

Kyle Price

Research Process

ANT 285 Ethnography

Fall 2009

Dr. Gina Hunter

Subject:

#1

Analysis
of a
University
Text

Topic: My Research Project

Author:

Kyle Price

Date: August 30, 2009 10:11 PM

I found this text by searching "non traditional student" on the Illinois State University web site. This page gives a definition of a non traditional student, and also gives some statistics about how many of these types of students attend the university. The site essentially says that an adult learner/ non traditional student is one that doesn't meet the definition of a traditional student. Although traditional students aren't defined, there is a list of several stipulations for qualifying as a non traditional student. In Norman Fairclough's "Assumptions" from *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* he discusses three main types of assumptions that can be found in texts. He states that "Implicitness is a pervasive property of texts". These three types are: existential, propositional, and value assumptions. The first of these types can be found in the University's web page defining non traditional students. The first sentence on the page makes an existential assumption. "Historically, an adult learner/non-traditional student is someone who is pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree, but who does not meet the definition of a "traditional" college student." By using the word "historically" the text not only establishes the existence of non traditional students, but that they have been defined in the same way for a significant period of time. I also thought it was interesting that non traditional students were also defined as "lifelong learners" who are over the age of 25. This seems to insinuate that students who continue through graduate school and on to Ph. D. programs are non traditional students as well (unless they finish before 25). The term "lifelong learner" is also a little vague.

http://www.ucollege.ilstu.edu/mentoring/adult_services/who.shtml

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Subject:

#2 My
research
question

Topic: My Research Project

Author:

Kyle
Price

Date: September 9, 2009 4:43 PM

What question(s) will your group try to answer? What interests do you have in the topic? What do you THINK you will find (what is the answer to your question—state this in some detail.) What are your ideas for how to go about it researching this question?

I think the first question we want to answer is how the university defines traditional students. The

non-traditional student website included many stipulations for being a non-traditional student, but never really defined a traditional student. I think traditional students would be between 18 and 22 and live in dorms and then off campus housing. I would like to know if a student who decided to live at home but lives in B/N is considered a traditional student. I'm pretty sure students that commute were included in the non-traditional definition. I think talking to people in admissions about their definition and also talking to several students about their definition would be useful. I would also like some statistics on students as well. (age, military status, and other stipulations listed in the non-traditional definition) The website has some stats, but they don't really make sense, and I would like to inquire about these as well. Another question I think should be addressed is how students defined by the university as non-traditional, see themselves in that way. To do this I would like survey or interview students (defined by the university as non-traditional) in order to gain their perspective. I think that many students that are defined by the university as non-traditional would probably not define themselves that way. I would also like to know if the university categorizes NTS into smaller sub groups. As a NTS myself, I don't feel like I fit in with other NTS simply because we are defined similarly by the university. I would also like to look more at the literature the university sends out to NTS and see what kind of functions are held. I would like to ask people who have attended functions for NTS what their thoughts are on these events. I would like to know if they gained anything from being grouped with other students by the university, or if they would rather seek out groups based on their own interests.

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Subject:

#3

Previous **Topic:** My Research Project
Student
Research

Author:

Kyle **Date:** September 9, 2009 11:44 PM
Price

<https://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/handle/2142/3498>

One major idea that was addressed in the paper I looked at was the difference between the way community colleges and universities treat students. Community colleges tend to offer more scheduling options for classes. These classes seem to be geared toward those who have responsibilities that come before school such as work. They offer classes at night, or online and have more times that required classes are offered. Another point mentioned was that ISU may even be discouraging NTS to go elsewhere. This is something I hadn't considered, mainly because I hadn't felt hostility from the university or had any problems myself. I have, of course, noticed the limited availability of class times, but have not had too many problems with it. The only major issue that I've had personally is the parking. (I'm guessing most people have this problem though) I've been late and even missed entire classes due to the lack of parking available to students. I'm not sure a lounge for NTS would really be feasible because there are already facilities at Bone that could be used. Also, what would distinguish a non-traditional lounge from a traditional student lounge? I agree that there need to be more places to spend time between classes though.

