RESEARCH

Dropping out of Vocational Education in the State of Kuwait: A case study of Industrial Arts Students
By Dr. Abdulmuhsen Ayedh Alqahtani and Eng. Yousef B. Almutairi

Telling the Life Stories of Adult Immigrants Learning English as a Second Language in the Midwest: A Chronotopic Approach Informed by Bakhtin’s Forms of Time and of the Chronotype in the Novel
By Dr. Yin Lam Lee

Literacy Content Knowledge Expertise Among Adult Education Providers in Kentucky
By Dr. Laurie A. Henry

RESOURCE REVIEW

Learning and Violence Website
Reviewed by Dominique T. Chlup

PRACTICE

Practitioner Perspective
Just in Time Volunteer Tutor Training: Reports from the Field
By Alisa Belzer

Web Scan
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Dear Readers,

We are pleased to release our first issue of the second volume of the Journal of Research and Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary, and Basic Education. In this issue, you will find three research articles focused on ESL instruction for immigrants or foreign-born learners and literacy content knowledge for instructors in Kentucky. Each of these articles provides a unique insight into the language and literacy needs of adults as they work to address various language skills.

Alqahtani and Almutairi’s article, “Dropping out of Vocational Education in the State of Kuwait: A Case Study of Industrial Arts Students,” describes a study that examined perceived reasons for students dropping out of vocational education in Kuwait. The authors developed a survey exploring the perceptions of 230 male trainees in vocational education, and they discovered that institutional influences and family reasons were the most popular explanations of why students dropped out.

Henry’s article, “Literacy Content Knowledge Expertise among Adult Education Providers in Kentucky,” assessed the literacy content knowledge of 520 adult education providers in Kentucky. Using a survey from two previously developed instruments, the author was able to discover that instructors performed well on fluency and comprehension instruction but struggled with vocabulary development, alphabetic instruction, and emergent literacy skills.

Lee’s article, “Telling the life histories of adult immigrants learning English as a second language in the Midwest: A chronotopic approach informed by Bakhtin’s Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,” takes a unique approach to mapping immigrants’ life histories to demonstrate their impacts on learning English as a second language. Three adults were observed and interviewed using a qualitative approach to discover the chronotopic knots of their lives. The results indicated that students’ lives greatly impacted their learning of English as a second language.

I encourage you to read through these articles and the practitioner article by Belzer, our Web Scan, and the Resource Reviews. If you find something interesting in the articles and would like to discuss it further, take a moment to visit our blog, found at: http://coabejournal.blogspot.com. The authors will be moderating a discussion of what they found and its impact on the field. If there is something you would like to see in the journal, please feel free to contact me at journal@coabe.org.

Enjoy!

Jim Berger,
Editor
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The Journal of Research and Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary, and Basic Education is published jointly three times a year by the Commission on Adult Basic Education and Western Kentucky University. The journal’s mission is to provide a forum for sharing research, information, theory, commentary, and practical experiences that will improve the quality of services for adult basic education, literacy, and numeracy learners. These learners are found in publicly funded ABE, ESL, and GED programs; volunteer-based literacy programs; community-based literacy programs; family literacy programs; workplace literacy programs; correctional literacy programs; and many other places.

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# CONTENTS

**Journal of Research and Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary, and Basic Education**  
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## RESEARCH

8  **Dropping out of Vocational Education in the State of Kuwait: A case study of Industrial Arts Students**  
By Dr. Abdulmuhsen Ayedh Alqahtani and Eng. Yousef B. Almutairi

22  **Telling the Life Stories of Adult Immigrants Learning English as a Second Language in the Midwest: A Chronotopic Approach Informed by Bakhtin’s *Forms of Time and of the Chronotype in the Novel***  
By Dr. Yin Lam Lee

35  **Literacy Content Knowledge Expertise Among Adult Education Providers in Kentucky**  
By Dr. Laurie A. Henry

## RESOURCE REVIEW

49  **Learning and Violence Website**  
Reviewed by Dominique T. Chlup

## PRACTICE

52  **Practitioner Perspective**  
**Just in Time Volunteer Tutor Training: Reports from the Field**  
By Alisa Belzer

58  **Web Scan**  
**Career Exploration: Web-based Videos**  
Edited by David J. Rosen

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- Portland State University’s national Learner Web project
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop a state adult basic education technology plan
- Massachusetts Central SABES RSC to create professional development workshops and modules on integrating technology in the classroom
- McDonald’s Corporation’s distance education ESOL program for immigrant restaurant workers
- Health Care Learning Network, a distance education workplace basic skills and college preparation program for health care workers.

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Dropping Out of Vocational Education in the State of Kuwait: A Case Study of Industrial Arts Students

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of the current study is to examine, in retrospect, trainees’ perceptions of the reasons some of their peers dropped out of the vocational education at the Industrial Institute-Shuwaikh (IIS), Kuwait. Using the descriptive–analytical method, a reliable questionnaire was developed to achieve this purpose. Results show that: (a) the trainees perceive that institutional influences, particularly family-related reasons, are the most common reasons for their peers to drop out; (b) only the father’s educational level and family income are found to significantly affect, though in a small proportion, the trainees’ perceptions, though not in all statements. Based on the obtained results, relevant recommendations are included.

INTRODUCTION
Similar to many other countries, Kuwait is suffering from a drop-out crisis in all sectors of education. A considerable number of students are reported to be leaving school after fifth grade at different levels, failing to complete their schooling (Kuwait National Commission for Education, Science and Culture, 2004). Addressing this phenomenon requires a better understanding of what students report as their reasons for leaving school (Glaesser, 2006; Rumberger, 2011). Multiple factors may influence students’ decisions to drop out (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

The published literature identified two types of factors that could predict student drop-out (Astin, 1975; Bean, 1980; Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Habley & McClanahan, 2004; Ma & Frempong, 2008; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Tinto, 1975, 1997): factors associated with individual characteristics of students and factors associated with institutional characteristics. Individual factors were classified into four types (educational performance, behavior, attitudes, and background), while the institutional characteristics were classified into three types (family, school, and community). Several of these factors have been widely identified in the research literature as significant predictors of students dropping out. However, students’ behaviors in and out of school, either academic or social, have been shown to be the most influential individual factors, whereas communities seem to be the most apparent institutional factor affecting school drop-out. The community values (e.g., how society perceives education and its returns) and rituals (e.g., how people make choices, and how people react to others’ decisions and choices) can either increase or decrease student drop-out. Within families, three aspects are important: family structure, family practices, and family resources. This final
factor indicates that the parents’ educational levels and income are believed to contribute more than other aspects to the drop-out rates. Family practices—including monitoring children's educational process, following up with the school, and monitoring children’s choice of friends—were also found to be influential in reducing student drop-out (Alqahtani & Alazmi, 2011; Al-tabtabaie, 2008; Checchi, 2006). The final institutional factor focuses on school characteristics, such as school infrastructure, resources, curriculum, and policies.

The above review of the drop-out trends is related to notions of persistence and completion, which have been subjects of interest for educators and researchers for many decades (Hagedorn, 2005). Of the research conducted on persistence and completion, several models have been proposed to determine which factors contribute to drop-out. As such, these models were used in this study. Researchers use persistence and completion models as the theoretical basis for their own research. Major models include Astin's (1975) “Student Involvement” model, Tinto’s (1988, 1993) “Student Integration” model, Bean’s (1980) “Student Attrition” model, and Bean and Metzner’s (1985, cited in Al-tabtabaie, 2008) “Nontraditional Undergraduate Student Attrition” model. These major models—along with others—indicate that, although individual factors are significant in a student’s decision to persist in his or her education, they are not the only factors involved in the process. A student’s decision to persist or drop out could be due to institutional factors, individual factors, or a combination of the two (Astin, 1975; Bean, 1980; Habley & McClanahan, 2004; Tinto, 1975).

Although the above-mentioned factors were classified into two types—individual and institutional—they were just classified for the sake of investigation. As is the case with other social phenomena, these factors should be seen in gestalt. Three important issues could be raised. First, it is clear that the drop-out phenomenon is multidimensional; that is, there is no single dominant factor that impacts student retention (Astin, 1975; Bean, 1980, 2005; Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Lambert, Zeman, Allen, & Bussiere, 2004; Ma & Frempong, 2008; Murtaugh, Burns, & Schuster, 1999; Seidman, 2005; Tinto, 1988). Second, dropping out can be seen as the final stage in a dynamic and cumulative process of withdrawal from school. On the same line of argumentation, these factors are not bipolar in nature; i.e., they could be interrelated and overlap. The challenge for many institutions is to detect and determine the factors that influence their particular students (Rice & Darke, 2000; Schuh, 2005). Once these factors are determined, the institution can initiate programs to improve student retention (Ma & Frempong, 2008). Third, dropping out could reflect that a particular type of schooling does not fit with a student’s character or personality. To assist institutions in the process of identifying drop-out factors, Bean (2005) identified a set of questions that institutions can ask themselves when starting to investigate student-retention issues. These questions include topics such as program offerings, financial support, support services, and staff knowledge.

BACKGROUND
In the early 1960s, Kuwait realized the need for trained, skilled technicians to meet the demands of the growing local labor market that was aimed to accelerate development projects. Some crucial measures were taken based on this trend, and the most important of these was the establishment of vocational education (Vocational Training Institute), in collaboration with the International
Labor Organization (ILO). When vocational education expanded to include several institutes and centers, the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) was established in the mid-1980s to include all vocational institutes and centers. Since then, the Industrial Institute-Shuwaikh (IIS) has been frequently restructured to suit the technological developments in local labor market demands (Al-tabtabaie, 2008) and the requirements of the new national mega-development projects.

IIS is comprised of six departments, including Machining and Metal Operating Department, Metal Welding Department, Metal Production and Shaping Department, Electrical Engineering Department, Automotive Engineering Department, and Carpentry and Decoration Department. Fourteen majors are offered within these departments, and all programs require six semesters to graduate (i.e., three-year programs). All training programs are designed to balance between theory and practicum.

Over time, admissions policies in vocational education have undergone revisions and amendments in order to control quality. IIS, one of only two vocational educational institutes in Kuwait (the other is Industrial Institute-Sabah Al Salem), has developed an admissions policy that suits the new infrastructure of IIS and reduces probable drop-out ratios. The main elements of the new admissions policy are the introduction of career counseling and admissions interviews at the time of admission.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In countries worldwide, vocational education is regarded as essential for progress and substantial development (Billet, 2011; Hoffman, 2011). The Industrial Institute-Shuwaikh is considered an important asset in creating a qualified workforce that can optimally contribute to development programs in the State of Kuwait. Therefore, Kuwait has invested huge resources into improving this type of education (i.e., vocational education) since the 1960s. In regard to this investment, trainees are seen as the most important resource, and they are admitted in cohorts in order to better control the drop-out crisis. All admitted trainees are considered at-risk trainees at the institution, since the official statistics showed that about 57.5 percent of trainees dropped out and never returned during the 2005–2012 period. Knowing that the annual trainee cost, using the flat rate method, is 2,000 Kuwait dinar (about 5,000–6,000 USD), it may help relevant stakeholders to know possible causes of drop-outs.

The Industrial Institute management has tried to reduce the drop-out percentage. However, most resources were allocated to the infrastructure, such as new buildings equipped with advanced technology. In addition, the number of annual trainee intakes has been reduced to about 350 trainees. This new policy was intended to control the drop-out crisis. Nevertheless, the drop-out problem persists despite the existence of new admission policies, career counseling, and interviews. These policies do not seem to be as effective as they should be.

Of course, the drop-out problem is an outcome of preceding causes. Based on this premise, the current study attempts to answer the following:

1. How do the current remaining trainees perceive the causes of their peers’ drop-out?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in the current remaining trainees’ perceptions about their peers’ drop-out based on trainees’ selected
Dropping Out of Vocational Education in the State of Kuwait: A Case Study of Industrial Arts Students

socioeconomic factors (i.e., parents’ educational levels and family income)?

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**
The current study can be significant to three stakeholder categories: (a) trainees and families; (b) institutional training faculty/staff; and (c) future researchers. First, by focusing on trainees and their families as a reference point, potential causes of dropping out can be monitored and possibly corrected in order to reduce the drop-out probability. Second, the obtained data can provide faculty/staff with a deeper understanding of the drop-out problem. Although the data collected here is somewhat limited, these results can be used to initiate a draft for effective preventive measures and solutions to reduce, or at least to monitor, the drop-out ratio. Finally, the current study can help future researchers elaborate upon the obtained results in terms of future empirical research. More specifically, they can build and test models that should provide valuable insights into the nature of this complex phenomenon.

**Terminology**
The topic of the current study comes from a broader topic labeled educational wastage. It is an expression of the efficiency of resource management, and three categories of student wastage are identified in this model: drop outs, repeaters, and fail-outs (Najjar, 2003). The term “drop-out” is generally defined as those students who are leaving the educational program without completing graduation requirements for reasons other than transfer (Al-tabtabaie, 2008). The published literature reveals that dropping out has been examined from several angles: (a) dropping out in a single year without completing a certain level of schooling is called “event drop-out;” (b) dropping out of the whole educational system at a given age is called “status drop-out;” and (c) dropping out by a single cohort of students over a certain period of time is called “cohort drop-out” (Allensworth, 2005). In the current study, “dropping out” is defined as a trainee leaving the IIS before completing the graduation requirements without returning or enrolling in another training institute of the same type. In this sense, the type of drop-out relevant to the current study is the event drop-out.

