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Learner Retention: The Challenge of Family Literacy Programs

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by

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DEDICATION

To the students in the family literacy program at Kimbrough Elementary School.
Literacy in English is increasingly important for the success of U.S. immigrants. To address the issue of low literacy rates among immigrants, various family literacy programs have been developed throughout the country. Unfortunately, administrators and instructors of these programs often struggle with the low attendance rates of their students, thus the topics of learner persistence and retention have become prevalent in adult education. The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that affect attendance rates, and thus learner persistence, with adult ESL students in classes at San Diego elementary schools.

This mixed-methods study uses questionnaires and unrecorded interviews with both learners in San Diego family literacy programs, and the administrators of these programs. Sixty participants from three different family literacy classes completed questionnaires focusing on demographics, and various situational, institutional, and dispositional factors that have been shown to affect persistence and retention. Each participant’s responses and Fall semester 2009 attendance rates were statistically analyzed using Pearson correlation to reveal relationships among all factors. Attendance rates were calculated based on a participant’s start date, so that even if a participant enrolled in class the last month of school, but attended every subsequent day, he or she could have a 100% attendance rate.

Questionnaire results reveal that the majority of participants are middle-aged females from Mexico with less than ten years of formal education completed. Correlation analysis reveals that demographics did not have significant relationships with attendance rates, but five other variables did, including two barriers to persistence: not attending class due to work, not attending class due to housework; and two supports to persistence: liking the teacher, and enjoying learning. The strongest relationship was found with a participant’s start date; participants who enrolled after the first week of classes had significantly lower attendance rates. These results bring up compelling issues to address at the institutional level, specifically concerning the integration of new students into class after the first week.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Javier works late nights selling hamburgers and tacos from his mobile food unit in Tijuana, Mexico, then wakes up at 4:30am with determination. His 8-year-old daughter and he take a taxi to the U.S./Mexico border, wait in line to pass through immigration, and cross the border. They take the trolley, a bus, and walk until they reach their final destination: Kimbrough Elementary school. Here, Javier attends an adult English as a Second Language (ESL) class, while his daughter studies in a second-grade classroom. Every day, they make the journey to Kimbrough to take advantage of this educational opportunity. Other students in Javier’s adult ESL class, however, live just blocks from Kimbrough, but do not attend class regularly.

Irregular attendance, or a lack of learner persistence, seems to be a trend in adult education: the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey reported that of those literate in a language other than English, slightly less than half completed the ESL classes they were enrolled in (Sum, 1999). Nonetheless, ESL programs are continually growing and comprise the largest component of the federally funded adult education system; in the 2004-2005 academic year, 44.3% of participants in state-administered adult education programs were enrolled in ESL classes. The percentage in the state of California was an astonishing 72.5% (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). This does not include those enrolled in programs with private language schools, academic institutions, volunteer literacy services, and other community-based programs. It is logical that attendance matters in the language classroom.
But specifically for language learners in need of literacy skills, development is important because the number of adults in the United States in need of literacy skills is enormous, and its impact reaches not only the person, but his or her family, workplace, and community (Kinerney, 2007).

Meeting the expectations of ESL classes can be difficult for United States immigrants who are juxtaposed with the demands of living in a new country, work, and family life. It is particularly difficult for students with limited literacy skills in their first languages to overcome the obstacles that prevent them from attending class because literacy and learning how to succeed in a classroom setting are additional skills to acquire (Kinerney, 2007). Low literacy rates are profound in the United States, and especially in California. In 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) conducted a “National Assessment of Adult Literacy” found that 14% of the population nationwide, and 23% in California, are at a “below basic” literacy level, meaning that they can perform “no more than the most simple and concrete literacy skills,” (NCES, 2003, “Number of Adults in Each Prose Literacy Level”), such as providing a signature on the correct line. Another 29% of U.S. adults were determined to have only “basic prose literacy skills,” or “skills necessary to perform simple and everyday literacy activities” (NCES, 2003, “Number of Adults in Each Prose Literacy Level”), such as determining the gross pay from a pay stub. Those adults with below basic or basic literacy skills comprise a stark 43% of the U.S. population, and surely find it difficult to raise children with strong literacy skills.

To address this issue, many family literacy programs, such as Javier’s class at Kimbrough Elementary, have been developed. In family literacy, classes involve much more than the ability to read and write; literacy has been defined as “an individual’s ability to read,
write, speak in English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual and in society” (U.S. Congress, 1998, Section 203:12). Family literacy, then, is a complex system that benefits children, parents, families, and the larger society (Padak & Rasinski, 2003). Given the target learners, family literacy classes are typically held at elementary schools and offer free babysitting. Programs typically involve elementary or secondary schools, community colleges, libraries, and daycare and preschool facilities to help prepare children to be better learners and help adults become economically self-sufficient (Tice, 2000).

One successful example in California is the Community-Based English Tutoring Program (CBET), established by the California Department of Education (CDE) as a result of Proposition 227. Also known as “English for the Children,” Proposition 227 was a ballot initiative approved by California voters in 1998, aiming at restricting the use of bilingual instruction, and requiring all public school instruction to be conducted in English (California Primary Election Voter Information Guide, 1998, Proposition 227). The CBET program is based on the belief that “the more a parent or guardian is involved in the education of his or her child the better the child will perform in school” (California Department of Education [CDE], 2007, para. 2). According to the CDE (2008), the intent of this program is to “encourage adult student partnerships that result in raising the general level of English knowledge in the community” by providing “free or subsidized adult English instruction to parents or other community members who pledge to provide English tutoring to California school children with limited English proficiency” (para. 2).

In San Diego, the CBET program is jointly funded by the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) and the San Diego Unified School District, and thus provides ESL
instruction while encouraging parents to help their children in school, using materials
designed to use language in school-related contexts. CBET classes are free, and students do
not need to buy books. Classes are non-credit, i.e., students do not receive grades, and are
“open-enrollment,” i.e., students can enter or drop-out on any given day during the course of
the semester. This type of enrollment management allows students the freedom to manage
their daily lives, but may not encourage regular attendance.

To benefit from any ESL class, it is well understood that regular attendance is
essential. According to Prins and Schafft (2009), researchers have long sought to understand
how various factors enable or constrain participation and persistence in adult education and
have found three sets of factors influencing persistence: situational (learners’ life
circumstances), institutional (programmatic factors), and dispositional (learners’ personal
experiences and attitudes). However, as far as can be determined, no systematic analysis of
attendance patterns and learner persistence in family literacy programs has been conducted.

In order to design the best possible family literacy programs, research to help
understand learner persistence is critical. The aim of this study is to investigate whether
demographic, situational, institutional, and dispositional variables can predict attendance
rates among adult students enrolled in three family literacy classes in San Diego.
Specifically, this study will examine the relationships between attendance and a total of 51
variables that may have an effect on attendance. Results may benefit those interested in the
factors that positively or negatively contribute to attendance rates. Furthermore, the study
may help teachers and administrators develop programs that increase attendance rates. In
addition, it will provide teachers and administrators of family literacy programs with
information about the demographics of their classes, student study preferences, and attitudes
toward attendance, which may help improve current institutional policies and pedagogical tendencies. While this study is uniquely concerned with family literacy classes in San Diego, the findings from this study may also benefit teachers and administrators in different environments.

The current study will examine if certain variables contribute to learner persistence in San Diego family literacy classes, answering the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between learner demographics and attendance rates?
2. Is there a relationship between situational, institutional, and dispositional factors and attendance rates?

The hypothesis is that there is a relationship between learner demographics, and situational, institutional, and dispositional factors.

As previously noted, most family literacy programs include combinations of early childhood education, adult literacy education, parenting education, and structured literacy interaction between parents and their children (St. Pierre, Ricciuti, & Rimdzius, 2005). This study focuses on the adult ESL aspect of the programs in San Diego, California, jointly coordinated by the SDCCD and San Diego Unified School District, to identify relationships between specific variables and attendance rates. Because the present study focuses on attendance and learner persistence in family literacy programs, previous research on family literacy programs as well as the literature on attendance patterns and learner persistence in adult education will be reviewed in the next two chapters. Chapter 2 will look at family literacy classes, discussing definitions of terms, background, prior research, curriculum designs, and the San Diego learner population. Chapter 3 will focus on defining retention and persistence, and on examining previous research on persistence in both adult education and ESL programs. Chapter 4 will give an overview of the methodology used in the study, and
the results will be presented and discussed in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 will offer a
general conclusion, including recommendations and directions for future research.
CHAPTER 2

FAMILY LITERACY

The current persistence study focuses on a specialized population: family literacy learners. As such, it is useful to discuss previous research in both the family literacy and learner persistence fields. The goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of family literacy programs. The chapter will include family literacy definitions, a background of these programs, an explanation of typical structure and curriculum, and a discussion of family literacy research that has been conducted in San Diego, California. Chapter 3 will continue the literature review, focusing on research in the area of persistence.

2.1 DEFINITIONS AND BACKGROUND

This section will explore current definitions of family literacy, and provide a brief review of the origins of prevalent family literacy programs.

2.1.1 Definitions

Traditionally, a literate person is one who is able to read and write. However, as noted in the introduction, literacy is currently viewed as a more complex proficiency; a literate person should also be able to speak and solve problems. Furthermore, literacy requires the ability to function appropriately in social contexts involving the family, the workplace, and society (U.S. Congress, 1998). Since the family is a component, or a context, requiring literacy skills, it is logical to provide programs specializing in family literacy. Many of these
programs are developed and funded by the federal or state government; hence a look into government-recognized definitions of family literacy is crucial.

The purpose of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, (Title II of the Workforce Investment Act) is to:

1. assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency;

2. assist adults who are parents to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children; and


The second purpose focuses specifically on “family literacy services,” which are further defined by federal acts (e.g., the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the Head Start Act of 1981) providing: “sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family,” integrating:

1. interactive literacy activities between parents and their children,

2. training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children,

3. parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency, and


Most programs, therefore, involve many stakeholders, supporting the use of literacy for children, parents, and other family members at home, at school, and/or in the community (Pongsrikul, 2007).

Strong proponents of family literacy, like the National Center for Family Literacy, (NCFL) define family literacy more enthusiastically, as “a practical solution that addresses the root of devastating social problems: low literacy rates and poverty…by giving families
the tools they need to thrive today, and most importantly, by helping them educate
generations of tomorrow” (National Center for Family Literacy, 2009, para. 4). This
viewpoint has had considerable political and legislative support resulting in many federally
and state funded programs such as CBET and Even Start (Pongsrikul, 2007). Taking the
various definitions of family literacy into consideration, I propose that the purpose of these
programs is to improve upon a vast range of literacy abilities in parents, children, and
community members, so that they can succeed at home, school, work, and in society.

2.1.2 Background

The nation’s literacy problems have been addressed through diverse approaches. According to St. Pierre, Ricciuti and Rimdzius (2005), remediation programs for adults (adult education or workplace literacy programs) began in the mid-1900s, followed by prevention programs for children via early childhood education (such as Head Start from the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy). The first family literacy programs were implemented around the late 1970s and were based on the belief that children’s early learning is greatly influenced by their parents, who are their first and best teachers. Parents, therefore, were encouraged to develop and value their own literacy skills to support their children’s education by becoming more literate, understanding more about how children learn, and developing good teaching habits. Eventually, these programs “attained national status in 1989 when the federal government instituted its family literacy centerpiece, the Even Start Family Literacy Program” (St. Pierre et al., 2005, p. 953). While programs like Head Start focus on children and parents separately, family literacy programs target the relationships in the family unit; the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2002) states that Head Start’s goal is “to ensure that young children are ready for school.... In contrast, even Start’s goal is
to improve family literacy and the educational opportunities of both parents and their young children” (p. 2). In sum, the family literacy model proposes family participation in various contexts: early childhood education, adult education, parenting education, and parent–child literacy activities, rather than participation in an early childhood program alone (St. Pierre et al., 2005).