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Subject: #4 An
Observation

Topic: My Research Project

Author: Kyle Price **Date:** September 17, 2009 8:57 PM

I chose to observe from a seat near the vending machines on the 1st floor of Schroeder Hall. (technically the East side of the annex) I expected to observe many students passing through this area, and many students congregating near the seating area. I also expected to be able to identify a few non-traditional students based on appearance and possibly even by listening to conversation. However, I found this was much more difficult than expected.

I was seated, as I said, near the vending machines. I sat in the corner so I could have the best view. It was around 11:30am when I sat down and began observing. The area consists of 4 exits, two hallway entrances, one set of stairs, and one large classroom nearby. There was a group of students talking near me, but most of them looked young, and their conversation, from what I could tell, was mainly about roommate troubles and dorm life. This became a prominent theme in most people's conversations. Other topics included comparing test scores, and weekend plans. As I began to take notes, I immediately noticed a problem. Identifying a non-traditional student by observation only was proving to be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. I was expecting to see more "older looking" students, but this was not the case. In the half hour I was there, I only saw two people who looked older than the others, and they were both teachers. My next approach was to try to identify NTS by listening to the different conversations. This also didn't really give me much information except when I heard them specifically talking about dorm rooms which meant they weren't NTS. As I've mentioned, most discussion was about roommates, which doesn't exactly indicate a traditional student. Although I didn't expect to hear students talking specifically about being NTS, I did expect to find clues such as mention of family or a long commute home after classes. These clues were not present in the conversations that I could hear, which brings me to my next difficulty. I do not have hearing in my left ear. Although I am able to adapt to most situations, I found it difficult to "eavesdrop" on many of the people talking. Just hearing bits and pieces of the conversation made it difficult to pick up on what they were actually talking about. In spite of my inability to identify NTS through visual observation, or by listening to conversation, I still made some interesting notes. I noticed that almost every female student was wearing a "hoodie", while most male students only wore a t-shirt. (I wore a "hoodie") I also noted that there were only three students who used a vending machine. I see people using them all the time, and therefore expected to see several people using them during the course of my half-hour observation. Almost every student walking through or seated on the benches had a cellphone in hand. I noted one student's cell phone conversations that I found amusing. She received a call and replied very quickly that she was studying and didn't have time to talk. She proceeded to call someone else (I assume) and talk for several minutes about roommate troubles. Overall, if I had to strictly observe, I would try to find a place where NTS congregate, or a function held specifically for NTS rather than trying to pick them out of a crowd. I actually recently received an email about four upcoming NTS events.

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Subject: #5

Revised Research
Question/Research Plan **Topic:** My Research Project

Author: Kyle Price **Date:** September 17, 2009 10:30 PM

Our original research question remains the same. We need to initially find out how the university defines traditional students before we can truly define non-traditional students. There are three "coffee break" events planned this semester for NTS. These events would be excellent places to interview NTS, and the people from the university who organize these events.

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Subject: #13 **Topic:** My Research Project

Author: Kyle **Date:** October 12, 2009 3:59 PM
Price

"A Motivational Typology of Adult Learners" Barry R. Morstain and John C. Smart Source: The Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 48, No. 6 (Nov. - Dec., 1977), pp. 665-679 Published by: Ohio State University Press <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1979011>

This study was conducted to determine different reasons adult learners have for seeking an education. The authors conducted this study in response to two previous studies also trying to determine adult learners' reasons for participating in education. They wanted to try to determine adult learners' reasons by grouping them according to those reasons, rather than by their demographics, as the previous studies had done. The previous studies had gone to certain demographics, and then identified adult learners within the demographic, and finally determined their reason for seeking education as an adult. This article differs in that the authors surveyed a large group of adult learners at once, and then, from the survey, determined the reasons they wanted to learn. The survey consisted of several questions in which respondents rated each question on a 1-9 scale. The survey results were then fed into a NORMIX multivariate clustering program. The NORMIX program identified five groups in the surveys. Non-directed, social, stimulation seeking, life change, and career oriented were the five categories of reasons identified. After identifying these categories, the demographics within each category as well as the relationships were identified. There are several ideas presented in this study that could be relevant to the non-traditional student group project. Finding out why an adult learner seeks an education can be valuable in helping define what it means to be a non-traditional student. It can also be valuable to the university in determining the needs of NTS, and in providing those needs.