**METHODOLOGY**
The empirical part of the current study was based on a descriptive, analytical approach, which is used to examine a phenomenon and uncover some of its related aspects. Although unstructured interviews were used for the sake of developing the instrument, this study is not a mixed-methods research design study by nature as those interviews were not included in the data analysis.

**Participants**
The whole IIS population was qualified for inclusion in the current investigation. In total, 230 trainees agreed to participate. Their ages ranged from 17 to 19 years old. All were male trainees because vocational education in Kuwait is presently for males only. In addition, the participants were from different grades (first, second, and third). They are equivalent to grades 10, 11, and 12 in public schools. As the sample size of the current study was adequate, this was an opportunity to use parametric statistical inferences (Hair, Anderson, Babin, Tatman, & Black, 2010).

**Instrument**
Developing the survey. The current survey was initially developed by following the example
of two sources. First considerations were given to the theoretical framework proposed by the published literature (Checchi, 2006; Rumberger, 2011; Rumberger and Lim, 2008; Al-tabtabaie, 2008). This literature helped provide the paradigms for what constitutes drop-out factors. Findings included institutional reasons, individual and family reasons, and outside societal reasons. Secondly, informal and unstructured interviews were conducted with small-scale samples representing relevant parties (i.e., parents, trainees, trainers, social workers, and the institute administration). In light of the paradigms provided in the literature, those parties were asked what reasons they thought could account for students dropping out. The drafted survey consisted of 27 statements related to institutional, individual, and societal characteristics of dropping out. It should be pointed out that the interviews included insiders and outsiders in order to enhance our understanding of the root of the phenomenon.

Validating the survey. Once the draft survey was ready, it was sent to a panel of inter-raters to judge and validate the content of the survey. The inter-raters were scholars and professionals in the field of educational management, vocational education, and statistics at Kuwait University and the Public Authority for Applied Education. The goal of that panel was to check whether the statements and the rating scale were appropriately presented. The decision criterion was that any statement should get at least 70 percent agreement in order to be included in the final survey. This clear-cut figure was chosen in accordance with the reliability in quantitative methodology. The final version that the panel agreed on 70 percent consisted of 22 statements. The final, complete survey was then provided to the experts for a second verification. The whole survey got 80 percent agreement (i.e., this indicates not all items got 100% of agreement). For further validity analysis, the aggregate data collected from all the respondents from were factor analyzed to know its internal structure and the grouping of items. This analysis was conducted by using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with the help of SPSS Amos. The goodness of fit index for the above scales was 0.90, indicating that the survey had adequate fit.

Piloting the survey. Having the survey construct approved by the experts, it was piloted with a sample of 20 trainees in order to ensure its clarity and comprehension. No negative feedback was received, and the Cronbach's alpha for the pilot group was 0.81, meaning that the instrument was reliable and measured what it was meant to measure. The final Cronbach's alpha for the main study was 0.85, which was satisfactory.

The final instrument. The final instrument administered in the main study consisted of two parts. The first part contained closed-ended questions (multiple options to choose from) about selected socioeconomic factors, including the father and mother's educational levels (less than high school, high school, post-secondary diploma, university graduate, or postgraduate), and family income (less than 1,000 KD, 1,000–1,500 KD, or over 1,500 KD1). The second part contained 22 statements concerning the drop-out phenomenon in the IIS. The remaining current trainees were asked to rate the statements in the survey on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all relevant, 2 = slightly relevant, 3 = somewhat relevant, 4 = moderately relevant, 5 = extremely relevant). Higher scores indicate a higher relevance of the statement to be a probable cause for dropping out.

1One KD was about 3.5 US dollars during the time when the study was conducted.
 Procedures
Having obtained the required permissions and participants’ consents, we began collecting data during the 2011–2012 academic year. Prior to administering the study survey, the study objectives were clearly articulated to the participants (i.e., trainees), and all questions and inquiries were answered in order to avoid any misunderstanding or misinterpretation. The researchers distributed and collected back the surveys during classes. Once all the data was collected, it was coded and processed to answer the two research questions using an SPSS program for descriptive and inferential statistics.

Statistical Analysis
The responses to the survey items were numerically coded into scores representing a hierarchy of perceptions ranked into an implicit logical order, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all relevant, 2 = slightly relevant, 3 = somewhat relevant, 4 = moderately relevant, 5 = extremely relevant). Although this Likert scale was ordinal in shape, it shares many of the features of interval measurement (Hair et al., 2010).

To answer the current study questions, the means and standard deviations were used to describe the trends of trainees’ perceptions about each statement (Question 1). ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) tests were used to examine the effect of the selected socioeconomic factors on the trainees’ perceptions about each statement (Question 2). The aims of conducting ANOVA were to compare the mean scores for the reasons of dropping out (the dependent variables) across specified groups of participants (the independent variables). The prescribed significance level was $\alpha = 0.05$ to decide whether there is statistically significant difference among groups. To assist the interpretation of the results, the mean scores were examined further in post-hoc tests (Hair et al., 2010). Multicollinearity was calculated prior to running ANOVA analysis, and effect size was also calculated to check the strength of association between the dependent and independent variables (Hair et al., 2010).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
To check that the frequency distributions of the scale for the trainees were normal, they were visually compared against the bell-shaped curve. Most of the scores tended toward the middle and slightly higher end of the five-point scale. The most frequent scores were 3 (somewhat relevant) and 4 (moderately relevant). Although the frequency distributions were slightly skewed and deviated from perfect normality, they were sufficiently dome-shaped to justify the use of parametric statistics. This decision was made based on the following criteria: it cannot be assumed that the participants perceived, for example, that the interval between somewhat relevant and moderately relevant was the same as the interval between moderately relevant and extremely relevant; it is theoretically impossible for ordinal categories ranging from 1 to 5 to be perfectly distributed (i.e., a frequency distribution described by a perfect bell-shaped curve); and it makes no sense to add up or subtract the scores – e.g., a response of not at all relevant (coded as 1) added to a response of slightly relevant (coded as 2) does not equal a response of somewhat relevant (coded as 3).

Remaining Trainees’ Perceptions of Peer Drop-out
The primary question of this research focused on the current trainees’ perceptions of the probable reasons that made their peers drop out prematurely.
Table 1 shows the relevant findings.

All standard deviation values are relatively low, meaning that the trainees were homogenous in their responses. Hence, we can carefully generalize the findings into the study population.

Drop-outs are a noticeable problem in vocational education. In addition, the perceived reasons show a tendency for a multitude of drop-out reasons: almost all listed reasons were perceived to be probable for drop-out, including institutional reasons, individual and family reasons, and societal reasons. Thus, this finding clearly indicates the multidimensional feature of the drop-out phenomenon in vocational education.

The remaining trainees perceived that reasons related to individual characteristics were the most probable causes for peer drop-out (i.e., absenteeism, the impact of outside distractions, bad peer influence, trainee neglecting his study duties, and lack of attention during classes). On the other hand, family reasons were not perceived as highly probable reasons for dropping out.

Table 1—Descriptive Statistics for Trainees’ Perceptions about Their Peers Dropping Out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>M**</th>
<th>SD**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trainee neglecting his study duties</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of attention during classes</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health conditions</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carelessness</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absenteeism</td>
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<td>Weak home—institute communication</td>
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<td>Frequent visits to Diwaniyya*</td>
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<td>Frequent camping</td>
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<td>Low performance of trainers in class</td>
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<td>Inadequacy of training aids</td>
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<td>Difficulty of training curriculum</td>
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<td>Institute building was not suitable</td>
<td>2.05</td>
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</table>

* A place where people meet to chat and drink (coffee and tea) or eat; ** M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation
Dropping Out of Vocational Education in the State of Kuwait: A Case Study of Industrial Arts Students

compared to the individual reasons. This result could be due to the fact that equality in Kuwait is apparent in major societal issues: health services, education opportunities, and, to a relative extent, monthly income. The published indices indicate that the Kuwaiti family, as with other Arab Gulf families, has access to all types of public education, which is free and adequate (The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, Secretariat General, 2006; 2011).

Trainees perceived that institutional reasons, specifically the institution itself, were also probable reasons for their peers to drop out (i.e., institute building was not suitable, inadequacy of training aids), although to a lesser degree. It is worth mentioning that the newly established IIS building is well-equipped; therefore, perceptions with respect to the institute building not being suitable scored the least among all statements. These results were in line with the rest of the research in that individual characteristics are perceived to be more crucial in drop-out rates (Al-tabtabaie, 2008; Rumberger, 2011; Rumberger & Lim, 2008). In addition, these results are highly related to the Kuwaiti context, where the institutional characteristics reflect a high standard (The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, Secretariat General, 2006; 2011). Moreover, it could be argued that the drop-out phenomenon is detached from the type of schooling and is not a phenomenon in public schools.

Other societal reasons were perceived to have some effect as well. More specifically, getting involved in social activities was perceived to contribute to the decision to drop out. In fact, although Kuwaiti society sees social activities as a part of daily life, the focus on extracurricular involvement sometimes goes far beyond simple participation and expands to immersion at the expense of other duties (Al-tabtabaie, 2008). Of course, the school-aged population is not an exception.

Differences in Remaining Trainees’ Perceptions of Peers Drop-out Based on Selected Socioeconomic Factors

This secondary question was about the existence of any statistically significant differences in the trainees’ perceptions according to selected socioeconomic factors, including family income, father’s educational level, and mother’s educational level. Prior to running the ANOVA tests, however, it was imperative to check the multicollinearity for the 22 reasons (i.e., dependent variables) in order to check to what extent dependent variables were correlated. Pallant (2001) states that the basic, straightforward way to check multicollinearity is to run correlations among the dependent variables. She adds that, if correlations are up around 0.8 or 0.9, there is reason for concern since analysis of variance tests work best when the dependent variables are not highly correlated; otherwise, it is fine to consider running a univariate analysis of variance for various dependent variables under examination. Fortunately, the obtained correlations were less than 0.8 (see Appendix), so ANOVA tests for the current 22 reasons were statistically feasible. Ensuring this assumption meant that the standard errors associated with the obtained coefficients were not critical or threatening. In other words, the observed multicollinearity did not misleadingly inflate the standard errors, making some variables statistically insignificant while they should be otherwise significant.

The proportion of variance of the dependent variables explained by the independent variable termed the “effect size” was calculated through dividing the sum of squares between groups by the
total sum of squares. The outcome is labeled eta squared, ranging from 0 to 1 (Hair et al., 2010). To interpret the magnitude of the obtained effect size, Cohen (1988) proposed three guidelines: 0.1 indicates a small effect; 0.6 indicates a moderate effect; and 0.9 indicates a large effect. Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 present the relevant findings of ANOVA and post-hoc statistics.

Table 2 shows the statistically significant effect of family income on trainees’ perceptions of perceived reasons for peer drop-out. Although all effect sizes were clearly small, those reasons still indicate that family income had some kind of effect on remaining trainees’ perceptions. More specifically, family income was likely to differentiate the remaining trainees’ perceptions of the weak communication between home and institute and absenteeism as probable reasons for their peers to drop out. Further analysis, i.e. post-hoc analyses as shown in Table 3, reveals that, in general, the lower the family income of those remaining trainees, the higher the probability for them to justify their peers’ reasons for dropping out. This finding also shows that those remaining trainees coming from lower-income families could be at risk.

Table 4 shows that the father’s educational

<table>
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<th>Drop-out reasons</th>
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<th>P</th>
<th>Effect size</th>
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<td>Frequent family disputes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family’s need for more pecuniary income</td>
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<td>Inadequacy of training aids</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.987</td>
<td>0.02</td>
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</table>

* Df = degrees of freedom; F = F statistics; P = significance value

Table 3—Post-Hoc Test of Drop-Out Reasons by Family Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drop-out reasons</th>
<th>A**</th>
<th>B**</th>
<th>C**</th>
<th>Direction</th>
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<td>M*</td>
<td>SD*</td>
<td>M*</td>
<td>SD*</td>
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<td>4.34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequent family disputes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* M = Means; SD = Standard Deviations; ** A = less than 1,000 KD, B = 1,000–1,500, C = over 1,500 KD
level was found to significantly affect the trainees’ perception about home–institute communication, albeit the effect size was small. The post-hoc test shown in Table 5 indicates that the lower the father’s educational level, the higher the probability that the trainees would point to poor family–institute communication as a reason for their peers to drop out. This could be due to the fact that the Kuwaiti father, as in all Arab communities, has a leadership role in his family, especially when it comes to family-related affairs outside the home. On the other hand, the mother’s educational level was not found to be a factor significantly affecting trainees’ perceptions. This was probably due to the role that the Kuwaiti mother plays, regardless of her educational level: if she is interested and enthusiastic in following up and taking care of her child, there is a low probability that her child will drop out of an institution. In other words, the mother’s educational level did not seem to be a factor contributing to drop-out. Post-hoc analysis in Table 5 shows that the remaining trainees whose fathers were the least privileged in education perceived that weak home–institute communication is a highly likely factor in peers dropping out. Again, this finding shows that such trainees could be at risk as well.

**CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The current study attempts to examine remaining IIS trainees’ perceptions about the reasons behind peer drop-out. Using the survey method, it was found that individual or family-related reasons were generally perceived as more influential than institutional reasons. Moreover, the lower in rank the remaining trainees’ demographic factors were, the higher the probability to justify the drop-out. However, this trend by no means indicates that those who were higher in their ranks saw any justifications for their peers to drop out; the difference, as it is known in social sciences, was in degree and not in kind. For example, those who came from families of higher incomes perceived that the trainee’s neglect was a reason to drop out, but those who came from families of lower incomes were more assertive in this regard. In addition, if demographic characteristics are taken

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Drop-out reasons</th>
<th>A**</th>
<th>B**</th>
<th>C**</th>
<th>D**</th>
<th>E**</th>
<th>Direction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>M*</td>
<td>SD*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weak home— institute communication</td>
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<td>3.42</td>
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<td>2.61</td>
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</table>

* M = Means; SD = Standard Deviations; ** A = less than high school, B = high school, C = postsecondary diploma, D = university degree, E = postgraduate.
into consideration, the findings indicate that those remaining trainees who were similar to their peers who dropped out could be at risk since they were likely to experience the same conditions. As far as vocational education programs, especially industrial arts programs, our findings appear to have important implications. According to Altabtabaie (2008), individual and institutional characteristics, to different extents, sustain one another to control drop-out rates. Thus, finding a good balance between these two sources is vital in maintaining minimum drop-out rates. Because vocational education is primarily informal and usually involves an administrator–trainer–trainee interaction, industrial arts trainers and administrators should strive to become aware of their roles in trainees’ academic and personal lives (Billet, 2011). Along the same lines, administrators and trainers may want to improve family involvement in order to increase the family role in decreasing drop-out rates.

Based on these findings and implications, certain actions are recommended to help the practitioners put the above findings and implications into operation. First, trainees and their families should be helped to identify the potential causes, such as looking for employment and outside distractions, leading to drop-out. It is not unusual to find that some trainees and their families are not aware of the impact of these factors. This action could be executed through preventive awareness programs discussing these causes in order to minimize their effects. In addition, this step necessitates equipping trainers and administrators with counseling skills as a preventive measure.

Secondly, a new demographic-related database should be set up so that all relevant stakeholders can monitor their respective child’s circumstances in order to launch preventive measures and reduce drop-out probabilities. This proposed database can help to remedy some deficiencies and probable reasons for drop-out.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Studying drop-out rates, as an aspect of educational wastage through a cross-sectional study design, has advantages but also limitations. The advantages include studying large samples that allow for meaningful generalization of the study while saving time and resources. However, the use of surveys—as cross-sectional methods by design (i.e., cross-sectional methods involve data collected at a defined time)—combined with the restrictive nature of the current research questions, do not make it possible for us to draw firm conclusions about causal connections between drop-out reasons. Thus, our conclusion about the nature and volume of those reasons is restricted. Although the study identified trends and the impact of some demographic factors on those trends with respect to trainees’ perceptions, our analyses were limited to the perceptions of non-drop-outs rather than those trainees who actually dropped out. Another limitation concerned the selection of socioeconomic factors. Focus was limited to the parents’ educational level and family income only. Moreover, these factors were also limited to set of choices: the father and mother’s educational levels (less than high school, high school, post-secondary diploma, university graduate, or postgraduate) and the family income (less than 1,000 KD, 1,000–1,500 KD, or over 1,500 KD).

The remaining limitation concerns why current trainees, not the actual trainee drop-outs, were surveyed for this study. As self-serving bias
became a concern in social research, social research scholars attempted to find ways to minimize its effect in empirical social research (Rabe, 2003). Of course “social research can be approached in many ways. Regardless of the methodology employed, advantages and disadvantages arising from the specific methodology will be present” (Rabe, 2003, p. 159), and one alternative to minimize self-serving bias was to think of an “insiders versus outsiders” approach when investigating a social phenomenon. Although this approach concerns researchers, it could be used with participants. We believe that those who dropped out, if asked about why they dropped out, are likely to deny any responsibility for their actions in order to protect their ego. We assume as well that remaining trainees got involved, more than the administrators, in drop-out-related discourses with peers prior to dropping out. Therefore, we believe the remaining students could be a third-party, non-biased source of information on why their peers dropped out, thus minimizing the effect of self-serving bias. However, it was still a limitation as one source of obtaining data.

Future studies should gather more detailed survey data from those who drop-out and those who do not. In-depth ethnographic data on the range and diversity of individual characteristics related to drop-out rates, beside the inclusion of other socio-economic factors, should be explored. Additionally, a quantitative study should be carried out, including further correlational analyses to clarify the interrelationships between causes and effects of the drop-out phenomenon in vocational education. Proposed future research can hopefully help to identify factors contributing to drop-out compared to those reducing it.
REFERENCES


## Appendix—Correlation Matrix for the Survey Items (n = 230)

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<th>Items</th>
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<td>2. Lack of attention during classes</td>
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<td>.4**</td>
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<td>15. Tedium social engagements</td>
<td>4**</td>
<td>.3**</td>
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<td>16. Frequent visits to Diwaniyya*</td>
<td>.6**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<td>17. Frequent camping</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.1</td>
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<td>18. Low performance of trainers in class</td>
<td>.2**</td>
<td>.3**</td>
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<td>19. Large class size (too many trainees in the class)</td>
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<td>20. Inadequacy of training aids</td>
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<td>.3**</td>
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<td>21. Difficulty of training curriculum</td>
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<td>22. Institute building was not suitable</td>
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* p = 0.05 (2-tailed)
** p = 0.01 (2-tailed)
ABSTRACT
Adult immigrants are invaluable assets to our society as they bring along their cultural capital across borders. However, little is known about how their rich life histories reflect and refract their plights as ESL learners. This study is an investigation of three adult immigrants’ English learning in an immigration center in the Midwest. The researcher spent six months at the immigration center for prolonged observation. She collected artifacts, videotaped the ESL classes, and conducted interviews with the participants in 2009. Bakhtin’s chronotopic approach was employed as a means for representing and mapping the participants’ life histories. The findings contribute to the research base by furthering our understanding of the discursive relationships between life histories and ESL learning among these adult immigrants.

INTRODUCTION
This article aims to tell the life histories of three adult immigrants and how their rich experiences reflect and refract their journeys as English-as-a-second-language (ESL) learners. The researcher developed a chronotopic approach based on Bakhtin’s Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel to represent the chronotopic moves (i.e., critical turning points) in the participants’ lives. The findings of the study contribute to the research community of adult literacies in two ways, (i) the study reveals how these learners’ experiences affect their learning of ESL, and (ii) the chronotopic approach offers a new investigative means for qualitative researchers in the field.

As Crandall (1993) underscores in her article, “Adult education is a stepchild of K-12 education and an afterthought in U.S. educational policy,” (p. 497) adult ESL education has long been viewed as a “dumping-ground” for people who failed in the educational system. Formal ESL instruction among school-aged students has always been the focus of research. However, the learning of English as a second language among adult immigrants is an important area of research because this group of people, whose voice is seldom heard by the mainstream society, deserves an outlet to tell us what they can offer to the teaching and learning processes.

Theoretical Framework
The theoretical framework of this study was informed by Bakhtin’s Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel. In the literary theorist’s masterpiece, The Dialogic Imagination, Bakhtin uses the analogy of novel genres to narrate the subtle relationships between the author, the text, and the reader (Bakhtin, 1981). This approach
was borrowed and applied to broaden the horizon of investigating the life histories of adult ESL immigrants.

With reference to Bakhtin (1981), chronotope is the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in the literature” (p. 84). Time and chronotope in the novel are referring to the changes that occur in the major characters’ lives in various novel genres. Bakhtin (1981) depicts the various genres as unique in its way of telling the lives of the heroes. For instance, the hero in the adventure novel will go through adventures but will appear “as if absolutely nothing had happened” afterwards (p. 89). On the other hand, the hero in the adventure of everyday life will go through metamorphosis, i.e., evolving into a more complex individual after a series of events.

By bringing in the various chronotopes of his novels, Bakhtin (1981) unfolds the complex relationships between the characters’ past, present, and future in the plots. As such, the chronotopes reveal the critical turning points of the characters. I believe that Bakhtin’s (1981) chronotopes can be applied to analyze adult immigrants’ life histories as ESL learners. I derived new analytical tools called the “chronotopic moves” and “chronotopic map” based on the chronotope theoretical construct discussed in Bakhtin’s *Dialogic Imagination*.

Chronotopic moves are the flashbacks that occur when a participant refers to a certain period of time in his/her life while answering a question in the interview. Most of the times, the chronotopic moves are identified when the participant refers to a critical turning point of his/her life, e.g., moving from his/her home country to the U.S., or attending the very first ESL class. Such turning points are significant temporal referential points for analyzing their interview transcripts. The chronotopic maps are the representation of such moves with the use of timelines.

For each participant’s interview transcript, I first identified the chronotopic moves and described them in the form of a table. Timelines were used to represent all the chronotopic moves that happened during the interview. The collection of timelines is called a chronotopic map.

Bakhtin’s chronotopic approach unravels the participants’ transnational experiences and ESL learning journeys. Most importantly, it highlights the changes in the participants’ lives, which can be easily overlooked in educational research. Therefore, I regard the chronotopic approach as an invaluable means to analyze interview data. Also, as the approach is based on the participants’ point of view, it allows the researchers to gain an *emic* perspective while analyzing the interview data.

**Literature Review**

In the area of second language teaching and learning, studies about formal classroom instruction with school-aged children have always been foregrounded in the literature (e.g., Allwright, 1980; Alvarado, 1992; Brock, 1986; Lee, 2008; Love & Suherdi, 1996; Pennington, 1999; Schwartz, 1980). However, less focus has been given to adult immigrants who are struggling with the English language in the U.S. (Bowen, 1999; Bourret, 2009; Cooke, 2006; D’Annunzio, 1990; Frye, 1999). Mathews-Aydinli (2008) corroborates this claim and expresses the concern that “not only do adult ELLs studying nonacademic English remain an understudied population in the academic scholarship on second-language acquisition (SLA) and education, the research studies that do exist often lack a theoretical base and thus remain disconnected from each other” (p. 199). Indeed, there is no consensus among the research community regarding the “how” question for investigating adult immigrants’ learning trajectories.

Among the extant studies, D’Annunzio (1990)
used pretest posttest design to determine the effectiveness of Language Experience Approach in educating 15 Cambodians who did not speak English at all. Cooke (2006) investigated four adult migrants learning English in the UK using a case study methodology. Frye (1999) studied immigrant women’s ESL classes and concluded that they lacked crucial support such as child-care and transportation, placing them at a disadvantaged position when compared to the males.

As far as Bakhtin’s chronotopic approach is concerned, much of the research was conducted in literary studies. Among them, most were conducted for genre analysis and narrative studies (Crossley, 2007; Cuevas, 2006; Dickson, 2001; Lawson, 2011; Pishghadam & Sabouri, 2011). These studies referred to Bakhtin’s notion of chronotopes for analyzing the time and space arrangement in literary texts. For instance, Crossley (2007) counted the number of temporal and spatial moves in cover letters and analyzed the genre specific particularities in cover letters. Lawson (2011) utilized Bakhtin’s chronotope to analyze the space-time arrangement in narrative plots.

In the field of education, many studies were conducted with reference to Bakhtin’s dialogism instead of chronotope, but few used the chronotopic approach (Brown & Renshaw, 2006; Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 1998; Mutnick, 2006). Brown & Renshaw (2006) investigated a conversation between a male teacher and 26 students by looking at how the past and present were articulated and constructed among the participants. The researchers concluded that the chronotopic approach allowed them to further explore the meaning constructed by the participants with intertextuality and hybrid chronotopes. Hajdukowski-Ahmed (1998) referred to Bakhtin’s dialogism and how it empowered female participants to voice out the hegemony that they experienced. Mutnick (2006) analyzed the time and space arrangement in novels using chronotopic approach. All of these studies utilized narration as the means of analysis. Though Mutnick (2006) suggested mapping out the temporal-spatial arrangements in the novels, the analysis in the article was conducted with textual analysis.

The overarching concerns arisen from these studies are:

i) The number of research studies conducted with adult ESL immigrants with limited language proficiencies is much less than those conducted with school children receiving formal instruction, and

ii) There is a lack of studies with well defined logic-of-inquiry that maps out the chronotopic moves. All studies were conducted either with quantitative methods, i.e., counting the temporal-spatial moves, or textual analysis.

Crossley (2007) suggested that, “while much of Mikhail Bakhtin’s work on the dialogic nature of discourse has been adopted by both the composition and the English as a Second Language (ESL) community, very little, if any, of his work on the chronotope has been used as an approach to analyze either the composing process of writers or the finished writing product.” (p. 4) Therefore, there is a need for a better framing and representational tool as far as adult immigrants’ learning trajectories are concerned. This study aims at addressing this research gap in the literature.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the major reasons for adult immigrants to move to the U.S.?
2. Why are they studying English as a second language?
3. What are the difficulties of adult immigrants in learning English as a
second language (ESL) in the U.S.?
4. What are the cultural differences which they experienced?
5. How do their life histories inform us about their English learning?

**METHODOLOGY**

This article draws data corpus from a qualitative case study with three adult immigrants at an immigration center in the Midwest. The immigration center offers free ESL classes for adult immigrants who are over 18 years old. In 2009, I volunteered as an ESL teaching aide and started to collect data after having the approval from the center director and IRB. When I was working closely with the adult immigrants, I noticed that they longed for their voices to be heard. I chose Bakhtin for the theoretical framing because he addresses the dialogical needs of these immigrants. As such, the logic-of-inquiry warrants a qualitative approach, so I observed and videotaped the ESL classes, audio recorded the oral interviews, and collected reading and writing artifacts from the participants.

The interview data for this study, which was relevant to the participants’ lived experiences and their plights in learning English as a second language, was selected for further analysis. Among the 26 adult immigrants, many were undocumented and did not want to be interviewed. Also, many women from the Middle East said that they were not allowed to be video or audio recorded in their cultures. As such, three learners’ interview data was included for in-depth analysis. The interviews were conducted in Summer 2009 on a one-on-one basis. They were transcribed and analyzed as follows.