Another founding theory of family literacy is that increasing family involvement in education is one of the most effective ways to improve student achievement in school. For example, Henderson and Mapp (2002) review and summarize 51 recent (1993–2002) studies of the effects of parent involvement, and find “one overarching conclusion: Taken as a whole, these studies found a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement” (p. 24). To find out more about this key element of family involvement, research has focused on why some families are less involved. Findings highlight parents’ education levels. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2001) reports that parents without high school diplomas are less likely to attend school events and meetings with teachers or to serve as volunteers or committee members. Likewise, Kohl, Lengua, McMahon, and Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group (2000) found that parent education is a significant predictor of parent involvement factors. In an effort to increase parent involvement and education levels, family literacy programs have proliferated across the United States.

However, family literacy programs have become the focus of some debate. In particular, a two-year study on the Even Start program did not find statistically significant impacts on Even Start families as compared with control families on child literacy outcomes, parent literacy outcomes, or parent–child interactions. Researchers note possible reasons for
the ineffectiveness of the Even Start programs involved in the study: the model was not fully implemented, instructional services were not sufficiently intensive, families did not participate intensely enough or long enough, and/or insufficient quality of instruction (St. Pierre et al., 2005). This study brings several factors investigated in the current study, namely the amount of time and intensity with which adult learners participate in family literacy programs.

Nonetheless, there is a significant body of recent research contending that these programs do increase literacy skills in parents and children (among others, Gevirtz Research Center, 2008; Pongsrikul, 2007; Saint-Laurent & Giasson, 2005). Isla Vista Elementary’s CBET program, for example, shows that family literacy programs can be effective; their 2008 report by the Gevirtz Research Center (GRC) suggests that as a result of the family literacy project, participants increased their English language skills. Analyses revealed statistically significant improvements in various writing areas as well as knowledge of vocabulary and grammar structures. An important finding in this study is that by acquiring English skills and learning how to help with schoolwork, parents enhanced their relationships with their children, a motivating factor for parents to continue with the program. Moreover, findings indicate that participants felt more empowered and were contacting their children’s teachers more often and making more decisions about their children’s education. To foster these kinds of improvements in literacy skills and parent involvement, family literacy programs must have clear goals which guide the program’s structure and curriculum.
2.2 FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND CURRICULUM

This section will discuss typical family literacy syllabi and curriculum, and how the structure and funding of these programs affect curriculum. Following the current Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) movement, “syllabus content should reflect the communicative purposes and needs of the learners” (Nunan, 2001, p. 57). Nunan (2001) recommends designing integrated syllabi, which identify specific, relevant contexts, communicative events, and the goals and corresponding key linguistic elements necessary to accomplish these events. Curricula and materials of family literacy programs are largely influenced by the elementary school contexts and needs of immigrant parents and children. As a result, programs that aim at increased parental involvement in school often employ competency-based curricula, (Weinstein, 1998) such as specific lessons on the school system, study skills, reading report cards, talking to teachers in parent-teacher conferences, or helping with homework (Bercovitz & Porter, 1995). School-focused programs may also focus on topics such as health and nutrition or parenting skills (Weinstein, 1998).

Weinstein (1998) points out the existence of relatively new approaches in family literacy as well: the participatory curriculum and project-based learning. In a participatory (or learner-centered) curriculum, students determine the direction and content of their classes while teachers are facilitators who help to identify resources. In this environment, school issues may or may not be a primary focus of programs as learners themselves identify the topics that they wish to explore. Another approach is that of project-based work in which learners develop language skills while they work toward specific non-linguistic goals like planning events, producing books, murals, or other products, and in the context use a wide range of literacy skills (Weinstein, 1998).
Although family literacy programs are shown to have similar syllabi and curricula, there appears to be a disconnect between theory and practice in the field. While the goal of many professionals in the ESL field is to create successful programs by merging theory and practice (Celce-Murcia, 2001), family literacy programs have “traditionally been seen as practice-oriented and drawn together by a loosely connected set of activities pulled from early childhood or pre-kindergarten efforts to K-12 and adult literacy” (Gadsden, 2002, p. 260). Gadsden (2002) suggests strengthening the relationship between family literacy and adult literacy; various family literacy models exist, but they may not incorporate theory and research findings of how adults learn and how to assess programs. Part of the disunification of theory and practice may lie in the diversified structure of family literacy programs.

Because students do not pay for their classes, funding is scarce and programs are often supported by differing organizations such as community colleges and public schools. Consequently, family literacy programs must adapt to what is reflected in various funding priorities (Weinstein, 1998) instead of following a unified set of standards that characterize programs in the mainstream school system. Therefore, family literacy curricula are somewhat determined by government-imposed learning outcomes and standardized testing which may not accurately reflect the family literacy agenda. An example of this is the requirement of the Workforce Investment Act (U.S. Congress, 1998) that each state report standardized learner outcomes.

The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) test is widely used to fulfill this requirement in Community Colleges. Its purpose is to assess the development of adult learners in basic skills programs. The test focuses on functional reading skills within an instructional level, through a set of multiple choice questions (National Center for Family
Literacy & Center for Applied Linguistics [NCFL & CAL], 2008). However, according to Bachman and Palmer (1996), a good language proficiency test is made up of language tasks that replicate what goes on in the real world. A reading test involving multiple-choice questions is clearly far from “real-world.” Moreover, this test does not reflect the distinct goals and syllabi of family literacy programs and therefore does not follow language proficiency assessment theory.

Funding from community colleges also impacts family literacy program structure. Community colleges have a long history of providing flexible class times and locations to accommodate their students (Vaughan, 2000). To maximize student attendance, funding policies have given rise to open-door enrollment systems in certain programs (such as family literacy programs), in which students can enter and leave classes as they wish (Schalge & Soga, 2008). Although open-door enrollment appears to maximize attendance hours, the fluid student population creates barriers in curriculum development; teachers are unsure how many students will attend, and which students they will be. This flexibility makes it difficult for learners to fully comprehend and engage in the subject matter (Schalge & Soga, 2008). Moreover, this open-enrollment system along with the multi-level dimension of family literacy classes creates obstacles to curriculum development. Overall, family literacy syllabi and curriculum reflect the goals of increasing parent involvement in school and literacy skills, but the structure and funding of these programs, particularly through the impact of community colleges, do not necessarily aid in achievement of these goals.
2.3 Family Literacy Research in San Diego

The classes in this study are held at public schools in the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD). This section summarizes San Diego’s diverse population and previous studies conducted in the metropolitan area.

2.3.1 Background to Diversity in Population in San Diego

A look at the demographics of the children enrolled in SDUSD classes provides insight into the demographics of the adults participating in this study’s family literacy classes. According to the California Department of Education (CDE, 2009), California has the highest concentration of English Language Learners (ELLs) in public schools the country. The CDE (2009) reports that within that the SDUSD, there are 38,743 ELLs who have over 40 different native languages. The native language of over 77% of these ELLs is Spanish. This is an overwhelming majority, as the second and third most common languages are Vietnamese and Filipino, with just 5% and 4% of the population, respectively. The Spanish-speaking majority of ELLs in San Diego public schools is reflected in previous research on family literacy programs in San Diego.

2.3.2 Research Results

The marginalized population of learners in San Diego family literacy programs has been studied in theses and dissertations at San Diego State University, but with emphasis on needs analysis (McIntyre, 2004), or the program’s influence on parent involvement in local schools (Pongsrikul, 2007). These studies focused on the SDCCD’s Community-Based English Tutoring (CBET) programs, which Pongsrikul (2007) defines as an “intergenerational family literacy model” encouraging “parent involvement” in school
McIntyre (2004) argues that the CBET classes comprise “an identifiable group of learners with a common purpose and as such it is important to identify their needs so that classes can be tailored to them” (p. 8). Pongsrikul (2007) asserts that the program has been successful in increasing parent involvement at home (e.g., reading to children, and helping children with homework) and at school (e.g. attending school events, and talking to teachers) as well as in teaching parents strategies for supporting student learning. Specifically, participant gains were shown in: “reading with children, helping them with homework, taking them to the library, speaking to teachers and staff at the school, attending school activities, and tutoring at the participating elementary schools” (p. 81).

Pongsrikul (2007) further asserts that Hispanics, comprising 95% of the San Diego CBET population from 2001-2005, are “concerned about their children’s education, and given the opportunity, have the potential to contribute to it” (p. 83). Likewise, statistics of the students enrolled in CBET classes can be found in an annual study by the SDCCD, conducted to determine demographics, student perceptions, goals, and writing gains of the said population. In this study, Pongsrikul (2009) found that most participants are Hispanic females with 1-4 children, between the ages of 25-44. Most have been in the US for 2-9 years, and the majority are full time homemakers. Additionally, 43% have between 6-11 years of education. The current study will expand on previous studies of this population, including how demographics might contribute to learner persistence.

2.4 SUMMARY

Previous research has shown that family literacy classes were created in order to assist both adults and their children in obtaining the skills necessary to become self-sufficient citizens, while improving literacy skills in both parties. San Diego, in particular, has a large
number of ELL in public schools who can benefit from effective family literacy programs. Government funded programs such as Even Start and CBET rely on the understandings that a parent’s literacy skills impact those of their children, and that parent involvement in school benefits children. Unfortunately, funding and support of family literacy programs comes from various stakeholders, so the implementation of these programs is often inconsistent or even conflicting with current theories of ESL pedagogy. Matching the inconsistencies of many family literacy programs, many classes are plagued with irregular participant attendance. To introduce this issue, the next chapter will review research in persistence in adult education.
CHAPTER 3

ATTENDANCE, RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE

IN ADULT EDUCATION

The previous chapter provides an overview of family literacy programs, including definitions, curriculum, and research in San Diego family literacy programs. As the current study is essentially a study of attendance and persistence using the specific population of family literacy learners, this chapter will continue the literature review, turning to a discussion of the topic of learner persistence. The chapter offers definitions and a background of learner persistence, followed by an overview of persistence studies in English as a Second Language (ESL) settings.

3.1 RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE DEFINITIONS

Student retention, or keeping learners in programs, is a continuous problem in adult education, and has thus become a prevalent topic in academic literature. This issue has most recently been discussed using the term “learner persistence,” which is typically defined as the length of time learners attend class. Evidence of lack of persistence is referred to as “dropping out” (Kerka, 1995). However, retention and persistence have been defined in countless ways because each learner and program is unique; a learner persisting in a 4-year degree program is not the same as a learner persisting in a family literacy program. Universities, for example, commonly define retention as “a percentage measurement showing how many students re-enrolled at an institution that they attended the previous year” while
persistence is “a student’s postsecondary education continuation behavior that leads to graduation” (Arnold, 1999, p. 5).

While these definitions suit certain types of institutional structures, they clearly do not suit a family literacy program. More specifically, Kerka asserts that, “…program completion is relevant only for some students,” while others are successful when they achieve their objectives for participating (1988, p. 1). Likewise, Hagedorn (2005) believes that persistence is not necessarily an indicator of success as some learners stop attending when they feel their goals have been met. In response to the various definitions of persistence, and in order to create appropriate definitions for adult education, researchers from the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL), “a federally funded research and development center focused solely on adult learning” (NSCALL, 2007, para. 2) defined persistence as a continuous learning process: “adults staying in programs as long as they can, engaging in self-directed study when they must drop out of their programs, and returning to program services as soon as the demands of their lives allow” (Comings, Parrella, & Soricone, 1999, p. 3). Persistence is thus seen as an internal attribute (Jarrell, 2006).

