unfortunately, the data were only as reliable as the effort put into the process by participants.

The findings of the ETS Proficiency Profile were not conclusive. The sample scores ranged from an improvement of 27 points, to a loss of 21 points. Five participants showed no change between pre and post-test. Figure 3 illustrates the frequency of distribution of the scores. The mean difference between pre and post-test scores was 19.42. Removing the outliers in the data set did not change the mean significantly.

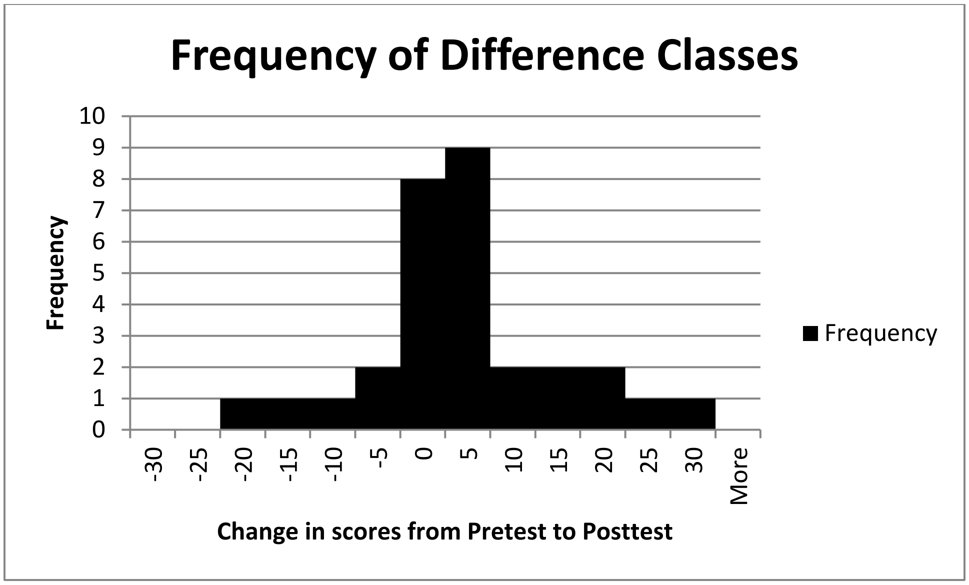

Figure 3. Frequency of differences between pre-test and post-test scores of the ETS Proficiency Profile. Used with permission of Lindenwood University (2013).

While the ETS Proficiency Profile could assess the student's ability to think critically about the general education curriculum without adding value judgments to the learning at hand, the scores were only reliable if the students took the survey seriously. McCollum (2011) stated, "Students are not likely to be intrinsically motivated to take - and perform well on - a test that has no consequence for them except to provide a minimally important extrinsic reward, such as a gift certificate" (p. 5). This was evident in the comparison of the sample of pre and post-test scores of the ETS Proficiency Profile evaluated in this study.

On the other hand, the HLC, one of the primary regional accrediting agencies, endorsed the practice of identifying student learning outcomes (SLOs) and then measuring the extent to which the student enrollment in the school achieved those outcomes. The LCIE Program identified critical thinking skills as a primary SLO for its general education courses. The ETS Proficiency Profile was chosen as a measurement of critical thinking skills. According to the ETS (2013) website "the ETS® Proficiency Profile test allows you to: gain a full perspective of the effectiveness of your general education program to meet requirements for accreditation and performance funding" (para. 9). Therefore, the Proficiency Profile was chosen to measure the effectiveness of the LCIE general education courses.

Reviewing comparisons based on demographic information of the participants also failed to show significant outcomes, with regard to improved scores between pre- and post-tests. Family, as in previous college attenders, race, or previous college experience failed to impact the score the participant earned. This may be evidence that the students were not taking the test seriously and the test results were random. Until the students can be convinced that the results might impact the standing of the program, and thus the value of their degrees, it is unlikely they will take the test seriously.

