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HIGHER EDUCATION  
ADMINISTRATION

A STUDY OF SINGLE MOTHERS' EXPERIENCE OF PERSISTENCE  
AT A FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC UNIVERSITY (162 pp.)

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The overall purpose of this study was to uncover and describe the barriers that low-income, single mothers between the ages of 17-24 experience and the strategies they adopt in their efforts to persist through year one to year three of college at a four-year public university. Adult education scholarship has shed light on the obstacles to college enrollment and persistence for adult students. For example, Cross (1981) classified obstacles that have an impact on the persistence and retention of adult students under three categories: situational, institutional, and dispositional. Non-traditional age adult students are challenged by these barriers as they attempt to enroll and persist in college. Less well known is whether these barriers also pertain directly to single mothers who are traditional age students with adult responsibilities.

This study provided an examination of traditional age, first generation, low-income single mothers' persistence in college from entry to third year at a four-year public institution. In addition, the study examined multiple barriers and strategies concerning student's employment and residential status, relationships of students with parents, and academic/college preparedness. The qualitative inquiry method used in this study allowed for an examination of low-income first generation student and their persistence from year to year. Narrative analysis was utilized in this study to assist the

researcher in creating a written detail of the phenomena of single parents' persistence towards college completion and to investigate and identify barriers and support systems identified by single-parent students. The researcher employed a retelling of the struggles and strategies of the study participants as individual interviews were weaved together in the coding and discussion of the study.