Unfortunately, this more inclusive definition of persistence is difficult to measure; “Research into persistence must depend on measures that can be collected, and time in class or in tutoring is the only effective measure available at this time” (Comings et al., 1999, p. 14). Retention, however, is essentially more measurable. Jarrell (2006) describes retention as a program statistic, in which a retention rate measures the percentage of students who continue to attend classes throughout the semester or year. The current study analyzes attendance data from just one semester, so persistence will be measured by the total
percentage of hours a learner attended class in the Fall 2009 semester (as a ratio between the number of hours attended and the number of hours offered in a semester).

### 3.2 Persistence Studies in Adult Education

As noted, attendance is of specific concern for many adult education programs because when students drop-out or do not attend class, this not only impedes learner’s progress but can also jeopardize funding. Learner retention and persistence appeared as a prominent topic in adult education toward the end of the millennium, when programs obtained funding to address problems with low attendance rates. In tandem with this new approach, research also started to emerge in many areas of adult education to test persistence theories. Although research has proposed countless hypotheses related to learner persistence, only the most prominent concerning adult education will be discussed below, followed by a discussion of ESL persistence studies specifically.

**Tinto’s Model** -- Vincent Tinto’s model of retention was first published in 1975 and has since become both widely tested and accepted by the educational community (Seidman, 1996). Its central idea is that of "integration;" a student’s degree of academic and social integration determines the likelihood that the student will persist. More precisely, Tinto (1993) believes that individual attributes (family background, skill and ability, prior schooling) impact an individual’s goals and commitments which then dictate the extent to which the individual becomes academically and socially integrated into the institution. This then, ultimately determines an individual’s dropout decision. Bloom and Sommo’s (2005) study at a Community College in New York is one of many that supports Tinto’s model: researchers created an “Opening Doors Learning Communities Project,” in which students who tested below-college level in reading writing, and/or math were assigned semester
courses together, including along with a counselor who helped students integrate into the school, address obstacles, and arrange extra tutoring and book vouchers. Students in the “Opening Doors” program substantially outperformed control group students, achieving higher passing rates, particularly in English courses, and were more likely to have completed their remedial English requirements.

**Knowles’ Model** -- Another prevalent theorist is Malcolm Knowles (1970; 1990), who emphasizes the needs of the adult individual. His theories of andragogy, or the adult equivalent of pedagogy, offer principles for effective adult learning. Knowles (1970; 1990) believes that adult learners are capable of taking responsibility for their own learning and are thus motivated by self-improvement. He claims that this is especially true when subjects have immediate relevance in their personal lives. Beder and Valentine’s (1987) often cited study of adult education programs in Iowa supports Knowles’ theory. Findings show that intrinsic motivation was tied to learners' strong desire to integrate into American society: Adult Basic Education (ABE) learners were largely motivated by self-improvement, helping children, employment and economic concerns, and gaining reading and writing skills. Learners with limited English proficiency (ESL learners) were also motivated by “self-improvement” but especially “within the context of being integrated into American society” (Beder & Valentine, 1987, p. 9). Another prevalent motivation factor for ESL learners was a desire to “function better” at skills such as using a telephone and shopping, and to reduce feelings of loneliness (common for immigrants).

**Quigley’s Theory** -- In addition to the aforementioned theories of Tinto and Knowles, research in adult education generally discusses “barriers” influencing learner persistence. The following categories of barriers to learner persistence were developed by
Quigley (1997): situational (life circumstances such as family responsibilities, finances, transportation), institutional (program factors such as scheduling problems and fees), and dispositional (personal experiences and attitudes, including perceptions about schooling). According to Prins and Schafft (2009), the literature tends to emphasize institutional and dispositional factors while situational factors, although perhaps beyond practitioners’ control, are necessary to grasp as well: “the ways in which social structures and community contexts shape educational participation and achievement” (p. 2280).

**Force-Field Analysis** -- Discussion of barriers alone excludes the opposing, positive forces, which researchers commonly refer to as supports. National researchers Comings et al. (1999) contributed immensely to research in the field, focusing on the factors that support persistence in their Adult Persistence Study. In this study, researchers offer practitioners and administrators practical advice on how to help adults persist. Further, they test out this advice in adult education programs for learners without a high school diploma in five states in New England. The team interviewed 150 learners concerning specific supports and barriers to persistence, employing a “force-field analysis.” In this case, the force-field analysis places the adult learner in a field of forces that are supporting or inhibiting persistence; positive forces help adult learners persist while negative forces push an adult toward dropping out.

The study used four categories of forces: personal (likes and dislikes, attitudes), life-context (transportation, family, health), instructional (teacher, curriculum, feedback), and program (counseling, scheduling, location). The instructional and program forces expand on institutional barriers of earlier studies (e.g. Quigley, 1997). Researchers found that participants cited positive forces helping them to persist significantly more than negative forces. The most frequently mentioned positive support was relationships (in the family,
work, and community) followed by: goal orientation, teachers and other students (or support in the classroom), and positive self (or self-efficacy). Based on their findings, Comings et al. (1999) conclude that strengthening supports is more important than the removal of barriers in increasing persistence.

Recent research from a vastly different context reveals a similar conclusion; Müller’s (2008) study of factors affecting women’s persistence in online programs concluded that variables supporting persistence played a greater role than those impeding it. Also similar to previous findings was the theme of support: much of the participant’s sense of satisfaction came from interactions with their classmates and instructors. Barriers to persistence included balancing multiple responsibilities as working mothers and disappointment in faculty; participants struggled with family obligations and professional responsibilities and found that instructors’ limited communication and engagement hindered persistence.

Also following the importance of supports in persistence, Quigley and Uhland (2000) designed a study using supports to counteract specific dispositional barriers. Their study focused on the first three weeks of enrollment, which proved to be a critical time for many learners to drop out of classes. In this study, “at-risk” participants were identified at intake according to dispositional barriers, and were placed in either a control group, or given one of three support treatments: additional counseling, small teaching groups or one-on-one tutoring groups. Not surprisingly, learners in each of the three treatment groups were significantly more persistent than those in the control group. This study was successful in increasing persistence with an identifiable group, suggesting that effective retention strategies may involve tailoring programs to the needs of specific groups. It is important, then, to review research involving ESL learners to provide an accurate background for this study. Although
there are no known studies on persistence in family literacy programs, these adult learners are part of a larger group of adult ESL learners, so this research will be discussed below.

### 3.3 ESL Persistence Studies

In general, immigrants are not only trying to acculturate to a new culture, but also work, manage households, and raise children. These multiple roles and tasks in tandem with learning a new language often times present significant obstacles to persistence in literacy programs (NCFL & CAL, 2008). However, despite these obstacles, “parents persist in family literacy programs longer than in other types of adult literacy programs” (Padak & Rasinski, 2003, p. 3). Pongsrikul’s (2007) four-year study on the CBET program in San Diego confirms this claim, as all 15 participants had been in the CBET program at least two years or more. Unfortunately, little research has been done on why exactly these family literacy learners persist. We can, however, look to persistence research in various ESL and literacy programs for some answers.

In an attempt to address poor persistence issues in government sponsored ESL programs across the country, various national studies have been conducted. In 1995, the NCES found that limited time, money, child care, and transportation, and lack of knowledge about appropriate programs were barriers to participation. Similar results were identified in 2004, when the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL, 2004) asked “community leaders and educators in communities with recent rapid growth in numbers of immigrant families,” (p. 8) to name the challenges facing immigrants in their communities. Results show that lack of transportation and childcare were by far the most frequently cited barriers. Among others, work schedules, appropriate class/program availability, and social and emotional issues like daily life management in a new country and shame about their limited
education. However, as evidenced by Schalge and Soga (2008), educators and administrators’ perceptions of barriers to persistence may not be accurate.

Schalge and Soga’s (2008) three year ethnographic study of an adult ESL program in Minnesota was conducted to address the fact that 70-85% of learners failed to complete classes in their level within a year, while 20% of learners attended less than 12 hours per year. Researchers found a stark contrast between teacher’s and learner’s perceptions; while learners emphasized instruction and curriculum, teachers usually attributed absences to factors outside of the program such as child care, transportation, employment, and relocation. Based on student feedback, researchers suggested enhancement in curriculum structure and learning environment through “more effective communication among staff and students regarding objectives and expectations,” along with “structured, topical curricula tied to a fixed schedule” (p. 159). Teachers acknowledged the use of “fluid” lessons and curricula to help deal with the open-enrollment admissions policy of the school. Schalge and Soga also encouraged teachers to develop more respectful estimations of students' abilities in order to foster ownership in learning. These suggestions follow Knowles's (1970) principle respecting learners' self-directedness.

Although the aforementioned studies focus on barriers, recent research has also focused on attendance patterns and supports to persistence; in one notable four-year study, researchers from NCSALL and the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (Comings, Cuban, Bos, Porter, & Doolittle, 2003) addressed persistence issues in a study involving nine library literacy programs across the country. Learners were most likely to stop participating within the first three months; however, they frequently moved in and out the programs and often returned after some time. Still, after 18 months, only 15% of students
originally enrolled remained in the program. An interesting finding is that students who persisted longer were also more likely to participate more intensely. Additionally, the time of year, i.e., the quarter in which the student entered the program appeared to have an effect on participation (those entering in July - September months persisted longer). Finally, those who were tutored in small groups or one-to-one participated more than those who studied in computer labs. These findings again emphasize the impact of institutional factors on persistence.

Also focusing on the supports to retention, research in San Diego conducted by the SDCCD’s noncredit ESL department (Jarrell, 2006) addressed declining enrollment and rapid turnover rates by focusing on classes with high retention rates. Retention rates were determined by dividing the average class size by the total number of students enrolled. Eight classes with the highest retention rates, which were also chosen to represent all sites and levels of the program, were analyzed in the study. Researchers observed classes and interviewed teachers and students to find similarities among all classes; results reveal the following consistent themes: structure (schedules, routines), organization (continuous learner engagement), community (built among classmates and with the teacher), and expertise (teacher knowledge and explanations). Again, institutional factors were prevalent in persistence.

Although not focused on persistence, Buttaro’s (2004) ethnographic study of Latinas in a New York ESL program offers a comprehensive overview of findings from persistence research. Essays, interviews, and questionnaires were collected from 8 participants to identify “the educational, cultural, and linguistic adjustments and experiences encountered by Hispanic adult females in learning English as a second language” (p. 21). Results reveal
barriers to learning English including: “being in mixed-level classes, fear of speaking, fear of ridicule, lack of child care, difficult classes, and programs that did not offer flexible scheduling” (p. 32). As noted in previous research, participants revealed that the difficulties of going to school, working, and caring for children were causes of drop-out. Furthermore, the majority of the participants affirmed the importance of support and encouragement; participants believed a key factor in their success in learning English centered on having their teachers’ understanding. Likewise, the role of the instructor was viewed as crucial in helping students to succeed. Also notable was the notion that a positive attitude toward learning increases performance. This dispositional trait seems to reach across demographics; positive attitudes towards learning were found in most learners in a London study, while most of those choosing not to study (non-participants) had negative attitudes about learning (Bariso, 2008).