At the time of this writing, the ETS Proficiency Profile was one of several assessment tools used in the LCIE program for accreditation purposes and to determine possible venues for program improvement. The disparity between the pre- and post-test scores could also be attributed to the much lower numbers of participants. Those who scored lower on the pre-test may not have persisted through graduation. Because the early post-test participants were volunteers, those who were willing to participate may have been more motivated about their education overall. Scores from tested areas other than critical thinking may also have affected the overall scores negatively, thus cancelling out the improvement seen in the critical thinking section, as compared to the raw score for the total test. While differences were not statistically significant, the ETS scores did provide a platform to provide a focus on areas for improvement in the program.

As Brookhart (1999) noted, relying on one form of assessment may lead to an inaccurate conclusion, therefore adding the findings from the interviews to the findings from analysis of the ETS test data provided some validation, despite the lack of significance in analyzing differences in the pre- and post-tests. The interviews did allow for more personal interaction and the ability to reinforce the importance of the information for study purposes.

Qualitative/Process Measurement Results Discussion

The interviews provided a broader response than that provided by the quantitative portion of the study and in most ways a more positive response than the outcome measures provided. The 11 participants, eight students, and three faculty members, were willing and eager to answer the interview questions and had strong opinions about the LCIE program and their experiences with it. The findings from these interviews were supported by an independent survey completed as part of an assessment process by Coble (2013), a program director in the LCIE Program.

When it was first established, LCIE strove to focus on the individual's learning needs. Contract degrees were possible, transcripts were narrative rather than traditional, and classes were taught as seminars with small enrollments and an emphasis on prior learning experiences. Many of those core values remained with small class sizes, the availability of an assigned faculty advisor, course credit available for work experience, and the use of the Socratic Method, even as the program adopted more traditional assessments.

In 1963, Liveright and DeCrow predicted that ease of access would drive adult-focused programs. Even they might be surprised at the extent to which that prediction developed. The growth in online offerings, and the variety of disciplines and formats, created a thriving market for the adult student. While the interviews confirmed that LCIE's design was attractive to working adults, and accounted for the continued growth in the program, the program's longevity could also be attributed, in part, to St. Charles' proximity to the greater St. Louis metropolitan area. St. Charles County was one of the fastest growing counties in the state for the twenty years previous to this writing. While St. Louis lost some of its population during that same period, few of the other institutions offered accelerated programs at the same completion pace as the LCIE program.

Three themes emerged from the participant interviews—general satisfaction, job preparation and career mobility, and rigor. General satisfaction with the program was evidenced in a variety of ways, ranging from convenience to the relationships that participants developed. Job preparation and career mobility was a second theme. Most of the student participants entered the program to broaden their employment opportunities. All of the interview participants discussed the program design and rigor, both separately and as linked topics. The ability to earn a degree while attending one night per week was a major driver in their program selections. In that same context, the rigor of the program arose as both a concern and an asset. The accelerated format insured, to some extent, a certain level of rigor simply because of the abbreviated time frame. At the same time, participants worried they might have been slighted because of the compressed time. They worried they would not have enough time to cover and comprehend nine credit hours. The emerging themes and their alignment with the research literature are discussed in the following sections.

General satisfaction. One of the greatest concerns of adult students was the ability to balance home, work, and personal life, and this was a recurring topic in the interviews as students described positive and negative experiences in LCIE. Hiemstra (1976) confirmed that education was most successful for those students who were able to integrate education with the rest of their lives. The ability to attend classes one night per week and to study material relevant to their career goals was a primary theme in the responses to the interview questions. Student satisfaction with the program was apparent in all areas of their discussions. They liked the format. They felt the instructors were engaged and interested in their progress. They liked the curriculum. They felt they were gaining useful knowledge. They also gained a sense of accomplishment as they progressed through the program.

As previously stated, this satisfaction may reflect that the participants volunteered for the interviews. Only one of the students was not satisfied, and most of her dissatisfaction stemmed from what she perceived as a lack of rigor and the lack of preparation of some of her peers. She still identified at least one instructor who challenged her. She also noted that the program was well-designed for the working adult.