"Adult Students in Higher Education: Burden or Boon?" John T. E. Richardson and Estelle King Source: The Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 69, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb., 1998), pp. 65-88 Published by: Ohio State University Press <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2649182>

The point of this article was to show that adult learners will more often perform better in an educational setting in comparison to a young learner. The authors point out that most other studies assume that the adult learner will encounter problems, and that these problems are most likely caused by the aspects of their life that younger students do not have to deal with. This article argues that adult learners do not perform worse than traditional students, and that it should not be assumed that adult learners will encounter problems in pursuing their education. The method used in this article is basically to use various sources to back the authors' argument against previously identified reasons why adult learners have problems. Time management, and study skills are two previously presented problems that might impede the educational performance of an adult learner. These are both refuted by the authors, who argue that adult learners are actually more experienced in time management, and that their study skills used previously are able to meet their current educational needs. This article is relevant to the non-traditional student group project in that it addresses many ideas about the personal feelings and reservations an adult learner might have. The article argues that many of these problems don't actually occur, or are far less widespread than one might think.

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Subject: #12 **Topic:** My Research Project

Author: Kyle **Date:** October 19, 2009 11:30 AM

Price

http://tempest.lib.ilstu.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/isuhistory&CISOPTR=395&CISOBX=1&REC=12

This is a picture of the 1937 "barn dance" at Illinois State Normal University. The picture depicts students, but I think many of these students appear older than the typical college student of today. This goes along with our research topic of non traditional students, a category which includes adult learners. Throughout its history, the university has shifted from more adult learners to younger aged students.

http://tempest.lib.ilstu.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/isuhistory&CISOPTR=542&CISOBX=1&REC=20

This is a picture of the first graduating class at ISU. These seven students also look a bit older than the typical student of today.

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Subject: #8 **Topic:** My Research Project

Author:

Kyle **Date:** October 19, 2009 11:40 AM
Price

Our research question still involves defining non-traditional students. To do this, we must first define a traditional student. Interviews, observation, and review of the literature and even the history will all be helpful in answering our question.

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Subject: #11 **Topic:** My Research Project

Author:

Kyle **Date:** October 26, 2009 11:23 PM
Price

I chose to use a flyer as my visual data. This flyer contains information about "nontraditional student coffee socials" held on one day each of September, October, and November. The flyer gives general information about when and where the event is held, and what it will entail (coffee, bagels, meeting fellow students). I chose this flyer because it seems to be a little out of touch with nontraditional students. (or any student really) First of all, the large graphic at the top says "nontraditional student coffee socials" in very large writing, and then underneath it says nontraditional student services and Julia n. visor academic center. I assume that these are the organizations responsible for holding the coffee socials, but it doesn't really say that. I think the nts student services and the academic center should at least list phone numbers or an address especially since the coffee socials are held at the Julia N. Visor Center conference room. The middle of the flyer lists the details about the event such as "what, why, when, time, and where". The "what" is just the name of the event: "nontraditional student coffee socials". The "why" was interesting because it says "meet fellow STUDENTS while enjoying free coffee and bagels". This was interesting because it didn't say nontraditional students, which is who the event is for. The event is only held once a month, for three months. I thought this was one of the most important factors in the flyer. It's a little sad that coffee and bagels can only be arranged three times in one semester. To me, this seems like lack of effort/interest by the university and the nts services. This makes it so I have to make plans to go to one of these events, rather than just stopping by when I have time to do so. With my schedule already full, this becomes difficult and stressful. It seems ironic to be stressed about coffee, but that is the result in my case. The time listed for the event is 7:30-9 a.m. An hour and a half is also not very accommodating. Due to the early time of the event, I would have to adjust my schedule in order to attend, which could also add stress. The event is located at the Julia N. Visor Center in the conference room. I am not personally familiar with this building, and would need to look up directions. An address and directions would be