3.4 Summary

Family literacy programs have various goals, and are implemented through the assistance of diverse organizations. As such, these programs face many challenges, and research has shown them to be both successful and unsuccessful. Under no debate, however, is the necessity for learner persistence in a successful program. Despite the various definitions of persistence, many researchers agree that persistence involves continuing education until a learner reaches his/her goals. Unfortunately, low attendance and persistence rates plague San Diego Continuing Education family literacy programs. The current study will analyze barriers and supports to persistence in this population, in order to determine correlations between attendance rates and a selected set of variables.
CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

To better understand how adult ESL learners in family literacy classes persist with their instruction, this study utilized an array of techniques (a focus group interview, surveys, and follow-up interviews) to examine relationships between a variety of variables and attendance rates. The intent of this investigation was to contribute to current research on learner persistence in adult education programs, focusing specifically on three family literacy classes in San Diego, California. The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between learner demographics and attendance rates?
2. Is there a relationship between situational, institutional, and dispositional factors and attendance rates?

In light of these questions, this chapter discusses the methods used for the study. The first section (4.1) will describe the context of the study, including program design and curricula, and the participants involved. The second section (4.2) will describe the research tools used for the study, focusing on the survey administered to students and informal interviews. A description of the statistical methods used to analyze the data will follow.

4.1 CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

Adult participants attend family literacy classes at the same location where their children attend school during the Fall 2009 semester. The fall semester follows the San Diego Community College’s 17-week semester, from September 2009 – January 2010.
Because these are family literacy classes located at different elementary schools, classes will be identified by their location. The three family literacy classes analyzed in the study are: Kimbrough Elementary, Field Elementary, and Edison Elementary. Attendance rates by class are shown in Table 4.1 providing a general idea of how the issue of learner persistence affects the three classes in question.

Table 4.1. Attendance Rates of All Students Enrolled, Fall 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total students enrolled</th>
<th>Total hours of all students enrolled</th>
<th>Total possible hours per student</th>
<th>Average hours per student</th>
<th>Average attendance rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kimbrough</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4054</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>47.69</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1552</td>
<td>101.5</td>
<td>37.85</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edison</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2297.5</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>52.22</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.67</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,634.50</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.92</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.92</strong></td>
<td><strong>43.4%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 4.1 shows, the average attendance rate for all three classes is approximately 43%. Kimbrough had a significantly higher number of students enrolled and thus, the total number of hours of all students attending was also substantially higher than at Field and Edison. However, when attendance rates were calculated, Edison had a considerably higher overall rate of attendance, approximately 15% higher than Kimbrough and Field.

Field and Edison Elementary schools are currently run under the CBET program. Kimbrough was part of the CBET program for six years, then Even Start for five years, and currently, Kimbrough’s Parent Academic Liaison (PAL) writes numerous grants to help fund

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1 A fourth class was to be included, but unfortunately, due to low attendance hours, was closed before data collection was complete.
its various family literacy classes. At every school, general administration and funding for childcare is provided through San Diego Unified School District, while the SDCCD provides instructors and teaching materials. Staff training and guidance within the SDCCD is available from the CBET/Family Literacy coordinator, ESL assistant chairs, and the ESL program chair. In sum, while the funding and managing of the three classes differ and overlap, for all intents and purposes the classes are run very similarly.

All three classes are held in classrooms and/or the library at the respective elementary schools, and are taught by part-time SDCCD Continuing Education ESL instructors with at least seven years of teaching experience. The instructors at Field and Edison have MA degrees in TESL, and I am working towards my MA in Applied Linguistics as the instructor at Kimbrough Elementary. In the selected family literacy classes, instructors have very similar curricula, assessments, and hours of instruction; classes are held in the morning, between 8:00am – 11:30am, for a total of 7-9 hours per week. Each class is non-credit, multi-level, and adheres to an open-enrollment policy in which new students can begin or end class on any given day.

In all three classes, teachers utilize both a core textbook (Ventures or Side by Side Plus) and a comprehensive picture dictionary to guide lessons and curricula. Syllabi for all three classes (Appendix A) indicate integration of a weekly thematic topic, language focus (grammar), and writing objective. According to the syllabi, thematic topics were consistent across classes; the following topics appeared in all three classes: personal identification, family, holidays, “around town,” and parent-teacher conferences. Additionally, daily

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2 While Kimbrough has administrative assistance from its PAL, Field and Edison have on-site Community Assistants (CAs) to help recruit and administer the CBET classes.
routines, school, life cycles/events, calendar/time, shopping, and employment were topics in any two classes, while students at Field Elementary studied two additional topics of health and leisure. All teachers indicated that weekly or bi-weekly quizzes or assessments of grammar and/or vocabulary were administered to evaluate student progress.

Moreover, each class spent three weeks in the Fall 2009 semester studying “EL Civics,” a program that integrates “English language instruction with opportunities to learn about civil rights, civic participation and responsibility, and citizenship,” (NCFL & CAL, 2008, p. 14). After EL Civics training on a particular topic, students are individually evaluated on oral and written achievement. Because the SDCCD receives additional funding from EL Civics achievement, ESL instructors are required to administer EL Civics testing at least once per year. Funding is also provided from student gains on CASAS tests, so all teachers were required to administer the standardized CASAS test in September and November of 2009. As a result, each teacher reported focus on themes of CASAS testing skills in their classes throughout the semester.

All subjects in the study were enrolled in family literacy classes at the aforementioned schools in San Diego in Fall 2009. Participants were adults of mixed gender and age, although the vast majority of family literacy learners in San Diego are middle-aged females from Mexico (Pongsrikul, 2009). Spoken English language proficiencies vary between no experience in English at all to speaking relatively fluently. Similarly, CASAS test results from all classes reveal that reading abilities range over six levels, from pre-literacy to low advanced. The wide range of English proficiency levels in family literacy programs are reflected in the participants of the present study.
4.2 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The specific procedures used to collect information for this study included (1) a focus-group interview with students with high attendance rates; (2) a questionnaire administered to students in three family literacy programs, (see Appendix B) and (3) follow-up interviews with the ESL teachers of these classes, Elementary school administrators, and SDCCD administrators. As the current study looks to evaluate the relationships between a multitude of variables and attendance rates, a survey was chosen as the main data collection procedure in order to gather as much information from participants as possible.

Because the research questions are two-fold, the questionnaire was designed to address both research areas. First, the questionnaire asks for demographic information, including: name, date of birth, gender, native country, native language, education level, length of time in the US, length of time studying English, employment status, number of cohabitants, and gross family income.\(^3\) The second part of the survey analyzes the three sets of factors that have been shown to influence learner persistence: situational (life circumstances), institutional (program factors), and dispositional (personal experiences and attitudes) (e.g. Castles, 2004; Prins & Schafft, 2009; Quigley, 1997). Students were asked to respond to 40 statements on a Likert-scale (1-5) using degrees of importance, agreement, or frequency. An example of a statement reflecting a situational factor is: “I don’t come to class because I have to work” (always, usually, sometimes, rarely, never); an institutional factor: “I like working with students of different levels in my class” (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree); and a dispositional factor: “I want to better integrate into the

\(^3\) As noted, names and dates of birth were removed from data analysis to protect anonymity.
American culture” (very important, important, somewhat important, of little importance, not important). Each participant’s demographics and statements were correlated with attendance information to uncover relationships between variables.

In the process of designing the student questionnaire, both the findings of previous research and the information gathered from the focus-group interview and helped determine relevant variables to include on the student questionnaire. The focus group interview included seven learners with high attendance rates who had been enrolled in the program for at least one year. Themes of helping children and family members, and acknowledgement of the importance of English were noted as important supports for these students, while the barriers of work and illnesses were noted as barriers to attendance. Each of these themes is included in at least one of the statements on the student questionnaire. Because of the insight gained from this interview, it was decided to include open-ended questions on the survey, which encourage more personal responses.

Lastly, the two open ended questions are: “What do you like about class?” and “Why have you or any other students you know dropped-out of class in the past?” These questions were used to elicit specific supports and barriers of individual participants. These responses were evaluated qualitatively to reveal preferences and life experiences of the population in question. As the first question focuses on supports to persistence, I chose to focus on responses of participants with 80% attendance rates or higher, to find themes within this group. The latter question focuses on barriers, and because of the scarcity of responses to this question, all feedback was analyzed.

After the initial questionnaire was designed, a pilot study was conducted, and five ambiguous or unclear test items were removed. The final student questionnaire was
administered to three classes by the researcher, outside of class time. The 60 final usable questionnaires were then analyzed to find significant relationships between attendance rates and a set of variables, such as the number of years a student received formal education. The student questionnaires were then analyzed to determine the factors that most prominently affect attendance rates, and thus, learner persistence. Attendance rates are used as measurable indicators of learner persistence during a relatively short one-semester period.

4.3 ATTENDANCE RATES AND GROUPS

Instead of using a student’s total number of attendance hours, attendance rates were chosen as a measure of learner persistence in the given semester. Spellings and Simon (2005) demonstrate how to calculate an attendance rate: daily attendance hours should be added up, then divided by the total number of hours that the participant could have attended, as determined by his or her enrollment date. Attendance rates provide a more complete picture of an individual’s participation pattern because they take into account learner start dates, which vary greatly in open-enrollment classes. Attendance rates were thus calculated for all students enrolled in the family literacy classes for the Fall 2009 semester. Table 4.2 shows a selection of attendance rates from participants at Kimbrough Elementary. Based on the principles outlined below, two students started later; hence their total possible attendance hours reflect this, as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Sample Attendance Rates, Fall 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Total Possible Attendance Hours</th>
<th>Total Hours Attended</th>
<th>Attendance Rate</th>
<th>Attendance Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9/14/09</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10/20/09</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/29/09</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9/14/09</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>99.1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to attendance rates, another variable of “attendance group” was used as a measure of learner persistence. Table 4.2 (p. 34) shows how the sample participants are distributed by attendance group. This variable places participants in one of four quartile percentage groups based on attendance rates. As such, the four attendance groups correspond to the following attendance rates: (1) 75-100%; (2) 50-74%; (3) 25-49%; (4) 0-24%. Those in group 1, with a 75-100% attendance rate are considered persisters. The attendance group variable was designed for a statistical analysis, to reveal qualities of a particular group as opposed to the linear distribution of attendance rates.

4.4 PROCEDURES AND DATA COLLECTION

The researcher came to each school site and personally gathered data from volunteer participants. Participants were approached at the end of class with the opportunity to participate in the study. Learners enrolled in any of the three classes were considered eligible participants. No incentives were offered to those who chose to participate. The researcher has advanced proficiency in Spanish, and verbally announced the opportunity to participate in both English and Spanish. Participants were assured that there were no “right” or “wrong” answers, and that their responses would remain confidential. The questionnaire was translated into Spanish, and specific questions were answered during the data collection to ensure participant understanding.

A total of 72 questionnaires were collected. Since 12 students had no attendance data available for the Fall 2009 semester, they were removed. Of the 60 questionnaires collected, 33 were from Kimbrough, 11 from Field, and 16 from Edison. Participants from Kimbrough

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4 These students were mostly from the fourth class that was closed (see Footnote 2).
Elementary contributed to just over half of the students in the study because Kimbrough has a larger number of total students enrolled and thus, a larger number of potential participants. Table 4.3 shows participant percentages contributed by each school: Kimbrough contributed 55%, Field 18.3%, and Edison 26.7%. Next, the total number of students enrolled in each class is displayed: 85, 41, and 44, respectively. The final column shows the percentage of total students enrolled in each class vs. 170, the number of students enrolled in all three classes. Comparing these two percentages, we see that proportionately, the number of participants in the study is similar to the total number enrolled.