**Lin**

Lin was a 78 year-old man who emigrated from China to Canada in 1999. He later moved from Canada to the U.S. and was naturalized in 2007. He was married with two daughters: one lived in the U.S. and one lived in Canada. Lin received his college education in mainland China in the 1950s and was previously employed as a college instructor teaching Mathematics and Computer Science in China. When Lin was attending college, he was required to study Russian instead of English as a second language and, therefore, did not have much training in listening, speaking, reading, and writing English. He only received some basic instructions of English vocabulary in elementary school.

Among the three participants, Lin possessed high intrinsic motivation to study English. He genuinely loved the English language. According to Lin, “English is beautiful. English grammar is science. It’s a systematic language... I consider English as culture... American culture. I love it” (Lin, personal communication, June 2009).

Regarding the difficulties of English learning, Lin complained about his fading memory. He was interested in studying the language but could not retain the new words presented through formal instruction and incidental learning. He often became frustrated with the situation, but he used a pocketsize notebook for jotting down new words presented to him. Lin was a conscientious student in and out of the classroom. Within the classroom, he always raised his hand and volunteered to answer questions. Outside the classroom, he tried his best to learn and use English in daily life with his notebook. Lin was aware of the cultural differences that he experienced in the U.S., and he stated that Americans were more open-minded than the Chinese counterparts—especially in the classroom setting.

**Ginny**

Ginny was a 25 year-old woman who moved from Italy to the U.S. in early 2009 because of her
partner’s relocation for a job. She had extended family members living in the country and said that she particularly liked the lifestyle. Ginny received her college education in Italy and had a B.A. in women studies. She had several years of work experience in an architectural firm before coming to the U.S.

Ginny was particularly interested in working on her pronunciation because sometimes the native speakers could not understand her. In Italy, she received English education beginning in elementary school, but it was grammar focused. She complained about having too many grammar drills but insufficient training in speaking. In her home country, English was viewed as formulaic and autonomous. The only goal was to remember the grammatical rules and pass the examinations, so the biggest cultural difference that Ginny experienced centered on the teaching approach in the English classes. However, the immigration center’s English language classes focused more on conversational skills and the completion of group-oriented tasks.

The ESL instructor in the immigration center encouraged Ginny to ask questions freely and allowed her to speak without raising her hand. Ginny enjoyed the ESL classes at the immigration center because the classroom atmosphere made her feel relaxed, and she was free to talk and laugh with the teacher and her classmates.

Jack
Jack was a 65 year-old man with sons, daughters, and grandsons in the U.S. He emigrated from Cambodia many years ago, where he received his college education. In the states, he pastored a Cambodian church in the Midwest.

Jack was intrinsically motivated to learn English; he said he wanted to improve his listening and writing skills. For listening, he did not understand the slang used by young people, and he could not make sense of higher-level words, which were less frequently used in daily life. He also wanted to improve his writing skills, especially about the tenses and the homonyms. He mentioned that most of his English learning struggles focused on tenses and aspects. “In my language, we use different from here. We have the word that has the past tense. In English, they have regular verb and irregular verb, but in Cambodian it’s not like that” (Jack, personal communication, June 2009).

Jack said that he would follow the rules of the country he was moving to as far as cultural practices were concerned. Before moving to the U.S., he previously lived in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand. “Anywhere I go I decide to follow them. I decide to follow. I see what they do. How they do. I keep my own. I just follow them” (Jack, personal communication, June 2009). Jack explained that Cambodian culture was to make peace and to follow the rules. “For example, in America sometimes we shake hands, sometimes we hug. I like to hug because in the church we usually we say like hug by loving people. We have mercy on people. We have compassion to people. We love them like a family. We like to hug” (Jack, personal communication, June 2009). Jack said that he had no interest in hugging, but he actively engaged in hugging because it was a cultural obligation due to his position as a pastor at his church.

Findings: Mapping of the Chronotopic Moves
The representations of the chronotopic moves and maps are as follows. For heuristics purposes, the rows in Table 1 were arranged with reference to the research questions of the study.
### Table 1—Chronotopic Moves Initiated by Lin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lin</th>
<th>Chronotopic Moves</th>
<th>Analysis of the Chronotopic Moves</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>78 (as of June 2009)</td>
<td>Flashbacks: (i) 2009 to 1999 when he moved from China to Canada (ii) 2009 to 2007 when he was naturalized in the U.S. There were two critical moves in Lin's life, i.e., from China to Canada and then from Canada to the U.S. His immigration to North America occurred when he was 68 years old. He had accomplished many things in his life before the moves. His life experience before the immigration could have significant impact on his language learning in his later life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reasons for moving to the U.S.</td>
<td>“I arrived in Canada as immigrant in 1999. The last year of the last century. Because I have two daughters. One is in Canada and another one is in U.S. So I think it's better. I am naturalized in USA two years ago.”</td>
<td>Lin referred back to his earlier life in China, when he was an elementary school kid studying English: he was always intrinsically motivated to learn the language. English was like his old time friend whom he lost contact with. He valued his relationship with English and he appreciated the beauty of the language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reasons for studying English</td>
<td>“I love English. Yes, in my opinion, English is beautiful. English grammar is science. It's a systematic language. Yes. And I consider English… I consider English as culture. American culture. I love it. Just because I had a long time since learning English in China. So I have to learn English. I love English.”</td>
<td>Flashbacks: 2009 to the 1930s as an elementary school kid in China (ii) 2009 to the 1950s as a college student in China There was a chronotopic move here. Lin referred back to his childhood as well as his college life. These were important years of English study in Lin’s life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties in English learning</td>
<td>“To me, I think only difficult is my memory has decreased. Slower and slower. I have no other difficulty to learn English. Only my memory has decreased. I must say to you. Because I forgot words completely. I talk in English not well. Because I forgot completely afterwards. I speak English… I am sorry. But I... But I... But I am good to talk to you in English. I learnt English when I was young. When I was primary school child. After I entered the college, I think you know that. In China we can only learn Foreign language, Russian. So I have a long break to learn English. But I used English very often.”</td>
<td>Flashbacks: (i) 2009 to the 1930s as an elementary school kid in China (ii) 2009 to the 1950s as a college student in China There were two chronotopic moves here. Lin referred back to his childhood as well as his college life. These were important years of English study in Lin’s life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural differences experienced</td>
<td>“This makes great impact to me. Americans deal with things very differently. They are very open-minded. Chinese are not open-minded so much like the US people. Very different. Inter-exchange. Exchange is inter. Americans emphasize exchange. Chinese is more like the teacher talks the students listen. Not only exchange, but inter-exchange. The teacher and students in China do not interact. Sometimes the teacher kneeled down on the floor in the ESL classroom. In the ESL classroom, the teacher kneeled down to us to write and teach us. It's beyond imagination in China that a teacher kneels down to a student. This is very different.”</td>
<td>Flashback: 2009 (American ESL classes) to the 1950s (English classes in China) There was a chronotopic move here where Lin first referred back to his English education received in China and then made a comparison between his American classes.</td>
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</table>

1The chronotopic move represents the participant's flashback to a certain time and space with critical turning point(s) in his/her life.
**Chronotopic Map A**

![Chronotopic Map A](image)

**Table 2—Chronotopic Moves Initiated by Ginny**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ginny</th>
<th>Chronotopic Moves</th>
<th>Analysis of the Chronotopic Moves</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>25 (as of June 2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reasons for moving to the U.S.</td>
<td>&quot;My boyfriend needs to come to work in the USA, so I followed him. My grandma and my grandpa from my father's side. They decided to move to France. I don't know why. There wasn't anything there. They tried. My grandfather was intelligent. We were lucky. We were happy. We were like... So they came like... Some parts of my family went to Australia too. Some parts went to America. They came here.&quot; Flashback: June 2009 to March 2009 Moved from Italy to the U.S. Ginny followed her life partner to the U.S. She moved in her mid 20's when she was a young woman.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reasons for studying English</td>
<td>&quot;Just because I want to learn English better. Possible I try to learn, if I have better pronunciation, it's fine.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulties in English learning</td>
<td>&quot;Italian teachers are based on grammar. We do a lot of grammar, we don't talk a lot. They really talk good English. They can speak in past tense. They really talk. I don't know why. We have a lot of grammar. Because you can talk, ok. For me, learning things is an opportunity. But I honestly think that this kind of lessons here are interesting, are funny. Because you talk about things and you can also laugh. It's like work. In Italy the feeling, it's more like something severe. Something hard. You have to study:&quot; Flashback: 2009 to 1995 where she started learning English at the age of 11 in Italy Ginny referred back to fourteen years ago when she was in middle school in Italy. She did not like the English classes because of the grammar-based teaching. She then compared the teaching in Italy since middle school to the English classes which she received in the immigration center. The contrast between the two separate chronotopes allows her to find out the differences and appreciate the free English education she received in the U.S.</td>
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Table 3—Chronotopic Moves Initiated by Jack

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<th>Jack</th>
<th>Chronotopic Moves</th>
<th>Analysis of the Chronotopic Moves</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>65 (as of June 2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Jack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for moving to the U.S.</td>
<td>“I immigrated to the USA 25 years ago.”</td>
<td>Flashback: 2009 to 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for studying English</td>
<td>“I want to improve my English.”</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties in English learning</td>
<td>“Listening and writing. Because people speak slang and I'm the one not comes to school. When they speak the high word, top word, I don't understand. Um the way I write. I am not very good. I am not listening very good. But the way I speak to people, I speak the vernacular word, because I don't know. Unless I come to school and I try to listen to somebody. If I try to listen careful, sometime I have to write it down. But I have to... I write the word by my own language. And I some word I cannot say. When I ask the teacher, the teacher say the word, the same spelling, but different meaning and different reading. Like we say read but read in past tense. I come to school I have to listen careful and I write in my own language to make sure. About 1965 I studied English for two months. It was not good at that time. Just learnt how to read ABC.”</td>
<td>Flashback: 2009 to 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural differences experienced</td>
<td>“I lived in Vietnam, Cambodian, Thailand, USA. I have been here for 25 years. Anywhere I go I decide to follow them. I decide to follow. I see what they do. How they do. I keep my own. I just follow them. Because Cambodian if we go we have to follow the rule of culture. We make peace. If we don't follow we don't have peace. It doesn't matter what country. It doesn't matter what culture. I follow every country. In my country, I hold hands. Go to Thailand do the same way. Vietnamese do the same way. But in America sometimes we shake hands, sometimes we hug. I like to hug because in the church we usually we say like hug by loving people. We have mercy on people. We have compassion to people. And we love them like brother and sister. Love them like a family. We like to hug.”</td>
<td>—</td>
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</table>
**DISCUSSION**

1. **What are the major reasons for adult immigrants to move to the U.S.?**

   Lin moved from China to North America (Canada and then the U.S.) in 1999 to be united with his two daughters. Ginny moved from Italy to the U.S. in March 2009 to accompany her boyfriend who had a job offer. Jack moved from Cambodia to the U.S. in 1984 but did not specify his reason.

   When comparing the three chronotopic maps, it is evident that moving to the U.S. was a critical turning point for the three participants. Both Lin and Jack made the transition after their 40th birthdays; both of them had finished their perspective college educations and raised their families in their home countries. As such, their prior life experiences could have significant impact on their language learning in their later lives. On the contrary, Ginny moved to the U.S. in her mid-twenties, so her life history might not have comparable impact on her English learning.

2. **Why are they studying English as a second language?**

   Among the three participants, Lin showed intrinsic motivation (c.f. intrinsic motivation, Deci & Ryan, 1985) in learning. He said, “I love English. Yes, in my opinion, English is beautiful. English grammar is science. It’s a systematic language. Yes. And I consider English... I consider English as culture. American culture. I love it.” From here we can see how he appreciated the language itself and did not present the instrumental reasons that many other ESL learners promote. By taking a closer look at the chronotopic moves, Lin’s past life experience as a Mathematics and Computer Science instructor explained his tendency to appreciate the systematicity of the English language from a scientific perspective, whereas both Ginny and Jack wanted to improve their English for instrumental reasons (c.f. instrumental motivation, Gardner & Maclntyre, 1991).

   Besides helping the educators identify the motivations of the participants, the chronotopic maps also help researchers further analyze the findings. Both Ginny and Jack did not engage in chronotopic move when asked about the reason for studying ESL; only Lin initiated a chronotopic move in response to this question. He referred back to his elementary school days when he first studied the language. He mentioned that, “Just because I had a long time since learning English in China. So I have to learn English. I love English.” For Lin, the
English language was like an old time friend whom he used to hang out with in the 1930s. His desire to study English was because of his appreciation of the language, as if it were a friend to him. The chronotopic link to his old days when he was studying English in elementary school explains that Lin had deeper personal connection to the reason for studying ESL.

3. What are the difficulties of adult immigrants in learning English as a second language (ESL) in the U.S.?

Lin said that his fading memory was the biggest plight because he could not retain the words he encountered. Ginny mentioned that pronunciation was the biggest challenge for her because of her lack of oral practice in Italy. Jack thought that listening and writing were the most difficult for him. All three participants initiated chronotopic moves when answering this question. Lin initiated two chronotopic moves in his response: he referred back to his elementary education in 1930s in China, which was when he first started studying English. He also referenced his college education in 1950s in China, when he studied Russian as a second language instead of English. Because of the lack of opportunity to study English in college, Lin underscored the long period of time since he officially studied the language in elementary school.