helpful. Not providing directions or an address is another way in which the university seems out of touch with nts. Many nts have not lived on campus and aren't as familiar with the buildings as traditional students. The best/worst part about this flyer is the picture at the bottom. It depicts three people sitting around a table drinking what looks like juice. It looks like it's from the early '90s by the colors and the clothing.(reminded me of "saved by the bell" for some reason) There are two females and one male, none of which look very old. There are no books or backpacks anywhere in the picture. They appear to be three young people sitting around a table drinking juice. I'm not sure what this picture has to do with coffee socials for nontraditional students. I think the ethnographic information that it conveys is that the university may need to approach nontraditional students in a different way. By defining the nontraditional as well as the traditional student, the university can better provide for different types of students. I think the fact that there are no directions to the building is really important because it seems that the organizers aren't keeping in mind the actual definition of nontraditional students and that they would generally be less familiar with the campus

Attachments: [Coffee break final.pdf](#);

Comments

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Subject:

Journal **Topic:** My Research Project
#

Author:

Kyle **Date:** November 9, 2009 2:45 PM
Price

In examining nontraditional students, it is helpful to look also at other studies and writings addressing nontraditional students. One such article by John T. E. Richardson and Estelle King discuss some of the attitudes about nontraditional students. "Adult Students in Higher Education: Burden or Boon?" opposes the typical problem oriented approach to nontraditional students. It is normally assumed that adult learners will encounter problems in higher education because they have other responsibilities and may lack study skills. The authors argue that adult students actually perform better and do not frequently encounter these problems as previously expected. The broader theme of this article applies to our research in defining the nontraditional student. The assumptions and attitudes about nontraditional students from both the student and the institutional perspectives may be contrasting, which may be counterproductive, among other things.

Another writing "What is a Non-Traditional Student at Illinois State University" more directly examines the issues related to defining nontraditional students. Andrew J. Chamberlain discusses problems with the university meeting the needs of nontraditional students. He examines many differences between community colleges and universities in the way these institutions provide for the student. His main observation is the availability of classes. According to Chamberlain, compared to four year institutions, community colleges tend to offer more scheduling options for classes including night and online classes. He suggests a redefining of the nontraditional student in order for the university to better meet their needs.

In my research I expected to find the amount of nontraditional students to be underrepresented. I suspect there are more nontraditional students than previously thought.

The present definitions provided by the university are quite open ended and a little confusing. The university college adult learner services website provides a list of criteria for being an adult learner/nontraditional student, which doesn't mention anything about age. First on the list is "an independent student". This may be referring to independent tax status, but it isn't explicit. Something this open ended could essentially apply to any student therefore encompassing the entire student body as nontraditional. How many students would answer "no" when asked if they considered themselves an independent student? As previously mentioned, the list doesn't include an age requirement, but below the list on the bottom of the web page it mentions the former

"Adult Learner Services Task Force" has a definition that includes those older than 25. This suggests that the university is already changing its definition of nontraditional students by omitting any reference to age in their criteria. However, it seems that there are separate adult learner services and nontraditional services. This information presented by the university is more than a little confusing. The nontraditional student services website states that nontraditional students can be defined by age. With adult learner services not using age in their criteria, and nontraditional student services defining nontraditional students by age, the university is sending mixed signals. Statistics provided on the adult learner services website further complicated the situation. The site states that there were 2100 undergraduates considered to be nontraditional which includes veterans. Directly below this information the site states that there were 5500 students listing veteran status on either financial aid or admissions forms. This information is clearly conflicting, and

One piece of visual data used was a flyer promoting nontraditional student events. This flyer presented information about a coffee social held for nontraditional students one day a month for three months. The flyer provides much information about how the university views nontraditional students. The fact that a coffee social is only held three times a semester may suggest that the university isn't putting in much effort. Additionally, while it does list the name of the building in which the event is located, the flyer fails to provide an address for that building. This failure to provide information also suggests that the university isn't taking into consideration its own definition when organizing events. Because commuter students, and those who live off campus are included in the university's definition of nontraditional students, it would be logical to assume that these nontraditionals may not be quite as familiar with campus as other students. By only listing the name of the building in which the event is located, the university fails to adequately provide for nontraditional students for whom the event is held.