Table 4.3. Participants by Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total # of Participants in Study</th>
<th>Total # of Students Enrolled in Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kimbrough</td>
<td>33 (55.0%)</td>
<td>85 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>11 (18.3%)</td>
<td>41 (24.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edison</td>
<td>16 (26.7%)</td>
<td>44 (25.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>60 (100%)</td>
<td>170 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After student questionnaires were gathered and results were analyzed, the researcher conducted informal interviews with program instructors and administrators guided by the results of the statistical analysis. As the researcher is the instructor of one of the classes, interviews were conducted with the two other instructors. Next, interviews were conducted with the on-site PAL or CA at each elementary school. Finally, a third set of interviews with SDCCD administrators were conducted, including the CBET/Family Literacy Coordinator and the Dean of ESL. Most interviews were conducted in person, but two were conducted by phone.
Every effort was made to follow ethical research practices during the implementation of this study. Because attendance data involves private student record information, participants completed a SDCCD Continuing Education “Release of Student Information” form authorizing the disclosure of this information to the researcher. A release form of this nature is required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), which states that schools must have a student's consent prior to the disclosure of education records. Upon collection of all student questionnaires and release forms, all documents were submitted to the SDCCD Professional Policies and Review Committee to release student attendance data to the researcher. The committee added student start dates, attendance hours, and current ages to the forms, and removed student names and dates of birth to protect anonymity before returning the questionnaires to the researcher.

**4.5 Statistical Analysis**

The dependent variables of this research are student attendance rates, and attendance rate groups, with several independent variables (demographics and situational, institutional, and dispositional factors). Variables are based on interval scales analyzed statistically using the Pearson correlation to reveal relationships between all variables. For each of the 60 participants, a total of 51 variables were entered into SPSS for statistical analysis: participant responses to 7 demographic questions and 40 Likert-scale statements, as well as participant attendance rates, attendance groups, classes, and start dates. Pearson correlation was chosen because it shows whether there is a direct and statistically significant relationship between any of the 51 interval variables.

Although the questionnaire included the demographics of: sex, native country, and native language, these were not included in correlation analysis because no more than three
males, two non-native Spanish speakers, and three students from outside Mexico were included in the study. These differences are not statistically significant. The other seven remaining demographic variables were correlated with attendance rates to uncover possible relationships. Finally, because just five variables were found to significantly correlate with “Attendance,” Chapter 5 elaborates on the characteristics of these variables, including discussion of further variables correlations. Discussion of these additional correlations is included to give a broader understanding of the five significant variables. However, only those variables with the strongest relationships (significant at the .01 level) are examined.
CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine factors that relate to persistence patterns among adult ESL family literacy students in three San Diego schools. Questionnaires and attendance data for 60 students were examined for this study. The research questions guiding the study were the following:

1. Is there a relationship between learner demographics and attendance rates?
2. Is there a relationship between situational, institutional, and dispositional factors and attendance rates?

This chapter will discuss the results of the research questions.

The first section will describe attendance rates and groups of the participants, gathered with permission from participants from the SDCCD. This section will also describe student demographics, as gathered from the student questionnaires, followed by a review of correlations between attendance rates and demographics. The third section will describe results from the second part of the questionnaire, in which students ranked 40 statements referring to situational, institutional, or dispositional factors using degrees of importance, agreement, or frequency. Correlations between attendance rates and situational, institutional, or dispositional factors will be presented. The fourth section will discuss answers to the open-ended questions found at the end of the questionnaire: “What do you like best about your class?” and “Have you or any of your friends dropped out of English class in the past? Why?” The first question seeks more in depth answers about supports to persistence while the second question looks further into barriers to persistence. Finally, a summary of findings
will be presented. For ease of understanding, I have included discussion after each of the four main sections.

### 5.1 Attendance Rates and Groups

Attendance rates of all participants were calculated based on each individual’s start date and hours attended in the Fall 2009 semester. Average participant attendance rates by class are homogenous, ranging from 70.2% (Kimbrough), 71.4% (Field), to 73.2% (Edison). The box plot chart in Figure 5.1 demonstrates the range of attendance rates in each class. The ends of the whiskers demonstrate sample minimums and maximums; Kimbrough has the largest range and Field the smallest range. The bottom of the box denotes the lower quartile of attendance rates, and the top the upper quartile. The median attendance rate within these quartiles is shown with the band in the box.

![Figure 5.1. Participant attendance rates.](image)
As another variable in correlation analysis, participant attendance rates were separated into four tiers: 1-24%, 25-49%, 50-74%, and 75-100% to form attendance groups. No participants in the study fell into the lowest category (0-24%); 9 students fell into the second tier of 25-49%; 24 students fell into the third tier of 50-74%; and 27 students fell into the highest tier of 75-100% attendance rates. This distribution is represented in the Figure 5.2.

![Figure 5.2. Attendance group distribution of participants.](image)

### 5.2 Demographics

Before discussing correlations between demographics and attendance rates, it will be useful to describe the demographics of the study’s participants. According to the data gathered on the student questionnaires, 57 participants are female, with only three males. Of the total, 54 participants are from Mexico, with three from El Salvador, two from Pakistan, and one from Honduras. In sum, approximately 97% of participants are from Latin America, and native languages follow suit; 97% of participants’ native language is Spanish, while 3% is Urdu (a language of Pakistan). Regarding formal education in these countries, participants attended school for an average of 8.7 years. A majority of students, 52%, have received
between six and nine years of formal schooling in their native country, while 15% have received five years or less, and 33% have over 10 years of foreign education completed.

In terms of age, the largest category of participants (42%) is between 31 - 40 years old. The vast majority, 72%, have lived in the United States for over five years. Despite the length of time participants have resided in the U.S., the amount of time they have studied English is much less; 36% have studied English for 0-4 months; 17% for 5 - 11 months; 29% for 1-2 years; and just 17% for 3 years or more. Regarding employment, 27% of participants are employed (full time, part time or with multiple jobs), while 33% are unemployed and 40% are not seeking work. It can be assumed that the majority of those who are not seeking work are either housewives or retired. Participants have varied household occupancies; most residences house 4-5 people (42%), or 6-7 people (27%). Meanwhile, over half (59%) of the participant’s monthly household incomes fall between $1000-$1999, with an additional 26% earning under $1000 per month. Overall, the demographics of the participants fall in line with demographics gathered from CBET participants in San Diego (Pongsrikul, 2009). All demographics are summarized in Table 5.1, with numbers under the demographic variables indicating the levels used in statistical analysis (if any).

### Table 5.1. Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
Table 5.1. (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Native language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Foreign education completed  \( Mean = 8.68 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No schooling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st - 6th grade</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th - 9th grade</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th - 12th grade</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 12 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age group

| (1) 1-20                          | 1   | 1.7% |
| (2) 21-30                          | 17  | 28.3%|
| (3) 31-40                          | 25  | 41.7%|
| (4) 41-50                          | 11  | 18.3%|
| (5) 51+                            | 6   | 10.0%|

Time in U.S.

| (1) 0-4 months                    | 2   | 3.3% |
| (2) 5-11 months                   | 4   | 6.7% |
| (3) 1-2 years                     | 2   | 3.3% |
| (4) 3-4 years                     | 9   | 15.0%|
| (5) 5+ years                      | 43  | 71.7%|

Time studying English

| (1) 0-4 months                    | 21  | 36.2%|
| (2) 5-11 months                   | 10  | 17.2%|
| (3) 1-2 years                     | 17  | 29.3%|

(\text{table continues})
Table 5.1. (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>3-4 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Employment status**

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>Employed - Full time</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>Employed - Part time</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>Employed - Multiple Jobs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>Not seeking work</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Household occupancy**

*Mean = 5.75*

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 - 3 people</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 5 people</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 7 people</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - 9 people</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+ people</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Monthly household income**

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>$499 or less</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>$500-$999</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>$1000-$1499</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>$1500-$1999</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>$2000 or more</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: DEMOGRAPHICS AND ATTENDANCE RATES**

Because the demographics of gender, country of birth, and native language have so little variance, they were not included in the statistical analysis; as noted, at least 90% of participants were females from Mexico, with a native language of Spanish. The subsequent demographic variables analyzed include: Foreign education completed (Grade), Age group
(Age), Time in U.S. (US_Time), Time studying English (Eng_Time), Employment Status (Job_Status), Household occupancy (Cohabitants), and Household income (Income). No significant correlations were found between these demographic variables and attendance rates or groups. In other words, attendance rates and learner persistence do not have a strong relationship with any of the aforementioned demographic variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between demographics and attendance rates can be accepted. This finding falls in line with previous research that demographics do not have a significant relationship with learner persistence (e.g. Kinerney, 2007). However, demographics do have significant correlations with other variables; those with the strongest relationships (significant at the .01 level) will be discussed for further understanding of the population in question.

Notably, a participant’s foreign education completed has a negative relationship with age. In other words, the more years a participant has completed in school, the younger they are likely to be. This relationship is demonstrated in Figure 5.3. This finding is logical, because the younger population is becoming more educated across the world. Older participants may need extra assistance in the classroom because generally, they have attended fewer years of formal education. Foreign education completed also has a strong relationship with the variable “I want to help my children with their homework,” indicating that the more years of schooling a participant has completed, the more they want to learn English in order to help their children with homework. The contrary is true for the relationship between age and wanting to help children with homework; the older a participant is, the less likely they are to be learning English to help their children with homework. This finding indicates that
older participants have fewer years of formal education and less desire to help their children with homework. This may be because their children are no longer in school.

Meanwhile, time in the U.S. has a strong relationship with learning English to become a better parent. In other words, the longer a participant has been living in the U.S., the more important they believe it is to learn English in order to be a better parent. Furthermore, an interesting correlation is found between income level and the desire to improve computer skills. Those with higher income levels feel that it is more important to improve their computer skills. Quite possibly those with higher income levels are more exposed to computers and thus, are more aware of their benefits.

Significant relationships with job status are noteworthy. Correlation statistics show that job status has a negative relationship with coming to class to see friends, meaning that students who are more fully employed are less likely to come to class because they want to
see friends. Perhaps students who are employed develop relationships at work and have
different reasons for attending class. Not surprisingly, job status also has an exceptionally
strong relationship with not coming to class because of work; the more fully employed a
participant is, the more likely he or she is to miss class because of work. Finally, a
relationship is shown between the number of cohabitants and not coming to school because
of participation in other school activities. This means that participants with more cohabitants
are more likely to miss class because they are attending other classes or activities offered at
the Elementary school. This finding is logical, as more family members create more
commitments, often times at school.

5.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: SITUATIONAL,
INSTITUTIONAL, DISPOSITIONAL FACTORS AND
ATTENDANCE RATES

In contrast to demographics, there are significant relationships between attendance
rates and five situational, dispositional, and institutional variables. The null hypothesis, that
there is no relationship, can be rejected. Table 5.2 shows these significant correlations, where
the correlation coefficient (the direct measure of strength) is significant at at least the .05
level. This value represents the percentage chance that if one variable occurs, the other will
as well. The dependent variables are a participant’s attendance rate (Attendance) and the
corresponding attendance groups (Att_Gp).