Job preparation and career mobility. All of the students who participated in the interviews matriculated into the program to improve their employability. Few adults had the luxury of pursuing an education for the sake of learning. The participants spoke of that learning, but the motivating purpose for returning to school was to pursue better career opportunities. The lone dissenter in the group raised the concern that her degree would not be valued. Another student was intentional about working with the Career

Services Office at the university, so the courses she completed would enhance her employability.

The need for relevance of the learning is one of the assumptions of the adult learner (Knowles, 1984). The importance of job preparation and career improvement was a recurring theme in the participant interviews. As stated in multiple studies, adult learners pursue education with specific goals in mind, the primary reason being to better themselves personally or vocationally. This is one point at which the responses diverged for several of the students. While all agreed that the mission was to educate and improve the student's lives, the students were more likely to value the ability to apply what they learned. The faculty, on the other hand, embraced a more abstract view of the value of the education in contrast to the students, who generally considered the vocational outcomes of their education. If the program did not prepare the participant for the workplace, the education would be wasted, according to faculty perceptions.

Student Jeff's specific frustrations with the sometimes missing link between curriculum and vocational application aligned with Knowles (1984), who made the assumption that adult learners sought immediacy of application. Jeff was not happy with the emphasis on theory over practice. As an information technology major, he may have felt that gap more than some students, but even a business major studying accounting might share this feeling. However, none of the other participants expressed that sentiment. Again, it is important for adults to experience education as meaningful and thus worthy of their time.

Rigor. In tandem with job preparation and career mobility, earning a degree from an institution not considered rigorous was a concern raised by one student. She felt it would negatively affect her marketability. For the most part, even those who were concerned about rigor felt their degrees would be worth the time and money they spent. Most of the interview participants brought up specific classes they felt were challenging.

The rigor of the program came up as both a positive and a negative component of the program. Many of the comments were situational. For example, content-laden courses were uniformly brought up as difficult and time consuming. As another example, Sandra noted that the accounting cluster was overwhelming. It could be the case that the accelerated program, offering nine-credit-hour clusters held one night per week, while appearing to meet student needs on the surface, was possibly creating a homework load that was not achievable, given the constraints the modern adult brings to the classroom. Another possibility, raised by accrediting agencies and opponents of such programs, was that the coursework was watered down to the point that the program was not delivering what it claimed. Rhonda was not happy that while she did not feel challenged, she was not allowed to enroll in two clusters simultaneously. She stated,

> Why do they penalize you for doing that? Because nobody can take eighteen credit hours in that short of time. But you know, I know, the whole world over knows, that this isn't nine credit hours' worth of work. This is maybe four.

She inadvertently raised an interesting question about meeting the needs of the adult student. Should the student be allowed to enroll in more credits if she is capable of successfully completing the overload?

Most of the participants agreed the accelerated format of the program insured rigor. They believed earning nine credits in 12 weeks necessitated a heavy homework load. Conversely, the participant who disagreed about the rigor believed the curriculum was watered down to fit the accelerated format. One of Liveright and DeCrow's (1963) several prerequisites for accelerated program success, which included rigor, was that administration must truly support the program ideologically and financially, with an understanding of the students it served. The LCIE accelerated program seemed to fit this particular Liveright and DeCrow (1963) prerequisite for program success.

Answering the Research Questions

Applying a mixed-method approach to answer the research questions provided a balanced platform for comparison of collected data. The findings from the quantitative data did not indicate significant differences, but did point to areas for further study. The qualitative data were more informative but may was possibly affected by potentially leading interview questions and a volunteer pool that was possibly predisposed to positive views of the program.

Main Research Question: How does LCIE, in its current incarnation, address the ideals of adult learning theory, the needs of busy contemporary adult students, and the requirements of the accrediting agency? Although not officially stated, the LCIE format mirrored the three rings identified by Knowles et al. (1998) required to properly employ andragogical principles: "goals and purposes for learning; [recognition of] individual differences; and [application of] andragogy: core adult learning principles" (p. 181). Students were still encouraged to identify individual goals, the curriculum relied on the experiences the students brought to the classroom, and faculty were encouraged to consider adult learning principles as they developed coursework. That LCIE was meeting these goals at the time of the study, as most of the interviewees cited the format and their expectation that the degree would further their careers as the primary drivers for enrollment.

