

# Challenges facing the nontraditional female student

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



There are many challenges that come with a college education for a nontraditional female student. These hurdles can have a negative effect on a college student or be the catalyst that drives them to succeed. A college degree can be an attainable goal for the nontraditional college student by accepting the challenges that come and staying true to the goal ahead. The three articles that I will refer to are; "Inspiration from Home: Understanding Family as Key to Adult Women's Self-Investment", by Annemarie Vaccaro and Cheryl Lovell, "Good Times to Hard Times: An Examination of Adult Learners' Enrollment from 2004-2010." by Sara B. Kimmel, Kristena P. Gaylor, M. Ray Grubbs & J. Bryan Hayes, finally, "Nontraditional College Students: Assumptions, Perceptions and Directions for a Meaningful Academic Experience," by Lokia Scott and Chance Lewis. These studies describe both the positive and negative challenges faced by the nontraditional student. First, the positive points are: "[i]n studies comparing traditional-age and adult learners, older students outperform young women," and "adult women learners may experience a... different and more positive transformation than their...younger... counterparts" (162).

Then other positive impacts are the gratification of going to college which increased skills, self-respect and personal freedom. Also, they write, "[i]n a sense, family was key to women's inspiration to remain engaged in school. Earning a degree and.... family pride were strong motivators to invest in education. One way women were motivated by kin was the prospect of being the first person in their family to graduate from college"(168). These points are from the article, "Inspiration from Home" by Vaccaro and Lovell. In the Scott and Lewis article, "Nontraditional College..." found that "older learners

are highly goal-oriented and expect feedback on assignments from their instructors, are likely to be active participants in their college courses” and “that older students will be more engaged... persist longer, and even ask relevant questions when they are interested and motivated to learn about the subject” (2). Then there are negative challenges for the student as well. According to Hayes et al in their article “ Good Times...,” some barriers to adult learners returning to college include personal and family commitments, financial limitations and a fear of returning to school (20).

There have been numerous studies conducted with nontraditional age female students that state personal and work responsibilities are stressors that distract students. They purport that family and education are greedy institutions that are demanding of a woman’s time, attention and emotional strength. Also, it was found that many women do not have emotional support from family and receive not just negative reactions but downright hostility. There is a great chance that women will drop out of college because of the burdens that come with work, school and family (Vaccaro & Lovell 162). In the article “ Nontraditional College.. ” Scott & Lewis reference a study of college students over the age of 50 and they found “ students age fifty and older...lackresponsibilityandmotivationto study...compared to traditional students. ” There has been an argument that the aging brain will not be able to absorb and learn college level courses (2). Then the financial issue, “[f]irst generation students are more likely to come from poor, working-class, and lower-middle-class backgrounds...although juggling family and work was

extremely difficult, working-class women...realized there were no other options... women in this study worked full-time jobs" (Vaccaro & Lovell 168).

I concur that there are numerous positive and negative challenges confronting the female nontraditional student. The negative aspects are family demands interfering with the student's time to study, the work obligation that conflicts with their schedule, or adult women students don't have the motivation to do the necessary work assigned. Then there are financial ramifications of working a job while trying to attend college.

On the other hand, the positive findings are that these learners are highly motivated, goal oriented people that want to achieve their college degree and become the first in their family to graduate from college. All these are very real issues that the adult student faces but if the student accepts these challenges and stays true to the goal ahead, a college degree is attainable.