Note that the positive and negative values in the chart are counter-intuitive; the
negative value for the variables “I come to school because I like my teacher” (Like_Teacher),
and “I come to class because I enjoy learning” (Like_Learn), represent a higher degree of
agreement with the statements, so that if a participant has a high attendance rate, they are
likely to agree with the statements. Conversely, the positive value for the variables “I don’t
Table 5.2. Correlations with Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Start_Date Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Att_Gp</th>
<th>Like_Teacher</th>
<th>Like_Learn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start_Date</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.499**</td>
<td>.431**</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>.357**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.281</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>-.499**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.915**</td>
<td>-.287</td>
<td>-.306**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Att_Gp</td>
<td>.431**</td>
<td>-.915**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.369**</td>
<td>.315*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like_Teacher</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>-.287*</td>
<td>.369**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.371**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.281</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like_Learn</td>
<td>.357**</td>
<td>-.306*</td>
<td>.315*</td>
<td>.371**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No_Work</td>
<td>-.303*</td>
<td>.321*</td>
<td>-.267*</td>
<td>-.347**</td>
<td>-0.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No_Housewk</td>
<td>-0.177</td>
<td>.329*</td>
<td>-.248</td>
<td>0.157</td>
<td>-0.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.236</td>
<td>0.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
come to class because I am working at my job” (No_Work), and “I don’t come to class because I am working at home, or running errands” (No_Housewk) represent a higher degree of frequency, so that a participant with a high attendance rate less frequently misses class due to work or housework.

As to be expected, the strongest relationship is between Attendance and Attendance Group. This is because attendance groups were created directly linking to attendance rates. All variables that are significant with attendance rates are also significant with attendance groups except for not coming to class because “I am working at home or running errands” (No_Housewk). This means that when students are divided into groups based on their attendance, the strong relationship between attendance rates and not coming to school because of housework obligations diminishes; attendance groups did not give significantly different responses to this statement. Correlations with attendance rate instead of attendance group will be discussed next.

5.4.1 Correlations Revealing Barriers to Persistence

Attendance rates show a strong relationship with two variables: “I don’t come to class because I am working at my job” and “I don’t come to class because I am working at home, or running errands,” which can be categorized as barriers to persistence. These relationships show that students with higher attendance rates less frequently miss class because they are working or doing housework. Conversely, those with lower attendance rates more frequently miss class due to work or housework. A look into these variables by class reveals very similar results; students in all classes answered that they “rarely” or “never” miss class because of work or housework. Missing class due to work and housework duties can be
classified as situational barriers. However, institutions may work with family literacy
learners on time management skills to neutralize these barriers.

Furthermore, a look into the variables that correlate (at the .01 level) with missing
class due to work or housework are compelling; these relationships can tell us more about the
people with work and housework barriers. As previously noted, not coming to class because
of work has a strong relationship with “Job status.” Figure 5.4 demonstrates that people who
work full time more frequently miss class because of work, and also shows further variables
strongly correlate with missing class due to work. Interestingly, work related absences have
positive relationships with missing class because “I’m tired” and “it’s too difficult for me.” It
can be assumed that those who work more miss more class, causing them to feel that class is
too difficult when they do attend. Furthermore, those who work more may have more
pressure, stress, or busier lives and may find that they are too tired to attend class (especially
if it is difficult).

Another variable positively correlating with missing class due to work (not included
in Figure 5.4) is: “I don’t come to class because I don’t think I’m improving,” which may be
similar to missing class because it is difficult. In other words, those who work more attend
less, and feel that they are learning less. This could be because frequent absences disrupt the
learning process, or because more fully employed learners have different goals, and may not
be improving in the ways that they feel they should. Further, it could be because those more
fully employed have higher proficiencies in English, and improvements may not be as
noticeable.

Finally, the variable “I come to class because I like the teacher” has a negative
relationship with work-related absenteeism. Those who work less are more likely to come to
class because they like the teacher, while those who work more are less likely to come to
class because they like the teacher. This finding relates to the idea that those who work more
may have different reasons for attending. Perhaps those with jobs have more exposure to
native speakers than those without, or perhaps they are less interested in the social aspects of
the classroom.

As for missing class due to “working at home or running errands,” analysis reveals
three more significant relationships: “I don’t come to class because I’m tired;” “I come to
class because my family makes me;” and “I don’t come to class because my family members
are sick or have doctor’s appointments.” The same conclusion as noted for learners who
work more applies to those with more demands at home: they may be too tired to attend class

Figure 5.4. Absenteeism variables by job status.
because of more pressure, stress, or busier lives. The subsequent correlations reveal an insight into familial obligations; those participants who more regularly miss class due to housework also more frequently miss class because family members are ill (as opposed to their own illness), while they come to class more frequently because of pressure from family members. These correlations seem to be linked to the concept of *familia* in Latino culture (Abi-Nader, 1990), which is especially important to new immigrant families. This means that whatever one does in everyday life should benefit not only the individual but also the family. Accordingly, meeting the needs of the family is one of the greatest motivations for success. As a result, adult learners may either attend class or miss class because obligations for the success of the family supersede personal aspirations.

**5.4.2 Correlations Revealing Supports to Persistence**

Regarding supports to persistence, “I come to class because I like my teacher” and “I come to class because I enjoy learning” are significantly correlated with attendance rates. This means that those participants who more strongly agreed that they come to class because they like the teacher or because they like to learn were more likely to have a higher attendance rate. Notably, these two variables also positively correlate with each other; those who agree that they like to learn also agree that they like the teacher. This finding may mean that learners with an affinity toward learning may enter the classroom with a preconceived affinity toward the teacher as well.

Despite the ambiguity of the statement, “I come to the class because I like the teacher,” I assume that those who more strongly agree with this statement are also more interested in community and building relationships in the classroom. This is demonstrated in a positive correlation between “I like the teacher” and “I come to class because I want to see
my friends.” It is clear that attending class to see friends reveals a desire for community and relationships. Finally, another positive relationship with liking the teacher is found in “I like listening to songs in my class.” This relationship is more difficult to analyze, but may also reveal a preference toward teaching style, or certain activities that a teacher utilizes.

Next, looking at the variable “I enjoy learning,” a correlation is found with “I study English at home.” This is a logical relationship, because those who enjoy learning may also find it enjoyable to study at home. Unfortunately, most family literacy students do not buy books, so students do not have the opportunity to bring important materials home to study. Another intriguing relationship is revealed with enjoying learning: a participant’s start date. This variable was part of the attendance data gathered from the SDCCD (and was not part of the questionnaire). Two levels are found within the start date variable: (1) those who enrolled the first week of class, September 14, 2009, and (2) those who enrolled any subsequent week (through January 2010). Thus, the positive relationship between these two variables means that a participant who enjoys learning is more likely to enroll the week that class begins. This finding may indicate that those enjoy learning most planned their enrollment in a family literacy class ahead of time.

This brings us to discussion of the final, strongest relationship with attendance: start date. This relationship means that participants with higher attendance were likely to have begun class the first week of school, while those with lower attendance rates are likely to have begun after the first week. Figure 5.5 demonstrates this relationship, as the line representing attendance rates drops for those enrolling after the first week. It is important to remember that in calculating attendance rates, the calculation of total possible hours was
based on start dates, so that a participant who enrolled in class the last month of school, but attended every subsequent day could have a 100% attendance rate.

The relationship between these two variables is an important finding because it questions the effectiveness of open-enrollment policies, specifically regarding learner persistence. For instance, although teachers and administrators may not have control over when a learner joins a family literacy class, the way that “late-enrollees” are oriented and brought into the class can be better managed. A deeper look into the institutional processes used for accepting new students into an open-enrollment class is critical. Furthermore, more attention and emphasis could be placed on recruitment in family literacy classes from the beginning of the semester so that more learners join from the first week. However, as noted, part of this finding relates to dispositional qualities of the learners themselves; differences between the students who enroll in classes the first week of school and after the first week
are evidenced by the correlation with the variable “I come to class because I enjoy learning.”
(Start date did not have any other relationships significant at the .01 level.)

5.5 OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Results of the last two questions on the survey reconfirm many of the results of the correlation analysis. The first question, “What do you like best about your class?” focused on supports to persistence. Unfortunately many students answered this question with a simple phrase like, “learning English,” which does not provide much insight. However, through focusing on the responses of students with attendance rates of 80% or more, two themes appeared: (1) shared experiences/camaraderie with classmates, and (2) the instructor’s teaching style, specifically involving patience and how things are explained. It is important to note that both of these themes were prevalent in all three classes.

Regarding the theme of shared experiences, participants indicated liking “la union,” or the unity of the class; “sharing with everyone;” and “learning English and sharing experiences with my classmates.” As for teaching style, participants wrote that they liked: “Everything, she explains very well and it’s not difficult for me;” “I like that she explains things very well, it’s good how the teacher runs the class;” “The class because the instructor teaches well and has patience.” This theme of teaching style fits in with the correlation results, which indicated that liking the teacher has an effect on attendance rates. Furthermore, the theme of camaraderie ties in with previous research; community is known to be a prevalent factor in learner persistence.

The second question: “Have you or any of your friends dropped-out of English class in the past? Why?” brought forth fewer responses. Half of the participants did not answer this question, or simply said that they had never dropped out of class. However, three themes
emerged from all participant responses. The most common reason for dropping out was due to work (n=7). This supports findings of the Pearson correlation, in which work is the most significant barrier to persistence. Another common response (n=4) was because of a move (out of the country or locally). These two barriers are situational, and therefore difficult to manage from an institutional perspective. Finally, a theme of the class being too difficult emerged (n=4); one student mentioned pronunciation especially as being too difficult, while others said learners simply “didn’t understand” or “couldn’t learn.” This is an interesting finding from an institutional perspective, especially as an issue that may be more prevalent in the multi-level classroom. This finding also arose in the correlation analysis as a variable with a strong relationship with missing class due to work.

5.6 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Attendance rates were calculated for 60 learners in 3 different family literacy classes, revealing average attendance rates of 70.2% at Kimbrough, 71.4% at Field, and 73.2% at Edison elementary schools. Questionnaire results find that the majority of participants are females from Mexico who have lived in the U.S. for over five years. Furthermore, learners are most likely to fall into the following demographic categories: 6-9 years of foreign education completed, 31-40 years of age, 0-4 months of English classes, $1000-$1999 monthly household income, and not seeking work.

Pearson correlation analysis between 51 items reveal five variables (besides attendance group) which have a strong relationship with attendance rates. However, none of these variables involve demographics, so the first research question, seeking a relationship between demographics and attendance rates, is answered: demographic variables do not have a relationship with attendance rates, and thus, learner persistence. Demographics do have
relationships with other variables, though. For instance, age and grade are negatively correlated, while income and a desire to improve computer skills are positively correlated.

The second research question, seeking relationships between attendance rates and various situational, institutional, and dispositional variables, uncovered two barriers to persistence: not attending class due to work or housework, and two supports to persistence: liking the teacher and enjoying learning. The strongest relationship, however, was with a participant’s start date. This brings up considerable implications for the management of open-enrollment classes. Further correlations found with these five significant variables were discussed, providing further insight into their characteristics. For example, start date was shown to have a strong relationship with enjoying learning.

It should also be noted that these five variables interact with each other and attendance rates concurrently. Figure 5.6 demonstrates how start date and liking the teacher simultaneously impact attendance rates. Under the heading “Like Teacher,” a value of 1 indicates that a participant strongly agrees with the statement, “I come to class because I like my teacher, while 5 indicates the participant strongly disagrees. It is clear that participants who began the first week of class have higher attendance rates, but when these participants disagreed with the statement “I come to class because I like my teacher,” attendance rates were lower. Conversely, students enrolling in class after the first week had low attendance rates unless they strongly agreed that they come to class because they like the teacher. In other words, one variable alone may not be strong enough to determine a certain attendance rate. In sum, results from the Pearson correlation reveal intriguing relationships among variables, which all interact, influencing attendance rates in many ways.
Finally, results of the open-ended questions mainly supported findings of the statistical correlations. One participant’s response summarizes the supports to persistence well: “I appreciate the teacher’s way of teaching, how we get along in class, and I appreciate my classmates.” Along with the supports of community and teaching style, common barriers mentioned included work, relocation, and the difficulty of classes. Overall, results of the questionnaires bring up compelling issues to address at the institutional level, specifically concerning start date, or the integration of new students into class after the first week.
CHAPTER 6  

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine variables that contribute to attendance rates, and thus, learner persistence, in San Diego family literacy classes. The first four chapters introduced the study, its purpose and research questions, described the methods used, and discussed the results. This chapter will integrate the data, and discuss recommendations for family literacy programs and future research in the field. The first section provides an overview of the main findings and implications of the study in light of previous research. The second section will offer policy and practitioner recommendations. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the study’s limitations and suggestions for future research.