From his two chronotopic moves, it is evidenced that Lin's personal life history had great impact on his English learning after moving to the U.S. Since the Communist Party's establishment in 1920s, the People's Republic of China was strongly influenced by the Soviet Union socio-culturally and socio-economically. From 1920s till the end of 1950s, the colleges in China required students to study Russian as a second language. Therefore Lin did not have a choice to study English when he entered college in 1950s. This period of life seems to have left Lin underprepared for his later life in North America in 1999. Because of the lack of formal instructions in ESL, Lin had a hard time remembering the word and grammar rules presented to him in the immigration center. On a superficial level of analysis, his fading memory is the major difficulty in his English learning; however, on a deeper level of analysis, Lin initiated an intertextual move (Kristeva, 1980). The two texts that Lin selected to compare are (i) when he was studying English as an elementary school child in China in 1930s, and (ii) when he was a college student studying Russian in 1950s. By initiating an intertextual link, Lin compared his learning experience in two different stages of his life, which not only helped explained his learning difficulties, but also indicated that he was more engaged in the interview and was more strategic in his response to the interview questions.

Ginny also initiated a chronotopic move in her response. She mentioned that she was taught English in Italy since she was eleven years old. In her interview response, she contextualized it by describing the kind of English lessons that she received in Italy. As the instructions were mostly grammar-based with many mechanical drills, Ginny did not have much opportunity to practice speaking and pronunciation. She complained that her previous English education left her underprepared for the needs of oral proficiency after moving to the U.S. Because of the chronotopic move, Ginny’s learning experience in Italy was juxtaposed with her current learning difficulty, which helped explain her plight in English language usage.

Jack only received formal English instruction for two months in 1965 when he was in Cambodia, and he initiated one chronotopic move in his response to the question. As Jack received the least formal instruction among the three, he had many challenges in English learning. He mentioned that
listening and writing were the most problematic areas. Regarding listening, he could not understand the slang that young people used, and he also had difficulty with “high/top words” (i.e., less frequently used words in formal register). Regarding writing, he struggled to distinguish the homonyms and lacked the training in grammar, especially about the regular and irregular verbs, tenses, and aspects. His chronotopic move helps explain his difficulty in English usage. He also explained that Cambodian did not have inflectional changes to the verbs, making it difficult for him to remember the changes in verb forms.

4. What are the cultural differences which they experienced?
According to Lin, his teacher in China was more authoritative in the classroom. Kneeling down to teach a student was out of the question and beyond imagination. He concluded that the Americans were more open-minded in terms of social relationships. He took a chronotopic move back to 1950s in China as he thought about the cultural differences that he experienced.

As such, Lin compared the English education that he had in China in 1950s with the classes that he attended at the immigration center in the Midwest. By doing so, Lin initiated another intertextual link (Kristeva, 1980) in his response. The intertextual link compared two texts, (i) his English education in China in 1950s, and (ii) his ESL classes in the immigration center in the U.S. in 2009. The intertextual link helped explain how the participant was unconsciously drawing upon two pieces of lived experiences when constructing his response in the interview.

Similarly, Ginny initiated an intertextual link between her English classes in Italy, which were mechanical and grammar-based, and the English classes offered by the immigration center, which were lively and conversation-based. Jack referred back to 1984 when he first moved from Southeast Asia to the U.S. He compared his way of life in different countries and concluded that he would always conform to the local rules and values when moving to a new country. In America, he was a pastor in a Christian church and, therefore, he had to adopt the greeting manners such as shaking hands, hugging, and displaying mercy to people, which demonstrates that how an adult immigrant learns the cultural rules is closely related to the career and everyday need of the individual.

5. How do their life histories inform us about their English learning?
Lin used to be a Mathematics instructor in China, and he studied ESL because of his appreciation of the systematicity of the language. His career history as a college instructor gave him a better angle to analyze the linguistics and cultural practices in Chinese and American classrooms in a systematic way. Because of the dominating power of Russia in China in the 1950s, he did not have the opportunity to study English in college. Because of old age, his fading memory was the biggest obstacle for him to learn English. His life history explains his motivation, learning difficulties, and cultural adaptations as the chronotopic moves unfold themselves in the interview.

Ginny had been studying English as a foreign language in Italy since she was 11 years old. Her learning history details the focus on grammar and mechanical drills in Italy and the drawback of such teaching. Her chronotopic moves inform us about the importance of addressing the cross-country differences in English teaching and the need to address individual learner’s personal needs.

Jack was a pastor in a Christian church in the Midwest. His lack of formal English instruction (only two months of English lessons when he was 21 years old) explained his difficulty in understanding the grammar rules, especially those
related to the change of verb forms. Jack was very adaptive as he had moved from country to country in his earlier life. Similar to Lin, Jack also initiated intertextual links when he was constructing his response to the interview questions. His comparison of his experiences in different countries, especially that in the Cambodian church in the Midwest, informs us about why adult immigrants’ learning needs, styles, and practices could be so closely linked to their career and everyday lives.

**Limitations of the Study**

One of the biggest limitations of this study is about the small number of respondents. Ideally, more respondents’ life histories could have been drawn from the study, yielding more varieties of life histories that the adult immigrants have. By doing so, the breadth of the study would be increased, making the results more transferable. However, it takes a long time to establish a trusting relationship with these participants. Lin, Jack, and Ginny’s willingness to recount their personal stories reflected the prolonged engagement and investment that I put into the ESL class of the immigration center. The depth of the interview data might be affected if more respondents were involved in the study because I may not be able to spend similar amount of time to establish rapport with all of them. Alternatively, if a team of researchers can be involved, then more life histories will be collected, and overall the credibility of the study will be increased.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

In the following paragraphs, I discuss the implications for research and teaching of adult immigrants based on the findings of the study:

i. The chronotopic moves and intertextual links initiated by the participants help educators and researchers better understand their learning goals and needs, and thus should be foregrounded in the teaching and research practices,

ii. Educators can invite learners to tell their life histories and encourage them to map out their life histories so as to help the learners take ownership of their learning,

iii. Textbook authors may create more oral activities which allow the learners to connect their transnational and ESL learning experiences with learning,

iv. Researchers can employ the chronotopic moves and maps to represent the adult immigrants’ learning trajectories and the correlation of such trajectories with various research questions identified by the researchers, and

v. Policy makers may incorporate the adult learner’s oral history into the curriculum and portfolio assessment.

Many of the ESL and TESOL programs in the U.S. overlook the rich lived experiences of the adult learners. Not only do these experiences help adult learners in the learning process, but they are invaluable resources to the ESL/TESOL learning communities. For future research, researchers may use the chronotopic moves and maps to investigate adult learners’ learning trajectories. Also, more studies should be done regarding the disjunction between the learners’ life histories, learning materials, curriculum, and standardized tests.

**CONCLUSION**

Lin, Ginny, and Jack had different experiences as ESL learners in their home countries due to various historical, political, sociological, and personal reasons. The chronotopic moves that they
constructed in the interview are representations of the dynamic relationships of their past, present, and future in their English learning trajectories. Giving them a chance to tell their life histories empowered them to connect their past and present with intertextual links. The findings of this study suggest that more emphasis should be placed on connecting adult immigrants’ individual lived experiences with their learning, so as to empower them to take agency to appropriate their personal learning trajectories and gain ownership in their ESL learning processes.

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Literacy Content Knowledge Expertise Among Adult Education Providers in Kentucky

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ABSTRACT
This paper summarizes the results of a literacy content knowledge survey and assessment administered to adult education providers in Kentucky (n=520). This descriptive study focused on two main goals: 1) to obtain a description of Kentucky adult education programs including instructors’ backgrounds, professional preparation, and teaching experience; and 2) to determine literacy content knowledge levels related to effective literacy instruction. Results show the majority of adult education providers performed highest on questions related to fluency instruction. Participants had the most difficulty with informal assessments of vocabulary development, alphabetics instruction, and emergent literacy skills.

BACKGROUND
Adult illiteracy rates have been a national concern for decades, and “America’s literacy problems and needs are growing, not declining” (Wagner and Venezky, 1999, p. 26). Significant changes to this trend remain flat as shown by two administrations of the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NALS). In 1993 the NALS showed “nearly 25% of America’s adults with an average of 10 years of formal schooling had only fourth-grade literacy skills or lower” (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993 cited in Wagner & Venezky, 1999, p. 21). A decade later, the NALS indicated 11 million adults were nonliterate in English; 7 million could not answer simple test questions, and 4 million could not complete the test because of language barriers. An additional 30 million adults performed at the Below Basic level, which means they possess “no more than the most simple and concrete literacy skills” (Baer, Kutner, Sabatini, & White, 2009, p. 7). A summary report indicated, “the average prose and document literacy scores of U.S. adults were not measurably different in 2003 from 1992” (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2007, p. 45). For more than ten years we as a nation have not made positive gains in addressing illiteracy rates. In light of these data, it becomes important to look to adult education programs to determine their success in providing services to our nation’s under-educated and nonliterate populations.

A main goal of the Adult Education Act (P.L. 200-297) is “to expand and improve the current system for delivering adult education services including delivery of such services to educationally disadvantaged adults” (National Literacy Act, 1991). Upon further analyses of the NALS data (Kirsch, et al., 1993), the National Education Goals Panel (1994) argued that nearly half of all adults scoring at the lowest two literacy levels,
the majority of American workers, are unable to compete in an increasingly global economy. Additionally, we continue to lose our grip as an international competitor. Among international comparisons, “the U.S. is the only country among 30 OECD free-market countries where the current generation is less well educated than the previous one” (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2008, p. v). This may be due, in part, to the lack of certification, licensure, or instructional experience requirements for adult education providers often imposed by state agencies in other areas of teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005).

Adult Education Programming

Adult education programs are often perceived as “nonformal” with a focus on General Education Development (GED) attainment (Merriam & Brockett, 2007), with the majority of adult educators working part-time or to supplement the income of a primary job (Smith & Hofer, 2003). Teaching in adult education is not often viewed as a “real job,” and educators who teach in adult education are rarely viewed as professionals (Smith, Hofer, & Gillespie, 2001). While some states have teaching licensure requirements specific to adult education or require a bachelor’s degree and teaching licensure from any level (K-12), other states lack licensure requirements for individuals who provide adult education services. Additionally, many adult education programs rely heavily on part-time instructors and volunteers to provide basic skills instruction or ESL instruction through tutoring services. Venezky and Wagner (1996) reported that “less than a third of the paid professionals in the field and far fewer of the volunteers are certified to teach adult education, and supervised in-service training is not common among such programs” (p. 200). More recently, a study by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy found “ABE teachers have limited formal preparation geared specifically to teaching adults and have limited opportunities for professional development and continued learning” (Smith & Hofer, 2003, p. xi). Thus, states not requiring licensure or on-going professional development may have difficulty ensuring the quality of adult education programs in meeting the needs of their students.

Program administration varies widely from state to state as well as within states, furthering the differences in the quality of facilities, resources, adherence to policies, convenience, access, and instructional structure (Smith & Hofer, 2003). The National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs (NEAEP) survey administered in 1991–1992 showed this variance in programming with 68 percent administered by local educational agencies, 17 percent by community colleges, 6 percent by community-based or volunteer organizations, 6 percent by vocational schools, and 3 percent by regional service agencies (Development Associates, 1992). With so much variance among programs, states may struggle to provide consistent levels of effective instruction.

Adult education programs are typically divided into three main categories of instruction: 1) adult basic education (ABE), focusing on individuals performing at or below the eighth grade level; 2) adult secondary education (ASE) for individuals who want to obtain their GED certificate; and 3) English as a Secondary Language (ESL) programs assisting individuals with limited English proficiency (United States Department of Labor, 2010). Most adult education programs classify their learners by grade levels measured using standardized tests; however, this
A type of categorizing is shown to be of little value for instructional planning (Tuijnman, Kirsch & Wagner, 1997; Venezky, Bristow, & Sabatini, 1997). Often times, adult education programs are informal in nature with students entering and exiting at whim with limited formal instructional support in place (Venezky, Bristow, & Sabatini, 1997; Venezky & Wagner, 1996). Although there has been an increase in recent years of managed enrollment, many programs maintain the less formal open enrollment options to further individualize instruction to meet learner needs both inside and outside the classroom (Comings, Beder, Reder, Bingman, & Smith, 2003).

There is an increasing need in our country to provide adult literacy training for ESL students. A large proportion of adult learners enrolled in federally funded programs are non-native speakers of English (Venezky & Wagner, 1996). In fact, “each year, federal, state, and local agencies serve approximately 1.8 million ESL adults (nearly half of the total participation in adult education programs)” (Wagner & Venezky, 1999, p. 23). Now, more than ever, it becomes increasingly important for states to look closely at adult education programs and the instructional skill level of their providers to ensure they can meet the needs of the students they serve.

Adult Literacy Instruction

Adult education providers often do not possess the skills necessary to provide effective literacy instruction to adult learners. In fact, many adult education providers are volunteers with no formal educational training or experience teaching adult education populations. While many adult education instructors are credentialed for K-12 teaching, few states require that adult education teachers show mastery of the specialized knowledge and skills needed to teach adults (National Commission on Adult Literacy, 2008). This lack of specialized content knowledge is problematic when trying to address the needs of adult learners with the most critical literacy needs in our nation.

Purcell-Gates (1995) argues that adult learners often attend classes for a number of years but do not improve in reading or writing compared to when they started. Researchers agree adult literacy programs should provide instruction that is collaborative and dialogic in nature while responding to the needs and characteristics of individual learners (Auerbach, 1993; Purcell-Gates & Waterman, 2000). Literacy research also indicates adult learners are more responsive when authentic, real-world instructional activities and materials are used (Fingeret, 1991; Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson, & Soler, 2002; Stein, 2000). Thus, an important focus for literacy research is to determine the extent to which adult education provides effective literacy instruction most beneficial to adult learners.