While the primary design (for example, classes scheduled one night per week) remained the same, other changes were made that might not be as adult-learning centered as the original program intended. One of the changes the program made in the few years previous to this study was dropping the colloquium requirement. The colloquium was a means of integrating a student's educational and social life. This change could be identified as both in-keeping with and departing from adult learning theory. The colloquium was originally included in the curriculum for two reasons. The first was it promoted the habit of lifelong learning, and the second was it increased the perceived instructional time for an accelerated program.

Students were expected to complete the colloquium as an out-of-class learning experience during every quarter they were enrolled. The requirement reinforced the idea of self-directedness and lifelong learning. The colloquium was dropped, not for academic reasons, but because it was no longer required to meet the minimum number of contact hours for accreditation purposes. Opponents of the colloquium argued that many students were choosing activities that barely qualified as educational, and a few were actually fabricating the short descriptions of activities they pretended to attend. It is fair to consider this a pragmatic improvement. For many students, it was a burden to add a requirement to their coursework. Even so, for many students the colloquium established a habit of attending educational events not only for themselves, but for their spouses and children. Few things exemplified the spirit of transformative learning as did the colloquium requirement.

This habit, lifelong learning outside of the classroom, was discussed by a variety of theorists, such as Cross (1981), Houle (1996) and Knowles (1984). Hiemstra (1976) considered the concept of lifelong learning through the many settings in which it was offered. Agreeing with many peers and predecessors, he noted it was impossible "to describe the adult learner in specific terms" (p. 32). The learners and the contexts within which they learned were too numerous to cover exhaustively. Some of those contexts included: traditional settings, continuing education, community-level education, and informal education. Hiemstra considered all types of learning as part of the lifelong learning process, emphasizing lifelong learning as key to an adult education program. Hiemstra would undoubtedly have endorsed the colloquium requirement, but he most likely would have been equally supportive of the variety of learning contexts offered through the LCIE format.

Another point at which LCIE practice intersected adult learning theory was in small class size and the role of the faculty advisor. This point was particularly relevant to LCIE. Students were still required to meet with a faculty advisor during their first term of enrollment. Logically, students who desired more direction would continue to meet with the advisor until they felt secure enough to become self-directed. Merriam (1993) acknowledged the emphasis on self-directed learning, but noted, "Adults who know little or nothing about a topic benefit from teacher-directed instruction until they have enough knowledge to begin directing their own learning" (p. 8).

One of the strengths of the LCIE format was the importance of fostering collaborative relationships between student and instructor, and student and faculty advisor. Rachel (1994) noted, "The relationship between adult learner and facilitator or teacher is usually portrayed as a collaborative one" (p. 11). LCIE employed the Socratic Method as part of its foundation, which would exemplify the classroom to which Rachel (1994) referred. Instructors posed questions and students responded, often with other questions, which the group could pursue or reject based on the material and group interests. In the ideal group, students came to class prepared with questions and answers and the ability to direct discussion themselves.

As the LCIE program developed, faculty advisors became more directive as they helped students navigate enrollment and progression through the program. Many students relied on advisors to keep track of their enrollment and complete administrative tasks for them. With online enrollment, LCIE students seemed to divide into two groups: those who were truly self-directed and moved forward with limited oversight from a faculty advisor, and those who relied on the advisor for every step. While this study did not specifically track this evolution, interviews confirmed this shift. Because of the dichotomy between the truly autonomous and the truly self-directed, the topic remains a focus as LCIE continues to evolve.

Another component of the LCIE program that helped students matriculate more smoothly was the Communications Cluster, which was required and provided them with a safe environment to jump into the program with peers, but did not shackle them to a cohort that might restrict self-directedness. Merriam (1993) acknowledged the emphasis on self-directed learning, but also pointed out the importance of teaching students to direct their own learning through modeling, practice, and growth in self-confidence. The Communications Cluster, the initial cluster in which undergraduates enrolled, and the availability of a faculty advisor during their first terms of enrollment, promoted this self-directedness. Logically, students who desired more direction would continue to meet with the advisor until they felt secure enough to become self-directed.