6.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This section summarizes the study’s main findings, highlighting demographics, barriers to persistence, supports to persistence, and a learner’s start date.

6.1.1 Demographic Findings

Demographic data collected in this study corroborate data collected in Pongsrikul’s (2009) study of all CBET participants. Findings indicate that the learners enrolled in family literacy classes in San Diego are principally middle-aged female Latinas who do not have a high school diploma. Most participants have lived in the United States for over three years and are either unemployed or not seeking work. While most participants live with 4-7 people, 85% of monthly household incomes are less than $2000 per month, placing them below the
poverty level. All demographic data gathered in the current study was analyzed to reveal possible relationships with attendance rates. No correlations were found. This finding implies that one’s demographics do not affect learner persistence.

Likewise, there has been a considerable amount of research concerning this specific population with the goal of increasing literacy skills in both immigrant adults and children. Although some believe that adult Latinos with limited formal education do not value, or lack interest in, their children’s education, recent research has disputed this (i.e. Pongsrikul, 2007; Prins & Schafft, 2009; Rodriguez-Brown & Meehan, 1998). For example, Prins and Schafft’s (2009) study found that “family literacy participants characterized themselves as determined individuals who value education and want to ‘make something’ of themselves and create a ‘better life’ for their children and families” (p. 2297). This study adds to the argument that the population in question does indeed value their own education and their children’s education; it is not because of a person’s ethnicity, education, or income that they persist or drop-out of family literacy classes.

### 6.1.2 Barriers to Persistence

The second research question, seeking relationships between situational, institutional, and dispositional variables found five significant correlations. Two of these can be classified as situational barriers to persistence: not coming to class because of work, and not coming to class because of housework. Likewise, in the survey’s open-ended questions, work was the most commonly mentioned reason for dropping out of class, followed by relocation and the difficulty of classes. While work (whether at a job or at home) and relocation are situational factors that are mainly seen as beyond the control of instructors and administrators, they do call for further consideration and investigation. Prins and Schafft (2009) suggest that these
situational factors are not inflexible, so educators should “advocate for local, state, and federal policies—for example, raising the minimum wage and provision of affordable housing, public transportation, and child care—that benefit low-income families, both enhancing their ability to provide for their needs and to remain in adult education and family literacy programs” (p. 2305).

Furthermore, an understanding of the concept of ‘familia’ in the Latino culture (Abi-Nader, 1990), in which priority is placed on meeting the needs of the family, would help family literacy practitioners and administrators understand why students miss class due to “housework.” This understanding could lead to discussions or lessons that help learners with time-management skills or efficient ways to simultaneously manage home life and personal educational goals. Further, this understanding can help in developing programs that motivate immigrant parents in effective ways. For instance, reminding family literacy students of a lesson’s goals, with respect to how they relate to the success of their families, could be beneficial.

The difficulty of classes, however, is an institutional factor that is clearly managed by teachers and administrators. As noted by Schalge and Soga (2008), teachers often overlook students' evaluations of classes and do not recognize that absenteeism often reflects frustration with the program. The fact that students do drop out of family literacy classes due to the difficulties they face in learning English raises important questions about the effectiveness of the multi-level classroom. Furthermore, this point questions the amount of supports these students are receiving; research points to the implementation of supports as more important than the removal of barriers in increasing persistence (among others, Comings et al., 1999).
6.1.3 Supports to Persistence

Of the five variables strongly correlated with attendance rates, two more can be classified as supports to persistence: liking the teacher and enjoying learning. While these two variables correlate with each other, liking the teacher also correlates with coming to class to see friends, introducing the importance of building relationships and community in the classroom. Results of the open-ended questions further confirm the correlation findings: students with 80% attendance rates indicated liking teaching style and the community of their classes. As teaching style, a positive attitude toward learning, and building classroom community have been widely discussed in previous research as essential to learner persistence, results of the current study support these assertions.

Previous research provides further insight into how these supports affect Latinos in particular. In order to address the variables of liking the teacher and enjoying learning, Buttaro (2004) suggests that teachers create an environment that fosters self-esteem and an interest in learning, utilizing teaching methods that are stimulating, supportive, and meaningful for adult Latina students. Furthermore, Warren, Hong, Rubin, and Uy (2009) propose that building community has extensive benefits for low-income parents who find support from those who have similar concerns and challenges; “Strong relationships among parents create mutual support and a sense of community out of which parents can develop as leaders” (p. 2239). Building a supportive community has been proven successful in empowering Latino youth and adults in academic environments, (Abi-Nader, 1990; Prins & Schafft, 2009), so this must remain a goal in San Diego family literacy programs.
6.1.4 Start Date

As noted, a participant’s start date was shown to have the strongest relationship with attendance rates, wherein those participants who began class after the first week had significantly lower attendance rates. This finding supports previous research that the first three weeks are the most critical in learner persistence (Quigley, 1998). It is well understood that attrition begins at enrollment, so Buttaro (2004) suggests facilitating a speedy enrollment that emphasizes learners’ abilities and shows them what the program can do for them. Further, staff can utilize a learner’s first language to properly assess their goals and possible barriers to persistence, making them feel comfortable and ready to begin class.

Unfortunately, in open-enrollment classes, effective intake of late-enrollees is even more complicated.

Interviews with instructors of each family literacy class reveal similar intake procedures for late enrollees. At both Field and Edison elementary schools, Community Assistants (CAs) have the first contact with new students. CAs help new students fill out registration forms and inform them of the basic procedures and goals of the class. At Kimbrough elementary, the teacher performs these duties. Next, students enter the class, and teachers try to welcome them to the class and pair them up with a buddy (an experienced student) to teach them “the ropes.” Students are usually given a Continuing Education “Student Guide” and the class syllabus. Students are not given a test to assess their needs nor their English proficiency. Although teachers attempt to integrate new students into the class there are clearly aspects missing to the current procedures; teachers indicated that the first week of class involve various “getting to know you” and community building activities, goal
setting lessons, and extensive work with the “Student Guide.” These are important issues to consider in revising intake procedures in these open-enrollment classes.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations that follow for increasing persistence in family literacy classes focus on supports to persistence, namely building community in the classroom and intake procedures for students who enroll in family literacy classes after the first week, as these are direct institutional changes that can be made; barriers will always be present, but are more difficult to control from the perspective of teachers and administrators. Building community touches on the support of liking the teacher, as it can be seen as a result of building relationships in the classroom. Enjoying learning is a dispositional factor that is also seen as a result of a supportive classroom environment. In order to build classroom community, teachers should emphasize the social aspects of the classroom; making new friends in a warm, friendly atmosphere. In order to foster friendships and supports in the program, group and pair activities can focus on learning more about individuals, and asking classmates’ names. Teachers can also encourage students to exchange phone numbers and support one another.

Because start date was shown to be the most significant variable in attendance rates, it seems logical to utilize managed enrollment classes instead of open-enrollment classes. However, although SDCCD Continuing Education administrators are aware of the benefits of managed enrollment classes, they are bound to funding restrictions that apparently necessitate open-enrollment structures. Therefore, we must look at the procedures for enrolling new students into established classes to discover ways to improve the system. I suggest that family literacy classes establish a new student orientation procedure which is
more comprehensive than the current system. Kerka (1988) recommends providing an “orientation that includes assessment of ability, self-esteem, learning style, motivations, and values” and helps students to set realistic goals. This kind of an orientation would involve:

1. Opportunities for learners to observe classes and meet other students prior to official enrollment.

2. Sufficient information so that students can make an informed decision about enrolling: clear expectations for students regarding persistence (time requirements and level of commitment), and what students might expect to gain by participation.

3. An interview that explores past schooling, family life, and goals for education and the future.

These pieces of a more comprehensive orientation will require more time and organization. For an instructor of a multi-level, open-enrollment class, time is not always available for new students. This could be solved through organized times for new students to join the class. For example, new students can join on Monday mornings only. Alternatively, an interview with the ESL Dean revealed that funds are available for aides who could be exploited to set up a system for helping to orient new students to family literacy programs. Additionally, introducing a weekly or monthly “basics” workshop for new students that reviewed classroom language, the alphabet, and numbers could give new students a sense of security having mastered basic language, and would (re-) introduce them to the classroom.

A final recommendation calls for further syllabus development. The syllabi in each of the three family literacy classes in the study indicate that most weeks, a brand new topic is covered in class. I recommend elaborating on the topics, so that students focus on a theme for more than one week, and recycling the information learned throughout the semester. Repetition follows second language acquisition theories that learners need to be exposed to language repeatedly. Additionally, this could give late-enrollees an understanding of some of the topics that had already been covered throughout the semester before they enrolled.
6.3 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the sample of 60 student responses that were statistically analyzed using Pearson correlation, generalizations to the entire population of students enrolled in the family literacy classes cannot be made. However, interesting correlations were shown which provide guiding questions for future research. First, do the benefits of open-enrollment classes outweigh the drawback of lower persistence rates? To address this issue, future research should focus on orientation in open-enrollment classes. Other possible studies could investigate what makes some people like learning, and what causes family literacy learners to like their teachers.

Second, what are the best ways to measure learner persistence? This question does not have an easy answer because persistence is difficult to measure. Perhaps ethnographic, qualitative methods can delve deeper into the issues presented in the current study. Statistical studies of learner persistence use unique methods to reflect the definition of “persistence,” so the methods must be taken into account when analyzing results. In the case of this study, with a scope of only one semester, some may argue that learner persistence is not truly measured because when using attendance rates to determine persistence, daily attendance is not accounted for. For example, if a student comes to class every day for only one hour, they are persisting by coming regularly, but attendance rates would not reflect this. A more comprehensive way to assess learner persistence can be used in future research, keeping in mind that overall attendance hours do have an impact on a learner’s increasing English proficiency. Further, statistical measures could use different methods such as a multi-dimensional group cluster analysis to see how several variables interact. This is interesting
because, as noted in Figure 5.6 (p. 58), variables simultaneously affect learner persistence in different ways.

A final limitation of the study is the scope of participants; only 60 questionnaires were gathered, while there were a total of 170 students enrolled in the three classes. As this study seeks to find factors that significantly affect attendance rates, and thus, learner persistence, it would be especially beneficial to have information from students with low attendance rates. Unfortunately, on the day that data was collected in each class, many students with low attendance rates were not present. However, since research has shown that supports are more significant to increasing persistence than barriers are to preventing it, the fact that this study focuses on those with higher attendance rates may be more beneficial. In sum, although difficult to achieve, future studies should involve more students with lower attendance rates or who have dropped out to gain more insight into barriers to persistence.