Another piece of visual data used were photographs found in the Illinois State archives. These photographs further illustrate that the university was historically founded on nontraditional students. One photograph, from 1860 depicts the first graduating class at Illinois State. These seven students appear older than most students observed on campus today. Another photograph depicts the 1937 "barn dance". Students in this photograph also appear to be older. Many of them appear to be adults. In comparing the two photographs, the students seems to be quite similar in age even though the photographs were taken almost 80 years apart. Contrast these photographs with a depiction of the modern student and the differences in age become quite apparent. This reinforces our findings in the historical literature about today's nontraditional student being yesterday's traditional student.

From casual conversation and interviews with students and alumni about the university meeting their needs, one familiar theme that arose was the availability of parking. Because the university defines students that commute as nontraditional, this was a big issue involved in researching nontraditional students and how the university meets their needs. Students complained of the lack of parking, and the expense of a parking pass. Anger was expressed over purchasing a pass only to have to park in Bone student center hourly parking anyway. Long walks, tardiness, and absence were all attributed to lack of parking. Students felt that their needs weren't being met in this aspect.

The lack of parking was also obvious upon observation of the commuter parking lots north of Bone Student Center. These lots are continuously full during common class times. Only during early morning hours and late in the afternoon are parking spots left empty. Typical times for parking spaces to free up are shortly after classes dismiss including five minutes till the hour and 20 minutes after. One obvious observation is the addition of a temporary building in a commuter parking lot. In addition to the building, parking spots previously reserved for commuters are now staff and faculty parking only. These observations reinforce the idea that the university may not be meeting the needs of nontraditional students.

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Subject: #17
recommendations **Topic:** My Research Project

Author: Kyle Price

Date: November 16, 2009 12:22 PM

Based on the readings for the semester and your own research so far, what recommendations would you make to the Illinois State administration? How might university policies and practices be improved? Post an journal entry called —#17Recommendations||

One thing I would recommend to the university that I found in my own research would be more clarity for NTS. I think there's too much information coming from different sources and it gets overwhelming and confusing. This applies to other things than just nontraditional students. One thing I've noticed just from walking down the halls and around campus is that there is little organization of information. The walls and doors have posters and flyers everywhere, the sidewalk and bridge have information written in chalk constantly. There is a sandwich board on the bridge as well. It seems like all these things are competing with each other for student's attention. They might as well be advertisements because I generally ignore them. I know this isn't an admissions issue, but there are similar things going on with the university presenting too much information that isn't organized well. I have noticed the information on the walls of the third floor of Schroeder being more organized than in the past.

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Subject:

#15 **Topic:** My Research Project outline

Author:

Kyle Price **Date:** December 7, 2009 8:59 AM

Introduction
Thesis statement
Paragraph one
Methods used
Interviews
Student interviews
Staff interviews
Administration interviews
Visual DataOn ISU website
Posters
Handouts
Observations
Where do nontraditional students gather?
Other source data
literature reviews
historical data
Paragraph Two
What we expected to find
Amount of Nontrad Students
What does "traditional" mean anyways?How does the University cater to nontraditionals?
Paragraph Three
What we actually found.
definitions of both traditional and Non traditional students.
Historical data showing ISU founded on nontraditional students
Present definitions on website and visuals
Literature definitions
Complaints from nontraditional students
Are nontraditional's needs being met?
Comments on community colleges

Views about nontraditional students from the staff and other students
Findings from student interviews
Findings from staff interviews
Are these findings similar to what we expected to find?
Are nontrads and staff saying similar things?
Paragraph Four
Interpretation of our research
What is a nontraditional student in reality?
How many students should be considered nontraditional?
Does the University have a problem in providing for NTS?
What is the significance behind this research?
Why study nontraditional students?
How can our findings be used?
Conclusion
Overview of our findings.