While all of the student participants in this study identified the accelerated format as one of the reasons they chose the program, several noted the difficulty of squeezing nine credit hours into a 12-week quarter, attending one night per week. This presented one of the most difficult balances that programs for adults must achieve. The program must be deemed rigorous enough to be worthwhile, but not so rigorous that it became a burden because it was too challenging. An important value for adults is that the education be meaningful.

Assessment practices provided another area that determined whether LCIE met the needs of adult learners. As stated earlier, in its original design LCIE relied on writing, with limited formal testing. As the program evolved, testing became standard and writing, while still integral to the program, did not carry the focus it once did. While moving to more traditional assessment may not be in sync with the values of self-directed learning, many adults seemed to prefer clear expectations and outcomes that traditional (familiar) assessment practices offered.

General satisfaction was a dominant theme in the participant responses. Satisfaction with the program was easily linked to the six assumptions of adult learning theory; one might ask if the LCIE program addressed Knowles' (1984) six principles of adult learning. Those principles are, (a) the need to know, (b) the learner's self-concept, (c) the role of the learner's experience, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation to learning, (f) motivation (pp. 64-68). That the participants were generally satisfied with their experiences would suggest that the program was addressing Knowles' (1984) principles.

Alignment with adult learning principles was best illustrated by how the students described or defined themselves. Many students prefaced their responses with a description of who they were and what type of student they saw themselves to be. This was no surprise, because self-efficacy is a central concept for adult learners. For example, before answering the first question (Tell me about your experience?), Diane stated she was not a, ‘normal student.’ She felt she was ‘too hard on myself, and I push myself,’ suggesting her observations might not be accurate for the average student, that she put in more time and effort than her peers. She expanded on her self-identification as an overachiever when answering later questions.

Overall, it was clear that both groups, students and faculty, felt that Lindenwood and LCIE were achieving both the stated mission and the mission, as defined by the interviewees. Because the mission statement specifically stated the program will serve the adult learner if the program is achieving its goals, respondents unfamiliar with the mission statement should identify this as a core component. That they did suggests that the program was achieving its goals. It is also possible that students who selected the program would identify adult centeredness as a goal of any program that they chose. An important component of adult-centeredness was the recognition that students were working adults and the education must be vocationally relevant.

Participants brought up the importance of relationships. Several mentioned instructors, faculty advisors, and friends they made while students in the program. Sandra was most direct in her comments, noting she had enrolled in accounting with a friend with whom she could work on problems. She also mentioned an instructor with whom ‘you get to build a relationship’; an instructor who taught more than one course.

Sub-question #1: How have LCIE learning processes evolved since 1975? As noted in Chapter Four, this question produced very few responses. Most of the students felt they only experienced one program and could not comment on any changes made before or after they attended. The faculty members involved with LCIE had experienced the changes and had more to offer to the discussion.

One change already noted was the elimination of the colloquium. While faculty had mixed feelings about dropping the colloquium, students who mentioned it were relieved not to need that requirement. Don said, 'I'm glad it's not there anymore.' The one student who spoke positively of the colloquium completed all of them the first quarter, treating them as a chore to complete rather than an out of class experience that could enhance her learning each quarter. Thus, while the requirement was met, the point of the exercise was lost.

This question produced very little, if any, worthwhile data. Two of the faculty participants had positive and negative opinions about the changes in the program, but they agreed that the changes had been made, so the question was moot. The students were unable to identify changes and were unable to assess the positive or negative results of those changes.

Sub-question #2: Is there congruency between LCIE mission and practice? More important were the responses to the question of whether LCIE was achieving its mission. Maria answered emphatically, 'yes!' Don said, 'I think you guys are meeting those goals very well.' And, Jeff just answered, 'Yes,' without further elaboration. As with any mission statement, the goals were broad and optimistic; however, the uniform response to the question, both before and after reading the actual statement, speaks well of the program and how closely actions reflect intentions.