The Case of Kentucky

A report published by the Kentucky Legislative Research Commission, Task Force on Adult Education (2000) specified 14 percent of Kentuckians function at the lowest level of literacy, at or below a fifth grade reading level. The report goes on to state:

Kentuckians functioning at the lowest level of literacy represent 340,000 people in our state who have minimal skills needed to compete in the workplace, as well as to function in the home and in their communities. Another 650,000 adults in Kentucky function at the next lowest level of literacy...44% of Kentuckians struggle with minimal literacy skills, and 37% age
25 and older do not have a high school diploma. (p. 6)
Additional findings by the Task Force indicate the problem is not improving, with children of low literacy parents being five times more likely to drop out of school. The report concludes, “Illiteracy is a pervasive condition affecting every dimension of Kentucky life” (p. 7).

The 2003 State Assessment of Adult Literacy (The National Center for Education Statistics, 2005) shows similar results. This report states 42 percent of adults in Kentucky performed at the Basic Level (skills necessary to perform simple, everyday literacy activities, using a TV guide or comparing ticket prices for two events) and Below Basic Level (simple, concrete literacy skills like signing a form or adding amounts on a bank deposit slip). Furthermore, a report by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2008) ranks Kentucky 24th out of 32 states as not being internationally competitive (measured by 55 percent of the adult population having attained at least an associate's degree). Thus, literacy rates in Kentucky have become a statewide, critical issue.

PURPOSE
The purpose of this descriptive study was to survey adult education providers in the state of Kentucky as part of a needs assessment to determine professional development and training required to increase the success of adult education programs in meeting learner needs with a focus on effective literacy instruction. As such, this study was similar in nature to the purpose of The Characteristics and Concerns of Adult Basic Education Teachers study conducted by National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL), documenting “what is commonly known, but not well researched, about teachers in the field; the challenges they face in teaching, in their programs, and as members of the field of adult basic education; the training and preparation they receive; and their current working conditions” (Smith & Hofer, 2003, p. 5). However, the NCSALL study was limited to a small population of ABE teachers (n=106) from three New England states. These limitations make it difficult to generalize the results to other populations of ABE teachers in different geographic locations. The current study is limiting as well, as it focused solely on the state of Kentucky, but it aimed at providing more in-depth, robust analyses with a larger population to determine specific programmatic needs. This study focused on identifying characteristics of ABE teachers and features of adult education programs specific to the state of Kentucky, and specific attention was given to ABE teachers’ literacy content knowledge and instruction for the purpose of planning professional development opportunities to ensure successful delivery of literacy instruction in adult education programs in the state.

The two main goals guiding this research included: 1) to obtain a thorough description of adult education programs and instructors’ backgrounds and professional experience; and 2) to determine literacy content knowledge levels related to effective literacy instruction. The first goal was addressed by obtaining data related to professional preparation, instructional experiences, and ongoing training as well as the identification of specific instructional methods and activities most often utilized during instruction. The second goal was addressed by assessing instructor’s aptitude related to literacy content knowledge across four main aspects of literacy skill development.
METHODOLOGY
The instrument used in this descriptive study was comprised of items selected from two previously developed instruments, the Knowledge of Teaching Adult Reading Skills (KTARS) (Bell, Ziegler, & McCallum, 2004) and The Professional Development Kit (PDK) Needs Assessment Questionnaire (Sabatini, et al., 2000) with some minor revisions. The combined instrument included five sections: a) demographics, b) professional preparation and experience, c) programs and instruction, d) professional development, and e) literacy content knowledge. The demographics section included identification of gender, age, and ethnicity. The professional preparation and experience section included questions about education, certification, and occupational experiences. The program and instruction section focused on program characteristics and instructional attributes. The professional development section addressed professional development participation, activities, needs, and support. The literacy content knowledge section included questions in four areas of literacy skill development: alphabetic, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Instrument Validation and Piloting
The reliability coefficient for internal consistency of the KTARS complete scale is .80 and individual subscale levels are all above .60 (Bell, et al., 2004). Reliabilities of .60 and higher are considered adequate for most research purposes (Salvia & Yssledyke, 1998). There were no reliability estimates available for the PDK Needs Assessment Questionnaire from the literature; however, pilot data ensured validity of this instrument with reliability estimates greater than .70 for individual subscales.

The combined instrument was piloted to ascertain whether it measured the constructs of interest to meet the goals previously identified. Participants were recruited from adult education programs outside Kentucky and included responses from 35 states (n=338). Skip logic was utilized to exclude participants from Kentucky during the pilot. Based on pilot data, minor revisions were made including skip logic to streamline the survey and the addition of a transition page to introduce the literacy content knowledge section.

The final 60-item instrument combined forced response, Likert-style, and open response items. A specific question ordering technique often used in survey design to achieve higher response rates and minimize the number of non-completers was utilized (see Kongsved, Basnov, Holm-Christensen, and Hjollund, 2007); sections were specifically ordered beginning with questions identified as easy responses (i.e. professional and education experiences), moving progressively toward more difficult questions (i.e. literacy content knowledge), then shifting back to easier questions (i.e. basic demographics) at the end of the instrument.

Participants
The target population was Kentucky adult education program providers (i.e. directors, instructors, aides, and tutors). Responses were voluntary and collected anonymously using an Internet-based survey platform. A link to the survey was distributed through an email distribution list by the Kentucky Adult Education state office. The final data set included responses from 520 individuals with 315 complete case responses showing a response rate of 60.6%. Baruch and Holtom (2008) analyzed 490 survey research studies in which the average response rate was 52.7%, indicating the response rate for this study is adequate. It should
be noted that program volunteers and tutors may be underrepresented in this sample as these individuals may not have a work-related email address registered with the state adult education office.

RESULTS
Characteristics of Adult Education Programs
The majority of adult education providers in Kentucky (47.3%) identified their main teaching assignment as specific to GED®/Adult Secondary Education. The second most common assignment description was Adult Basic Education (20.0%) followed by Pre-GED® (9.3%), ESL (5.7%), Family Program (2.5%), or Workplace Program (<1.0%). An additional 14.8 percent identified their main teaching assignment under the Other category, which provided an open-response feature. These responses included program director, technical college reading and writing, corrections, and appointments in multiple content areas.

Nearly 63 percent of the respondents (62.8%) identified their positions as full time positions in which most reportedly work more than 30 hours per week. About a third (37.2%) work part time (16-20 hours per week), and 25.9 percent reported they also work as a program administrator. Combined, the majority of instructors (73.2%) work more than 20 hours per week.

Participants were asked to indicate the percentage of time they spent teaching reading, writing, and mathematics content during the past academic year (2008–2009). Responses showed mathematics as the primary subject with an average rate of 52.3 percent of instructional time. Reading was the second most frequent subject taught (30.2% of instructional time) and writing received the least amount of instructional time (27.4%).

Instructional Methods and Learner Goals
The majority of participants indicated they most often provide individual one-on-one instruction (40.4% of instructional time). The second most popular form of instruction was whole group instruction, including question & answer (31.2%). There were similar responses for whole group instruction with open ended discussion (21.8%), individual conferences or tutoring (20.6%), and facilitate small groups (20.0%). Overall, individual instruction accounted for 61 percent of instructional time. The largest number of participants (56.5%) rated individual one-on-one instruction as the most effective method. In contrast, although most participants indicated each of the five instructional methods were effective or very effective, less than a third reported using four of these methods in the past month. Thus, there appears to be a great disconnect between perceived effectiveness of instructional methods and those being used on a regular basis.

Participants were asked about their use of common instructional activities using a 4-point Likert scale indicating whether they use the activity frequently, often, seldom, or never. The instructional activity used frequently by the largest number of participants (18.0%) was the use of technology/internet to inquire about and explore specific topics of interest. This activity was also selected as being used often by the largest number of participants (37.5%). Three instructional activities were used seldom by the largest number of participants, including cooperative learning projects (38.0%), simulation including role-playing and case studies (41.5%), and peer revision writing groups (42.9%). Thirty percent (30.6%) indicated they never use simulation, including role-playing and case studies during instruction.

Participants rated nine specific learner goals on
a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *very important* to *not important*. The majority of participants (indicated by a 50 percent response rate or higher) rated five out of nine as either *important* or *very important*, including 1) *Pass the GED*, 2) *Get a job*, and 3) *Think/Read critically*. Although it was not rated among the top three goals, the ability to *convey ideas in writing* was rated as either *very important* or *important* by a vast majority of the participants (89.8%) as was *use math concepts and techniques* (89.7%). Similarly, the goal to *go on to higher education* was identified as *very important* or *important* by most participants (89.3%). The goal identified as least important was *Use technology*, even though 30.2 percent ranked it as *very important* and 48.4 percent as *important*.

An additional write in response option was provided to ensure all learner goals deemed important by the participants were accurately captured. There was a wide range of learner goals identified by these written responses, for example:

Response 1: “Help build feelings of self-worth”
Response 8: “Improve communication skills for ESL”
Response 13: “Family budget, health and household management”
Response 30: “Build strong, positive examples for children to follow.”

As can be seen from these examples, identified goals related specifically to academics and life skills, building self-esteem and a positive self-image. There were several responses referencing learner goals specific to ESL students.

**Professional Preparation and Experience**

The majority of adult education providers in Kentucky are white (95%) females (81.7%) aged 40 and over (80.5%). More than half (55.6%) indicated they hold a *Bachelors Degree* with 2.3 percent reporting a *Bachelors Degree* currently in progress. Another 28.1 percent hold a *Masters Degree* with fourteen percent reporting a *Masters Degree* in progress. A small number (15.2%) reported completion of an *Associates Degree* with an additional one percent in progress. It is important to note these categories are not distinct and do include overlaps for individual participants. For instance, one individual may report multiple degrees (i.e. *Associates Degree* and *Bachelors Degree*), which would be documented in both of these categories. Nearly half of the participants (47.0%) majored in education. Other identified majors using a write in response depicted a wide range of expertise (e.g. *counseling*, *juvenile justice*, *English*, *social work*, *home economics*, *agriculture*, and *library science*).

Over half of the participants (60.7%) do not hold state issued teaching certification. The majority with certification (91.0%) reported it was issued or accepted in Kentucky. Other respondents reported certification from California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, and Tennessee. Only two individuals hold certification specific to adult education. About one-fourth (24.3%) reported Elementary Education certification and about twelve percent (11.6%) hold certification in Secondary Education. Other certification areas included *Business* (5.8%), *English* (5.8%), and *Middle School* (5.3%) with small numbers holding certification in *Special Education*, *French*, *Spanish*, *Vocational Education*, *Health and Physical Education*, *K-8*, and *K-12*. Two individuals had “emergency certification” for teaching, a provision by the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board that grants temporary certification when qualified teachers are not available to fill specific positions.
Teaching experience in adult education was measured using six distinct time brackets. Nearly half of the participants (44.0%) reported teaching in adult education five years or less. Of these respondents, 34.8 percent reported teaching for 1-5 years and 9.2 percent with less than one year of experience. There was an overall trend for a decline in the percent of those teaching for longer periods of time, 6-10 years (23.6%), 11-15 years (14.3%) and 16-20 years (11.0%). The fewest number of respondents reported teaching in adult education for more than 20 years (7.1%). Overall, more than half of the participants (58.4%) reported teaching in adult education from 1 to 10 years.

About two-thirds of participants (67.5%) indicated teaching experience outside of adult education, including elementary, middle, and high school as well as experience at the community college and university/4-year college level across a variety of content areas. The most common responses showed 1-5 years of teaching experience at the K-12 grade levels: elementary (47.0%), middle (56.8%), and high (39.4%). Those individuals with over 20 years of experience have taught most frequently at the elementary (14.9%) and high school (19.0%) levels.

A related question focused on primary subject areas associated with prior teaching experience. The most common response (72.7%) indicated multiple subject areas at the elementary level, which is consistent with the instructional structure of most elementary schools. Of the two variables specific to literacy instruction (i.e. Reading and Writing), a disproportionate number of participants reported prior experience teaching reading compared to writing at each level. At the elementary level, experience with teaching reading (14.5%) is shown at more than twice the rate as experience teaching writing (4.5%). A similar pattern is noted at the university/4-year college level with experience teaching reading (28.0%) at a higher rate than teaching writing (12.0%). The opposite is true for the remaining levels: middle school reading (7.5%) versus writing (12.9%); high school reading (3.0%) versus writing (14.0%); and community college reading (10.6%) versus writing (29.8%). Closer analyses showed a relatively low percentage of individuals (23.9%) with teaching experience specifically related to literacy instruction.

**Professional Development**

This section included questions related to purposes and/or priorities for professional development, current needs, prior experiences, and support provided to participate in professional development opportunities.

**Purposes and priorities.** Nearly half of all participants (48.0%) felt the primary purpose of professional development (PD) was to provide techniques which I can use immediately. Two additional primary purposes were to provide information that is new to me (12.6%) and to help me understand the needs of learners (11.7%). The purpose receiving the smallest number of responses (5.3%) was to provide information on how adults learn.