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Subject:
#7 data **Topic:** My Research Project

Author:
Kyle **Date:** December 7, 2009 9:12 AM
Price

My data for this journal was an observation of one of the parking lots at Illinois State. The lot I chose to observe was one in which I regularly park, just north of the Bone student center pay parking area. My observation took place on a Tuesday, in the morning around 8am. This was a very busy time for the parking lot. The first thing I noticed was that there was a huge difference between this semester's parking availability (in this lot) and last semester's parking availability. There was a huge temporary building sitting right in the corner of the lot. This probably subtracts at least a third of the spaces that were available, and there are now faculty/staff only spaces directly next to the building. By the time I started my observation, the lot was completely full (including my car) Many drivers would drive through the lot, find no spaces, and return in less than a minute to look again. Some decided to wait in an inconspicuous area for spaces to open up. There were others that would slowly follow someone walking to see if they were going to their car. Overall, this was a very good time to do an observation. I was able to see the lot in use, and also the way students use the lot. I was also able to see a few frustrated drivers!

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Subject:
#16
rough
draft **Topic:** My Research Project

Author:
Kyle **Date:** December 7, 2009 9:14 AM
Price

Attachments: [Kyle Price nontraditional students\[1\].docx](#);

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Subject:
#9 data **Topic:** My Research Project

Author: **Date:** December 7, 2009 9:22 AM
Kyle

Price

Another observation I did was in the same parking lot north of Bone, but this time I observed later in the day, when things were a little less hectic. My observation took place around 4pm also on a Tuesday. This time I noticed that there were far fewer people driving around the lots looking for spaces. The lot was not completely full, and those who did drive into the parking lot were able to easily find a spot. There were still students walking out to their cars, but not as many, and there weren't as many people trying to get to class. I could also see from there that there were far less cars in the Bone pay parking lot. One strange thing I did notice was that the traffic in B/N was far worse at this time. For both observations I drove directly to the parking lot from my house in southeast Bloomington. (not the "scary" part everyone talked about in class) The traffic was far heavier during the afternoon hours, but the parking lot was less congested. However, the traffic during the morning hours wasn't near as bad, but the parking lot was much more congested.

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Subject: reflection
Topic: My Research Project

Author:

Kyle Price
Date: December 7, 2009 4:25 PM

By class time: Write a Reflection Essay #3.

Traditionally, ethnography is associated with participant observation. Ethnography, to me, is writing about a subject using participant observation as well as a number of other methods. It is studying the unknown. The unknown, however, doesn't always have to be something exotic, it can be something well known, but not well understood. Ethnography attempts to expose knowledge. I read recently that Microsoft uses ethnographers to study how people use their software. I think ethnography could be explained to freshmen by simply telling them that it is studying people using a variety of research methods. I feel I have learned much through my own research experience. I really never thought of ethnography as studying something such as the university. I'm familiar with other books that examine our own culture, but never really thought of them as ethnography (Patricia Adler is one specific author that comes to mind.) I feel I have a more concrete understanding of the research process, which is valuable in many fields. I feel like this class was almost and ethnography on ethnography.

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Subject: #18 final product
Topic: My Research Project

Author:

Kyle Price
Date: December 7, 2009 5:58 PM

Nontraditional Student Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discover the meaning of the term "nontraditional" student at Illinois State University and how the meaning affects the policies directed towards this segment of the student body. We will compare the university's definition with a national definition, interview nontraditional students and university officials on what the term means to them, and look at university programs and documents of the present and past to see if there has been a change in meaning through time. By discovering how Illinois State defines the term and how its different groups choose to use the term, it will allow the university to better serve this varied group.

Attachments: [Non-Traditional Students.pptx](#); [The Nontraditional Student at Illinois State final rough draft.docx](#); [The Nontraditional Student at Illinois State final.docx](#);