The positive responses to the question of whether LCIE's program was congruent with its mission could also be applied to whether the program was congruent with adult learning theory. If it were not congruent in both instances, students might not have been as effusive in their positive comments. While most of the interviewees had a few negative comments (which have been noted or will follow), most were very proud of the education they received or were engaged in.

Summing up the question of whether LCIE met the needs of adult learners and whether the program practices were congruent with its mission statement were the recurring responses that included the importance of relationships in the program. As stated in Chapter Four, participants noted relationships with other students, professors, and faculty advisors as important to their experiences in the LCIE program. This parallels the research findings. Kasworm (2003) referred to "the quasi-family relationships with fellow student learners" as being important for student success (p. 18). Sandra brought up the friends that she made through the program, noting, 'I made a friend, with whom I'm very good friends, and we're graduating together this weekend.' Along with the tangible outcome of a diploma, most of the participants brought up the connections they made while in the program.

Summary Discussion

When discussing nontraditional education, Gould (1972) stated, "Non-traditional study may be defined in simplest terms as a group of changing educational patterns caused by the changing needs and opportunities of society" (p. 1). This definition recognized that while most of the new programs were designed for the adult market, alternatives were created to address the changing needs of traditional students. Commuter students and the "expanded role of business and industry" were also changes that Gould (1972) expected as academia evolved in the post 1960s era (p. 4). LCIE in particular and Lindenwood University in general proved the prophetic nature of Gould's statement. LCIE continued to evolve to meet the needs of the changing population without sacrificing the core values with which it was established.

The review of the data from the ETS Proficiency Profile surveys failed to provide significant findings. That was not particularly surprising to the researcher. Prior researchers confirmed that without an incentive, students often do not take the testing seriously. The question assessment officers must ask is, are the data meaningful enough to continue using the test? Would a different instrument or technique provide more useful information? In addition to comparing the pre and post-test scores, assessment officers compared the Lindenwood scores with similar programs, which produced interesting data that may provide enough information to justify continued testing. The data does provide support for further study of program improvement.

The interviews, while subjective, did confirm, to some extent, the learning the ETS data were unable to conclusively confirm. For the most part, the students felt they gained through their experiences in LCIE. In retrospect, several questions could have been reworded. The question about change prompted instructive responses from the faculty participants and the student participants were unaware of the changes that preceded or followed their tenure in the program. A more useful question might have been to ask what changes they might recommend. The responses might not have been uniform, but they might have provided the program with further venues for improvement.

The other question that produced conflicting data from the student participants was, 'How was your learning assessed?' Initially, most of the students did not understand assessment, and once explained, limited most of their responses to grades. Only one spoke specifically about an instructor who provided feedback. A better question might have been one that was more specific. For example, asking how grades were figured or what processes instructors used to determine if the students had learned the material might have broadened the student responses.

A specific question about rigor might have provided another point for improvement in the program. The topic was discussed by several participants on both sides of the issue, several believing the program was too rigorous in some areas and not rigorous enough in others. While it can be argued that this particular question could be more subjective than the other questions asked because a student's sense of rigor relies on many external variables: preparedness, commitment to the education, expectations, and so forth, responses might have clarified for program developers areas on which to focus. These range from student recruitment (Is this program a good fit for this person?), to curriculum development (Is the curriculum parallel with the learning outcomes for this cluster?), and to adjunct training (Are the instructors consistent in expectations and assessment?). As Dave noted, however, the participant's success depends on the commitment he or she makes to his or her education. Asking specifically about rigor would tell the researcher as much about the participant as about the program.

Aside from these questions, the participants seemed to comprehend the focus of each question and provide instructive responses. The independent survey conducted by Coble (2013) produced similar responses to parallel questions in this study. This congruence gave credibility to the responses to both studies.