Participants were asked to rank their individual priorities for PD across seven specific areas on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 = top priority to 4 = lowest priority. The two highest priorities were add to my instructional skills (average ranking of 1.92) and add to my knowledge about teaching adults (2.01). The least important priority was learn to incorporate technology into instruction (2.94), which is consistent with previous questions related to learner goals showing use technology as the least important.
**Literacy specific training.** Participants were asked about training they desire related to teaching reading and writing specifically. There were three areas specific to READING closely ranked as high priorities, including:

1. **Helping learners with comprehension strategies**
2. **What models of teaching reading are effective with adults**
3. **Motivating learners to read**

A small number of participants (5.9%) provided a written response to this question with several comments specific to teaching ESL students, for example:
- Response 12: “Learning differences for ESL students’
- Response 19: “Teaching reading to second language learners.”

In relation to teaching WRITING, one indicator stood out as the highest priority with three additional indicators ranked as close seconds:

1. **Helping students overcome their fear of writing**
2. **Integrating writing and reading approaches**
3. **Teaching basic skills, including spelling and punctuation**
4. **Using process writing techniques**

Overall, **Teaching workplace writing (i.e. memos, faxes, reports, letters)** was ranked as the lowest priority. A small number of participants (3.7%) used the write in response option. Similar to the previous item, several individuals specified working with ELL students as a priority, for example:
- Response 3: “More ESL specific training…”
- Response 9: “How to teach writing to very low level beginners in ESL…”

Additionally, several participants indicated instructional needs for teaching writing at basic and advanced levels:
- Response 2: “Teaching basic grammar rules in an easy way”
- Response 14: “More complex skills-writing conventions”

One respondent commented specifically about the use of technology: **Using Smart Boards, Document cameras, web based blogs, and MP3 to improve writing.** However, this area of need was ranked low among most participants.

**Professional development delivery methods.** An additional question focused on different formats and/or delivery methods for PD training ranked across nine indicators. These options included a variety of face-to-face as well as distance learning formats. The items were ranked from **most useful (1) to least useful (9)** as follows:

1. **Professional workshops provided by colleagues**
2. **Content/subject matter specific training**
3. **Program workshops provided by outside consultants**
4. **Inquiry based projects**
5. **Independent/self study**
6. **Distance learning course (i.e. Web/TV)**
7. **Courses via CD ROM**
8. **University based courses**
9. **Video conferences**

Overall, technology-based delivery formats were ranked lower than content specific or face-to-face formats.

**Support for professional development engagement.** The final items related to PD focused on available resources and support. First, participants were asked whether or not they received support to participate in PD activities during the last academic year. The two most common types of support received by the
participants included: a) scheduled PD time within the hours for which you were paid (78.2%), and b) reimbursement for conference or workshop fees and expenses (66.3%). Nearly half (49.6%) were provided release time from teaching. The type of support received the least was grant to support a special professional development project (6.9%). Finally, participants ranked the type of support they felt would be most effective; the top three included:

1. Scheduled PD time within the hours for which you are paid
2. Reimbursement for conference or workshop fees and expenses
3. Full or partial reimbursement for tuition for university based courses

The type of support identified as the most important matches the most common type currently received; however, it may be important to consider the third type of support related to reimbursement for college tuition identified as important to participants, which less than a fourth (24.2%) indicated they currently receive.

**Literacy Content Knowledge**

The findings of the literacy content knowledge section showed the majority of participants (identified as 50% or more) correctly responded to 20 of 40 questions (M = 19.98, SD = 5.15). These results are described by each of four broad categories below.

**Alphabeticis.** The alphabeticis instructional area was identified as “the process of using letters in an alphabet to represent spoken words; phonemic awareness and work analysis or phonics” (Bell, et al., 2004, p. 543). The majority of participants scored correct responses on 4 out of 10 questions in this category (M = 4.44, SD = 1.85). Participants performed the lowest on items related to phonemes.

**Fluency.** Questions in the fluency category focused on “the ability to read with speed, ease, and accuracy, with proper intonation and rhythm” (Bell, et al., 2004; p. 543). Participants performed better on this section (M = 6.28, SD = 1.88). One question in which most participants provided an incorrect response focused on accurate decoding paired with slow reading speed. There was a small distinction between two of the response options (i.e. oral reading versus silent reading), which may have caused confusion on this item.

**Vocabulary.** The instructional area specific to vocabulary was described as “understanding the meanings of the words in a language” (Bell, et al., 2004, p. 543). The majority of participants scored 4 of 10 questions correct in this section (M = 4.58, SD = 1.86). The lowest correct response rates were obtained on two questions related to informal assessments of print vocabulary.

**Comprehension.** Questions in the comprehension category were described as “deriving or constructing meaning from text; involves all elements of the reading process” (Bell, et al., 2004; p. 543). There was a similar correct response rate in this section (M = 4.87, SD = 1.50). The lowest correct responses were on questions related to specific types of comprehension instruction.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The results of the literacy content knowledge survey and assessment are presented and discussed herein based on the two main goals of this research.

**Goal 1: Adult Education Program Characteristics**

The first goal of this project was to obtain a thorough description of the Kentucky adult education programs, including specific program characteristics as well as instructors’ backgrounds, professional preparation, and/or relevant teaching experiences.
Program characteristics. The majority of adult education providers in Kentucky (67.3%) identified their main teaching assignment as specific to GED®/Adult Secondary Education or Adult Basic Education (ABE) instruction. More than half (53.1%) considered themselves full-time employees working 30 or more hours per week. Most instructional time (52.3%) is allocated to teaching mathematics with lower rates of instructional time allocated to teaching reading (30.2%) and writing (27.4%). Individual, one-on-one instruction was used most frequently and was identified as the most effective instructional method with whole group instruction as the second most popular method. Adult education providers seldom use student-centered activities (e.g. peer revision writing groups) or authentic learning tasks despite the research indicating these activities are more supportive of student success (Fingeret, 1991; Purcell-Gates, et al., 2002; Stein, 2000).

The primary instructional materials used were textbooks and teacher developed handouts. A variety of computer-based programs (e.g. Microsoft Excel, Access) were used seldom or never even though entry level skills for the 21st century workplace often include the ability to use productivity software tools (Collins & Halverson, 2009). The most important learner goal identified was passing the GED® with get a job as the second most important goal. Thus, there appears to be a disconnection between what skills adult learners develop (non-technical) and the targeted learner goal of access to employment.

Adult education providers. The majority of Kentucky adult education providers are white females aged 40 and over. More than half of the participants (55.6%) hold a Bachelors Degree, and a large number of these individuals majored in education; yet, the majority (60.7%) does not hold state issued teaching certification. Of those with certification, most are certified at the elementary level, and only two individuals reported certification specific to adult education. Nearly half of these providers entered the field based on experience teaching at other levels. However, more than half (51.3%) entered the field through other, non-traditional routes. The majority of participants have been teaching in adult education for five years or less, but about two-thirds (67.5%) have teaching experience at other levels with elementary and high school identified as the most common. A relatively low number of participants (23.9%) reported experience related specifically to literacy instruction.

Goal 2: Knowledge Related to Effective Literacy Instruction
The second goal of this project was to determine literacy content knowledge levels related to effective reading and writing instruction among adult education instructors.

Literacy content knowledge levels. Overall, the majority of adult education providers (identified as 50% or more) correctly responded to 20 out of 40 literacy content knowledge questions. Their performance level was the highest on questions related to fluency instruction. There was a similar performance level for both the vocabulary and comprehension subsections with 4 out of 10 correct responses for each. Participants had the most difficulty with items related to informal assessments of vocabulary development and those related to specific types of instruction (e.g. direct, indirect). Participants performed the worst on questions related to alphabetic instruction correctly responding to only 3 out of 10 questions. Participants had the most difficulty with items related to emergent literacy skills (e.g. phonological
awareness).

**Professional development training.** The current PD offerings do not appear to meet the needs of adult education providers in the state. Opportunities to participate in outside workshops and collaborative teamwork with other teachers were the most popular PD activities and were rated as the most useful. This is consistent with previous research showing attendance at workshops as the most common type of PD supported in adult education (Smith, Hofer, & Gillespie, 2001). The three most desired PD training included: 1) *instructional strategies for teaching mathematics*, 2) *accommodating widely varied ability levels within the same classroom*, and 3) *instructional strategies for teaching reading/writing effectively*. Overall, PD related to integrating technology into the classroom was identified as least important. Wagner and Venezky (1999) argue, “adult literacy programs lag far behind in using newer electronic technologies—computers, wireless communications, videotapes, and the like—for instruction” (p. 25). Part of the problem, then, lies in the “inadequate staff training and lack of information on effective implementation and specialized uses” (p. 25). Without targeted PD focused on technology training, adult education providers will have difficulty viewing this as an important area for training, which will limit the development of technology skills among their students and interfere with their ability to become a successful part of a technology infused workplace.

Finally, participants identified a definitive need for PD training related to ESL instruction. This is consistent with other studies showing an increased need for effective teaching methods specific for instructing English language learners (Burt, Peyton, & Schaetzel, 2008; Lucas, Loo, & McDonald, 2005; Wagner & Venezky, 1999). “The needs of ESL literacy services are large, comprising currently about half of the provision for adult literacy education in the United States” (Wagner & Venezky, 1999, p. 24). Thus, adult education programs need PD support to help them better serve all populations of adult learners they serve.

**LIMITATIONS**

This descriptive study had several limitations. First, the collection of self-report data through the use of surveys can be subjective (Stone, et al., 1999) and sampling error is inherent (Fowler, 2008). Secondly, this study was geographically bound within Kentucky, which limits the generalizability of the results to states with similar geographic and demographic characteristics. Finally, the use of the KTARS instrument (Bell, et. al., 2004), as selected by the collaborating state agencies, limits the literacy content knowledge assessment to a particular paradigm for reading instruction, which minimizes the interpretation of the data.

**IMPLICATIONS TO THE FIELD**

The results from this study indicated targeted PD should be available to adult education providers to ensure they possess the necessary knowledge and skills for effective literacy instruction for their service population. Training should include a focus on a variety of pedagogic approaches to include more student-centered teaching methods as well as an overview of educational assessment techniques (e.g. formative assessment) to better inform and guide instruction. There should also be PD opportunities specific to working with ESL/ELL populations and how to address the instructional needs of a wide range of ability levels in one classroom, especially as managed enrollment models take precedence in these programs. Additionally, teachers prioritized the need for PD focused on math instruction, but more
importantly, instructional training should focus on further development of literacy content knowledge areas, including: critical reading, integration of reading and writing, complex writing, content area literacy, emergent literacy, vocabulary instruction, and reading comprehension of multiple text types. Additionally, adult education providers should be introduced to a wider variety of instructional materials, including technology-based resources and tools. Without a strong literacy background, adult education providers may struggle to help students develop the higher level literacy skills needed to transition to postsecondary education or the more complex, technology-infused workplace of the 21st century workplace. A lack of attention to these training needs, along with an increased focus on adult education enrollment, retention, and GED completion driven by state mandated accountability, might result in a continuation of little to no progress in changing the illiteracy rates in the state of Kentucky and, ultimately, our nation.

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The Learning and Violence website, started in 2006, was conceived and written by Jenny Horsman, the author of the seminal work *Too scared to learn: Women, violence and, education* (2000). The website is part of a larger vision and seen as “one step towards a long held dream of a virtual international institute for research and innovative practice to understand and address the impact of violence on learning” (Retrieved from http://www.learningandviolence.net/index.htm).

The website was initiated as a project of the Spiral Community Resource Group and Parkdale Project Read. The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre and the Canadian Council on Learning provided the startup funds. The site is now hosted by Canada’s National Adult Literacy Database (NALD/BDAA) network. Several knowledgeable individuals provided ideas, inspiration, research, writing, and website know-how to get the site up and running and to continue its expansion over the years (a complete list of involved individuals is available on the “Who we are” page of the website).

The Learning and Violence website exists to provide teachers, learners, and the general population the resources and allies needed to address the issue of violence and learning in an innovative manner. The objectives of the website are to provide practical ideas to make it easier to teach or learn when our own lives or the lives of those we work with are impacted by violence. The site also provides the names of people and organizations that are exploring violence and learning through research or practice. While most of the information is Canadian and
The website is not divided into separate sections for teachers or learners but, instead, is intended for anyone who seeks the information, regardless of educational background.

The most striking feature of the website is the beautiful nautilus shell on the homepage. The spiral image repeats itself throughout the website in the form of a shell and a spiral staircase and serves as a guiding theme. The website designers explain that they chose the image of a spiral as it “reminds us of the cycles that bring us around again and again to the same ideas, the same learning, so that we can find deeper and deeper knowledge each time we return to almost the same place. Each step on a spiral staircase turns slightly, turning upon itself, bringing a new experience, a new view, and perhaps a new insight” (Retrieved from http://www.learningandviolence.net/landv.htm).

When one thinks of violence and learning, the image of a spiral might not come immediately to mind, yet the consistent use of the spiral image allows the viewer to explore the scope of the problem while thinking about the complexity of violence and the impact of violence on learning. With a title like “learning and violence,” a visitor to the site might have some trepidation regarding the materials she or he would find on the site. For instance, I worried the materials might be heartbreaking or alarming, but there is nothing to evoke trauma, and I would feel comfortable employing any of these materials in a range of learning situations—from an adult literacy center to my university classroom. I found the images throughout the site to have a meditative quality to them, and the illustrations provided are like entering a great picture book. The corresponding audio is done in a variety of voices, and I greatly appreciated the diverseness of the materials on the site ranging from poems to research to videos to illustrations to lesson plans to pdf handouts to links to other organizations’ websites. There is a multitude of resources available for learners, teachers, administrators, and anyone interested in the topic of learning and violence.