There are many areas that call for further investigation, and the more insight that research provides us, the better we will understand the populations we are teaching. In turn, we can create lessons, syllabi, and programs that align with student goals, and encourage students to attend class more regularly.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

SYLLABI FOR KIMBROUGH, FIELD, AND
EDISON CLASSES
**ESL Multi-Level**

**Instructor:** Jessica Chambers  
**Time:** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 8:15 - 11:15am  
**Room:** Kimbrough Elementary Room 211

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/ Dates</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>Writing Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Sept 14 to Sept 18</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td>Registration forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal ID</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sept 21 to Sept 25</td>
<td>The calendar</td>
<td>Dates &amp; calendar abbreviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likes &amp; dislikes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Sept 28 to Oct 2</td>
<td>Everyday activities</td>
<td>Write about your likes &amp; dislikes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASAS Testing</td>
<td>Likes &amp; dislikes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Oct 5 to Oct 9</td>
<td>Occupations</td>
<td>Write about your abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASAS make-up</td>
<td>Can &amp; can't</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Oct 12 to Oct 16</td>
<td>EL Civics: Employment</td>
<td>Write questions for employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Oct 19 to Oct 23</td>
<td>EL Civics: Employment</td>
<td>Fill out a job application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Oct 26 to Oct 30</td>
<td>EL Civics Testing</td>
<td>Fill out a job application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO CLASS Oct 26</td>
<td>Halloween</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Nov 2 to Nov 6</td>
<td>Life Cycles</td>
<td>Write your goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Future: will</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>Activities/Topics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 9 to Nov 12</td>
<td><strong>Life Cycles</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Probability</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>NO CLASS Nov 11</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>CASAS Testing</strong></td>
<td>Write an invitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 10 to Nov 20</td>
<td><strong>Future: Going to</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Holidays, Thanksgiving</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>CASAS make-up</strong></td>
<td>Write about your future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 11 to Nov 26</td>
<td><strong>Happy Thanksgiving!</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>NO SCHOOL</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 13 to Dec 4</td>
<td><strong>Parent-teacher conferences</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Future Review</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Might</strong></td>
<td>Write questions for conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 7 to Dec 11</td>
<td><strong>Around Town; Describing things</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Comparatives</strong></td>
<td>Compare your hometown and San Diego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 14 to Dec 18</td>
<td><strong>Family; Describing people</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Superlatives</strong></td>
<td>Write a holiday letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO SCHOOL</td>
<td><strong>WINTER BREAK</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Return January 18!</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schedule:
- Most Tuesdays, we will listen to a song.
- Thursdays, we will go to the computer lab from 10:30 - 11:15am.
- Most Thursdays, we will have a quiz reviewing the information you've learned.

Student responsibilities include:
- Making coffee before class & cleaning up the coffee after class
- Putting books on the tables before class & putting them away after class
- Picking up the classroom & restroom after class
# FALL SYLLABUS 2009

Class: CBET Field Elementary  
Time: 8:00 – 11:30 a.m. Break: 10:00 – 10:15  
Instructor: Erica Fulton  
Room: 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>LANGUAGE FOCUS (Grammar)</th>
<th>WRITING (Objective)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 9/16</td>
<td>Personal Identification</td>
<td>To Be</td>
<td>Fill out Registrations Forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 9/21 – 9/23</td>
<td>Daily Routines</td>
<td>Simple Present Tense vs. Present Continuous</td>
<td>Structure of simple sentences—understanding subject, verb, object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 9/28 – 9/30</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Want and Need</td>
<td>Write about Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 10/5 – 10/7</td>
<td>Families</td>
<td>Simple past</td>
<td>A story about a family event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 10/12 – 10/14</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Have to / Should</td>
<td>An accident report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 10/19 – 10/21</td>
<td>School - EL Civics Parent Teacher Conference</td>
<td>Past Tense and Past Tense of Irregular Verbs</td>
<td>Respond to an email regarding child’s homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 10/26 – 10/28</td>
<td>Parent Teacher Conference</td>
<td></td>
<td>Written request for Parent/Teacher conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 11/2 – 11/4</td>
<td>Around Town</td>
<td>Adverbs of frequency</td>
<td>Absence note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 11/9 – 11/11 No Class on Wednesday</td>
<td>Around Town</td>
<td>Adverbs of frequency</td>
<td>Description of neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATES</td>
<td>TOPIC</td>
<td>LANGUAGE FOCUS (Grammar)</td>
<td>WRITING (Objective)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Life Events</td>
<td>Time phrases</td>
<td>Write schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/16 – 11/18</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

THANKSGIVING BREAK (NO CLASS THIS WEEK)  
11/23 – 11/27

| 11          | Shopping       | Comparatives             | Shopping Lists      |
| 11/30 – 12/2 |                |                          |                     |

| 12          | Employment     | What and where questions about simple past | Resume / Job applications |
| 12/7 – 12/9 |                |                          |                     |

| 13          | Holidays / Invitations | Phrasal Verbs         | Party invitation   |
| 12/14 – 12/16 |                |                          |                     |

WINTER BREAK

| 15          | Daily living    | Can, could, will, would | Letter to the landlord |
| 1/4 – 1/6   |                |                          |                     |

| 16          | Leisure         | Grammar Review          | Thank you note      |
| 1/11 – 1/13 |                |                          |                     |

| 17          |                | REVIEW                   |                     |
| No Class on Monday 1/18 1/20 | |                          |                     |

Our CBET class serves the community by tutoring weekly! Regular attendance is required.
# FALL SYLLABUS 2009

**Class:** CBET Community-Based English Tutoring

**Time:** Tuesday, Thursday 8:00 – 11:30  
Break Time: 10:00 – 10:15

**Instructor:** Maja Czapla  
**Room:** Library  
**Core Textbook:** Ventures

**Computer Lab:** TBA  
**Tutoring:** TBA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>Writing objective</th>
<th>Grammar focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/14 - 9/18</td>
<td>Welcome to school! Personal Information</td>
<td>Identifying and using capital letters</td>
<td>Simple Present of be</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/21 – 9/25</td>
<td>Personal Information</td>
<td>Writing sentences with personal information</td>
<td>Possessive adjectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/28 – 10/2</td>
<td>At school</td>
<td>Writing sentences about the location if objects in the classroom</td>
<td>Prepositions of location</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/5 – 10/9</td>
<td>At school</td>
<td>Using capitalization and periods</td>
<td>Singular and plural nouns</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/12 – 10/16</td>
<td>Friends and Family</td>
<td>Writing sentences about your own family</td>
<td>Present Continuous Wh- questions, Yes/No questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/19 – 10/23</td>
<td>El Civics Objective 13 (Interact with children’s school)</td>
<td>Fill out a form with your child’s school information</td>
<td>Ordinal and cardinal numbers</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/26 – 10/30</td>
<td>El Civics – continue</td>
<td>Write a note to the teacher about a child’s absence</td>
<td>Adverbs of reason and time</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/2 – 11/6</td>
<td>EL Civics testing</td>
<td>Write a list of questions to your child’s teacher</td>
<td>Questions in Present Continuous</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/8 – 11/13</td>
<td>Veteran’s Day</td>
<td>Around Town</td>
<td>Prepositions of location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/11 – no school</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEEK/DATES</td>
<td>TOPIC</td>
<td>Writing objective</td>
<td>Grammar focus</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/16 – 11/20</td>
<td>Around Town</td>
<td>Capitalizing proper nouns</td>
<td>Where questions</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Imperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/23 – 11/27</td>
<td>Winter Break - No school</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/26</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/30 – 12/4</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Using indents for paragraphs</td>
<td>Prepositions of time</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(at, in, on)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/7 – 12/11</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>Making a shopping list</td>
<td>Count and non-count nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/14 – 12/18</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>Writing a note about a shopping list</td>
<td>How many, how much?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christmas Traditions</td>
<td>Using commas</td>
<td>Quantifiers with non-count nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/21 – 1/15/2010</td>
<td>No school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Luther King Day 1/18 – no school 1/18 – 1/22</td>
<td>Martin Luther King</td>
<td>Write a short paragraph about M.L. King</td>
<td>Simple Past of be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Around Town**: Capitalizing proper nouns
- **Winter Break**: No school
- **Time**: Using indents for paragraphs
- **Shopping**: Making a shopping list
- **Christmas Traditions**: Writing a note about a shopping list
- **Writing objective**: Using commas
- **Martin Luther King Day**: Write a short paragraph about M.L. King
- **Grammar focus**: Where questions, Imperatives, Prepositions of time (at, in, on), Count and non-count nouns, How many, how much, Quantifiers with non-count nouns, Simple Past of be
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE
STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

First Name _____________________  Last Name __________________________
Date of Birth ____________________  Sex ________________________
month / day / year              Male/Female
Native Country ____________________  Native Language __________________
What is the last grade you completed in public school? __________________

How long have you lived in the United States? Circle the letter:
A) 0 - 4 months                   B) 5 - 11 months                  C) 1 - 2 years
D) 3 - 4 years                      E) 5 or more years

How long have you studied English? Circle the letter:
A) 0 - 4 months                   B) 5 - 11 months                  C) 1 - 2 years
D) 3 - 4 years                      E) 5 or more years

Do you have a job now? Circle the letter:
A) Full Time                         B) Part Time                       C) Multiple jobs
D) Unemployed                   E) Not seeking work

How many people live in your house (including yourself)? ________________ number

What is your total family income each month? (Your income plus that of all family members living with you.) Circle the letter:
A) $499 or less                B) $500 - $999         C) $1,000 - $1,499
D) $1,500 - $1,999            E) $2,000 or more

Your goals for taking this class. Answer each of the following statements with a number. Write:
1 if it is VERY IMPORTANT,
2 if it is IMPORTANT,
3 if it is MODERATELY IMPORTANT,
4 if it is OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE,
5 if it is UNIMPORTANT.

1. I want to better integrate into the American culture ____
2. I want to learn how to be a competent citizen ____
3. I want to get a job _____
4. I want to be a better parent _____
5. I want to help my children with their homework _____
6. I want to enter post secondary educational training _____
7. I want to improve my computer skills _____
8. I want to learn English to be successful in the United States _____
9. I want to learn English so that my children are successful in the United States _____
10. I want to make friends and maintain friendships with my classmates _____
Your life. Answer each of the following statements with a number. Write:
1 if it ALWAYS happens, a 2 if it VERY FREQUENTLY happens, a 3 if it
SOMETIMES happens a 4 if it RARELY happens, and a 5 if it NEVER happens.

1. I come to class because I enjoy learning _____
2. I come to class because I enjoy challenges _____
3. I come to class because my family makes me _____
4. I don’t come to class because I am involved in other activities or classes at school
5. I don’t come to class because I am sick or have a doctor’s appointment _____
6. I don’t come to class because my family members are sick or have doctor’s appointments____
7. I don’t come to class because I am working at my job ____
8. I don’t come to class because I am working at home, or running errands ____
9. I don’t come to class because I don’t think I’m improving _____
10. I don’t come to class because I’m tired _____
11. I don’t come to class because it is too difficult for me _____
12. I take my children/ I go to the library _____
13. I read (to my children) _____
14. I set goals for my children / for myself _____
15. My family members help me study English _____
16. I study English at home _____
17. I use a computer or the internet to study English at home _____

Your program. Answer each of the following statements with a number. Write:
1 if you STRONGLY AGREE, a 2 if you AGREE, a 3 if you are UNDECIDED a 3
if you DISAGREE, and a 4 if you STRONGLY DISAGREE.

1. I like taking weekly quizzes _____
2. I like doing homework _____
3. I like studying EL CIVICS ____
4. I like working with students of different levels in my class _____
5. My family supports me in learning English ____
6. I come to class because I want to see my friends _____
7. I come to class because I like my teacher _____
8. I like playing games in my class _____
9. I like listening to songs in my class _____
10. My CASAS scores have improved _____
11. My English is improving _____
12. I like going to the computer lab (if there is one) _____
13. I use the counseling services available through school _____

What do you like best about your class?

Have you or your friends dropped out of an ESL class in the past? Why?