Rhonda voiced the most dissatisfaction with the program, but her experience as a home-schooled child may mean that she was more independent and self-assured about her knowledge than one of the older students might have been. As an information technology major, Jeff wanted more hands-on experience on the computer, but he was not unhappy with the program. He did note that people were surprised he was pursuing an IT degree from Lindenwood, implying that the university was not known for an IT program. His response to the question, Why did you choose Lindenwood?, matched his peers, convenience. It is reasonable to conclude that students choose the program for convenience and accept the level of education they receive. It is equally reasonable that once enrolled, students commit and gain the knowledge they expected to learn. Again, based on the interviews and Coble's (2013) findings, most students do felt that they received value from their experience.

Another change that none of the students discussed was the opportunity for online enrollment. As noted in the interviews, the relationships students built were important to most of the participants. The change to online enrollment supported adult learning theory. Students who wanted to retain a relationship with a faculty advisor could do so, and those who wanted the convenience (and self-directedness) of online enrollment enrolled themselves. While it is doubtful the mission was considered when this change was made, the shift could be supported with theory. Students may control the level of self-direction that they prefer.

Program evolution kept the LCIE program relevant as more high school graduates entered college directly after high school, as other adult-centered programs entered the market, and as online programs made education accessible to almost anyone wanting to pursue a college education. The key to continued relevance will be adherence to the program mission statement. Several of the program cornerstones were retained as much because of a particular interpretation of accreditation rules as because of an understanding to adult learning theory. The changes in the accreditation process freed administrators from some of those worries. That release reinforced the need to be true to the mission of the program, which must remain the driver for any future evolution.

Societal pressures will increase the need for college degrees, which will in turn increase the number of institutions that cater to adults. Relying on a historic foundation of delivering a strong education to adults will give LCIE an advantage over the newcomers to the field. Continuing to address the needs of new students and their employers while staying true to its foundation will insure that LCIE continues to thrive. Interviewing and involving prospective employers would have added a missing facet to this study and could add concrete information for the program to consider as it adjusts to changes in education and the marketplace.

Recommendations

The most important recommendation to emerge from the findings of this study is the need to continue honoring the mission statement of the program. This is the point at which the question about changes in the program provides illumination. If the students are unaware of the program changes and they accept the program at face value at the time that they are enrolled, then it is doubly important that program administrators consider all program changes in the context of the mission statement. And, if even a small number of students matriculate and accept the program as it is, making the most of the situation, then administrators and faculty must guarantee that the program remains academically sound.

The mission statement is broad enough to allow for changes in the program. The key is to ask the correct questions before any changes are made. For example, are changes being made for expediency's sake or because they will incorporate then-current adult learning theory? One recent example is the colloquium. Students may not have taken the assignment seriously, and from an administrative viewpoint, it was not necessary to meet accreditation requirements for student contact time. However, the out-of-class assignment incorporated classic adult learning theory practice. Attendance promoted lifelong learning habits and the written reflection reinforced critical thinking and writing skills. Rather than eliminating what had become a meaningless exercise for many students, perhaps a review could have improved, rather than removed the requirement.

Rigor must also be maintained. Students mentioned the challenge of the accelerated program and specific clusters, but they also noted the importance of attending and graduating from a program of which they could be proud. Writing skills must continue to be emphasized no matter how the program evolves. Faculty voiced the importance of writing skills not only in determining competence, but also as a universal indicator of an educated person.

Finally, the emphasis on relationships should be noted. Students felt the relationships they built with advisors, instructors, and other students helped them achieve their academic goals. Small class sizes and faculty advisor meetings ameliorated the ‘treadmill affect,’ as one student termed it, of the accelerated format. As adults balance home, work, and school, the knowledge that the instructor or advisor recognized their sacrifice and supported their efforts, made a difference in their progress. As adult-centered programs continue to proliferate, LCIE will have to evolve to compete in the market, but it is essential that it retain those qualities that set it apart from other programs. Online learning, new and relevant programs, and convenient learning centers will be ubiquitous, but a solid history of liberal arts education, a commitment to rigor, and a focus on the student as an individual will set LCIE apart.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions for Students and Alumni

General Questions

1. Tell me about your experience with LCIE.

2. What do you consider the greatest strengths of LCIE?

3. What do you consider the greatest weaknesses of LCIE?

4. In your own words, what is the mission of LCIE?

5. How well does LCIE achieve that mission?

Specific Interview Questions for Students/Alumni

1. Tell me about a positive Cluster experience.

   Why was it positive?

2. Tell me about a less than positive Cluster experience.

   Why was it less than positive?

3. How was your learning assessed?

4. Do you think the assessment was reliable/accurate?

5. What changes were made in the program during your enrollment in LCIE? How did those changes affect your experience in the program?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Faculty

General Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experience with LCIE.

2. What do you consider the greatest strengths of LCIE?

3. What do you consider the greatest weaknesses of LCIE?

4. In your own words, what is the mission of LCIE?

5. How well does LCIE achieve that mission?

Specific Interview Questions for Faculty

1. Tell me about a positive Cluster experience.

   Why was it positive?

2. Tell me about a less than positive Cluster experience.

   Why was it less than positive?

3. How was learning assessed?

4. Do you think the assessment was reliable/accurate?

5. What changes were made in the program during your tenure with LCIE? How did those changes affect the program?

Appendix C: Mission Statement - Lindenwood University

Lindenwood University offers values-centered programs leading to the development of the whole person–an educated, responsible citizen of a global community.

Lindenwood is committed to...

- providing an integrative liberal arts curriculum,
- offering professional and pre-professional degree programs,
- focusing on the talents, interests, and future of the student,
- supporting academic freedom and the unrestricted search for truth,
- affording cultural enrichment to the surrounding community,
- promoting ethical lifestyles,
- developing adaptive thinking and problem-solving skills,
- furthering lifelong learning.

Lindenwood is an independent, public-serving, liberal arts university that has a historical relationship with the Presbyterian Church and is firmly rooted in Judeo-Christian values. These values include belief in an ordered, purposeful universe, the dignity of work, the worth and integrity of the individual, the obligations and privileges of citizenship, and the primacy of the truth.

Mission of The College for Individualized Education (LCIE)

The mission of LCIE within Lindenwood University is in alignment with the mission of the University.

1. Using the Socratic method of learning,
2. Providing a sound core in the liberal arts,
3. Providing a structured, broad-brush approach in majors in business administration, communications, health management, human resource management, criminal justice, information technology, and fine arts in writing,
4. Preparing students to be competitive in an increasingly global marketplace,
5. Developing the student's analytical and communication skills, with emphasis placed on both written and oral communication,
6. Using a cluster format to serve the adult learner
7. Providing mentoring for every student,
8. Developing an appreciation of the importance of continuing growth and education with an emphasis on values-centered thinking.

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Vitae

Education

MFA, Lindenwood University, 2006.
Major: Creative Writing

M.Ed., University of Missouri - Columbia, 1990.
Major: Higher Education Administration

BA, Southwestern College, 1981.
Major: Elementary Education

Professional Positions

Lindenwood University

Program Director, Liberal Studies Major (July 2013 – Present)
Program Director, Communications Cluster (July 1999 - Present)
Professor of Humanities, Lindenwood University. (August 2012 - Present).
Associate Professor, Lindenwood University. (August 2000 - August 2012).
Assistant Professor of Humanities, Lindenwood University. (October 1998 - August 2000).
Director of International Student Services, Lindenwood University. (January 1996 - October 1998).
Director of Campus Life, Lindenwood University. (September 1, 1995 - January 1, 1996).

University of Kansas

Resident Manager, (July 1991 - September 1995).
Residence Hall Coordinator (August 1990 – July 1991)

Teaching

Teaching Experience

Lindenwood University

Communications Cluster ICM10100, ICM10200, ICM20000
Creative Writing Cluster ICM31000, ICM31200, ICM31300
Humanities Cluster IEN20100, IEN21100, IRT21000
Social Science Cluster IPS15500, IPY10000, ISC10200
MFA Cluster IMF 51500, IMF 51600, IMF 51700
English Composition I ENG15000
Intro to Digital Photography IRT 18200