The website is easy to navigate and successfully provides resources on violence and learning in multiple formats. There is plenty to read, watch, view, respond to, and think about. The site contains learning materials that a teacher could immediately employ in her or his classroom. The interactive features of the site are exceptionally well done as are the social justice components woven throughout the materials. The questions posed for discussion are insightful and useful in progressing one’s knowledge about
learning and violence. The site can be navigated by clicking through the links on the nautilus shell on the homepage in any order of interest; an alternative way to navigate the site is at the bottom of the screen where visitors can click through a linear list.

The information on the site, while not claiming to be comprehensive, is indeed expansive and perhaps a bit overwhelming at times, which is why the site invites visitors to return again and again for the full experience of understanding how violence shapes and affects our learning. It is the only site of its kind that I am familiar with, and I feel it successfully accomplishes its goals of helping all of us think critically and crucially about the role of learning and violence in our lives.

Reviewed by,

Dominique T. Chlup

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When I trained volunteer tutors in the large community-based literacy program where I worked many years ago, I often wondered how they used what I had presented once they began tutoring. Frankly, I had concerns about what actually “stuck.” I had a pretty good idea, as a program coordinator with the monthly obligation to check in with tutors, that many maintained only dim memories of key concepts and instructional approaches covered in our 12 hour training. Research indicates my concerns were not without merit: it has been shown that volunteers have strong commitment but limited efficacy and knowledge, implicating tutor training as failing to overcome these challenges (Ceprano, 1995; Sandlin & St. Clair, 2005; Ziegler, McCallum, & Bell, 2009). One explanation for this stems from research which documents that training has limited and inconsistent influence on instructional practice (Sandman-Hurley, 2008). My own research on four different training approaches revealed that tutors did not use much of what they had been taught (Belzer, 2006). They often implemented principles of adult learning, but there was poor uptake from training when it came to using specific instructional strategies for
teaching literacy skills. For example, tutors often selected texts for their students that were too easy or too difficult. They depended on a small range of strategies to help students deal with word level difficulties, generally without reference to strategies covered in the student’s current knowledge, or the features of the word (Belzer, 2006).

The overall quality of specific training approaches may play a role in poor transfer from training to practice, but it seems likely that at least part of the problem is rooted in what may be an overly optimistic hope that volunteers can be accomplished instructors after only the relatively few hours of pre-match training. This limited exposure is typical of many programs in which volunteers are briefly introduced to many topics without much depth or regard for specific tutor and learner needs. In this paper I describe a training model which takes a different approach and report on the experiences of programs that have implemented it.

THE JUST IN TIME (JIT) TUTOR TRAINING MODEL

While a natural response to low tutor knowledge and efficacy may be to require more training, it seems unrealistic to think that programs are able to afford—or volunteers are willing to commit to—significantly longer trainings. I got a different idea after collecting and analyzing recordings of three tutoring sessions from each of 12 student-tutor pairs participating in four programs for my study (Belzer, 2006). I noted that I could learn a great deal about their strengths and challenges simply by listening to them work together. This suggested that more knowledgeable and experienced staff or volunteers who “listen in,” as I did, could provide specific and detailed suggestions to improve tutor practices. If implemented soon after the initial match, support and supervision of volunteer tutors could be provided that would be timely and completely applicable to the specific student and tutor. I believed that volunteers might be better able to act on this input than from a long menu of ideas and strategies presented during pre-match training before having even met their students. This suggested that less initial training (which I had found to be poorly utilized), balanced with more intensive and targeted support post-match (i.e. “just in time”), might be a more effective solution. In addition to making intuitive sense to me, the idea was consistent with adult learning theories which suggest that adults learn by experience, benefit from contextualized learning, and develop skill through interaction with more expert practitioners (Boucouvalas & Lawrence, 2010).

Although it has not previously been widely applied in ABE, this just in time approach to training is not new. The term was originally used in manufacturing to suggest the importance of ensuring that proper resources are available at the appropriate time (Jones, 2001). First employed on a large scale by Toyota in the 1970s, it was later applied to human resources development to describe a particular kind of on-the-job training designed to maximize proximity between training need and actual training. Jones (2001) argued that JIT training can enable “specific performance issues [to] be addressed strategically, without [providing] unnecessary additional information” (p. 483). By only including information that is relevant to tutoring any student during initial training, and by providing information and materials specific to the student once a tutor has begun tutoring, the JIT Tutor Training Model attempts to eliminate time spent on conveying information when it can not be well utilized and, instead, provide necessary information when it can. Based on this idea and as a result of consultation with practitioners interested
in developing procedures for implementing JIT Training, I developed a JIT training protocol, an initial training outline, and a follow up observational checklist (to support analysis of recorded tutoring sessions) for programs wishing to adopt the JIT Tutor Training Model.

**JIT Training Protocol**

The training protocol has four phases: (1) an initial orientation of approximately three hours that covers information to help tutors get started with their students, (2) a new tutor-student match and instruction that begins on-the-job training, (3) “listening in” after approximately 12 hours of instruction post-match when the student-tutor pair records an instructional session, and (4) an experienced staff person or designated volunteer listens to the recording and provides specific feedback to the tutor (and student) about what s/he is doing well and what strategies and materials could be used to be more effective. For best results, this feedback is offered as soon as possible subsequent to the recording, and training is not considered complete until the feedback session is conducted. In all, the training consists of approximately 16 hours stretched out over several weeks, but tutoring begins quickly. Ideally, tutoring sessions would be recorded and analyzed again at regular intervals (e.g., at the 60-hour point when many programs post test), and feedback would be provided to help the tutor respond to changing needs and interests of the student.

**Initial Orientation**

After combing through a number of training manuals, topics for the initial orientation were selected by the author and members of the practitioner working group based on two criteria: they provided necessary information for getting started and were applicable to all students. The topics are literacy in the United States; adults as learners; characteristics of a good tutor; designing instruction and lesson planning using student goals and selecting appropriate reading material; how to get started during the first few weeks using a range of strategies for reading together; how to help when the student gets stuck; how to increase comprehension, develop word attack skills, and encourage reading practice; learner diversity; and program procedures and JIT training logistics. More detailed information on any of these topics and additional strategies and instructional materials can be provided as needed in a pre-match meeting, reinforced at the follow-up meeting after 12 hours of instruction, or addressed during in-service tutor support meetings.

**Follow-Up Observational Checklist**

The observational checklist was developed to help staff members who are tasked with providing feedback on the recorded session. The checklist relates student goals and other needs to an overview of activities carried out during the session, and it prompts the listener to record overall impressions of student-tutor interactions and note specific reading and writing instructional strategies employed. Analysis of the checklist can then be used as the source for specific tutor feedback.

**LEARNING FROM THE FIELD ABOUT JIT TUTOR TRAINING**

Programs around the country have begun to implement JIT Tutor training after hearing about it at conferences where I presented. Wanting to know how the model was being enacted and how it was working, I recruited programs that had implemented JIT Tutor Training and were willing to share their experiences. Five programs contacted me; I interviewed a staff person from each and the remainder of this paper reports on...
what they told me. These five programs are small, serving from about 30 to 140 students annually with few paid staff. All serve both literacy and English language learners (ELL); one program serves only ELL students. Their experiences make clear that the model is adaptable to local contexts, addresses specific needs, and is perceived as effective.

Adapting and Implementing the JIT Tutor Training Model

Programs were attracted to JIT Training because they felt it addresses specific challenges they faced, such as long waiting lists of unmatched students or tutors. The shorter initial trainings gave staff flexibility to offer more trainings or responsively offer them when needed. They also believed that it could increase tutor recruitment and retention because a shorter training would be more attractive to volunteers, and the JIT follow-up reassures tutors that they are going to get the support they need when they begin tutoring. “This gives us an opportunity to catch a lot more students and activate a lot more tutors when we really need them…which has increased our numbers of working matches,” one program manager reported.

Perhaps just as important as addressing program challenges, the programs reported that JIT training addressed instructional challenges. Program staff said their own observations confirmed my findings (Belzer, 2006) that tutors do not use much of what is covered in long initial trainings. They observed that tutors get overwhelmed by the quantity of information presented and either can not retain it or cannot use it. One program manager recognized that, while tutors got too much information they could not use, they conversely did not get enough that they could. She said, “I realized that we have such a diverse population with our students, from those with no literacy skills in their native language to people with a Ph.D. So doing one training that would cover all of these possible students—you just can’t do it.”

Each program engaged in a different process to adapt the model and materials to fit their needs, core values, and context. They reduced initial training from 12-20 hours to 3.5-6 hours. Some programs stuck pretty closely to the training outline we developed but also retained some topics and materials from their old training to fit their needs. At the ESL only program, they had to start from scratch because JIT materials are aimed at literacy learners. To do so, they eliminated everything from their old training but “the most necessary, most basic information that a person would need, regardless of the student.”

Programs implemented the second part of the training—the just in time feedback—in different ways. Three programs followed the model of providing feedback after recording and listening to a tutoring session, but two others provide focused support based on direct observation. Additionally, most of the programs have added or gotten more systematic about providing in-service workshops, online supports, and other ways to supplement the short initial training. Ideally, this additional support can be tailored to specific tutor needs revealed by listening to tutoring sessions.

Two of the programs that give feedback after recording and analyzing a session have developed strategies that help staff have the time to do this. One program established a mentor group of experienced tutors who do phone check-ins with new tutors after their third or fourth meeting to see how they are doing and let them know they have someone to call if they need help. The mentors also implement the feedback process and participate in the feedback session after their pair’s eighth meeting. The program director emphasized that their help has made the logistics manageable and has enabled them to “personalize the training...
that’s necessary… [because it is possible to] identify very specific weaknesses (and strengths) in what they’re doing.” She said listening in has been “a great tool…I love listening to the tapes!... We don’t [otherwise] know what’s happening in those sessions…To me, besides getting 6 hours back from tutor training, having that tape has been the single most important thing to me [about adopting the JIT training model].” At another program, they listen to recordings selectively, listening to each element of the lesson for just a few minutes and skipping ahead when they feel confident they have a good idea of what is going on. By shortening listening time and gaining time back from a shortened training, they have not had difficulty finding the time to do the follow-up work. All three programs that use the recording process report that follow-up meetings with tutors do not take more time than typical check-ins that they were already doing, and they indicated that their time together is now much more productive.

Programs made other changes simultaneous with adapting the JIT model. Some changes were specifically intended to support implementation, and others were coincidental but ended up contributing to implementation success. Examples include recruiting new trainers to replace trainers resistant to the JIT model, adopting more systematic assessment procedures so that program staff could give volunteers more specific information about their students, and purchasing an online phonics tutorial which eliminated the need to include extensive phonics training during the initial training. Some programs also began to be more purposeful in how they facilitated a first meeting between the student and tutor by providing more targeted instructional guidance.

**Outcomes of JIT Training**

Of course there is no one way to fix every challenge a program faces with regard to training and instruction, but all five programs believe that JIT Training has directly addressed concerns they had about their old training. Unfortunately, given very limited staff resources, none of the programs were able to collect or analyze quantitative data regarding tutor retention, student-tutor contact hours, student retention, or learning gains to compare student-tutor pairs traditionally trained to student-tutor pairs whose tutors participated in JIT Training. Yet, anecdotally and by observation, all five program staff report positive outcomes as a result of making the change.

These programs have been able to offer more trainings as needed and recruit more tutors. Importantly, they feel that tutors are no less prepared to begin than they were after their longer initial training and are satisfied with the orientation they get. One program manager asserted that everyone is nervous and feels apprehensive and unprepared whether they have 6 or 13 hours of training, making “the difference [in initial training time] irrelevant.” Others say it is easier to recruit volunteers because they are more willing to commit when there are fewer hours of initial training. On the down side, the reduced initial training time means program staff do not get to know new volunteers as well, but no one saw the quality of matches suffer. In fact, staff people at several of the programs noted that new volunteers seem more positive, enthusiastic, and confident because they know “they’re going to get the help they need when they need it. That wasn’t happening before.”

Without a comparison group of students, it is hard to judge overall instructional effectiveness of JIT trained tutors. However, staff from all five programs did not hesitate to say they are getting good results. Their confidence comes from knowing more than they used to about what tutors are actually doing and being able to provide
specific and targeted assistance to improve their skills. As one program staff person said, “I don't think we're losing the ability to form a good tutor because we're giving 7 hours less [initial] training. The follow up is worth the effort.”

**IMPLICATIONS**

There are several implications for adapting the JIT Tutoring Training Model that arise from the experiences of the five program staff I interviewed. They demonstrate that the JIT model need not be replicated exactly in order to generate positive results. Rather, it provides a framework that can be enacted in a variety of ways. For example, I recommended a three hour initial training and the training outline is quite specific about what topics to include during that time. However, the programs did not all make their trainings quite so short, nor did they all adopt the initial training outline as is. However, they all stuck with the idea of eliminating everything from the initial training that was not directly relevant for all students regardless of level, needs, or interest; all programs significantly shortened their initial training. Similarly, not all programs are tape recording instructional sessions of new student-tutor pairs, but they all have increased the intensity of targeted support early in the match on the assumption that tutors need more help once they begin tutoring.

These programs also made clear that initiating other structures and formats played a role in their successful implementation of JIT training. JIT Training offers a significant rethinking of tutor training, but their experiences suggest that programs cannot succeed without well thought out assessment procedures and ongoing tutor support. The model, and accompanying materials, may be usable with very little modification in many programs, but may also need significant adaptation to work in others, such as those that are very large or geographically dispersed. Almost any program will want to put its own “stamp” on it. However, based on the responses of staff who have heard about the model at conferences and the experiences of the five programs described here, it seems like an idea worthy of exploration, adaption, and further research.

**Author Note**

A detailed outline of the initial orientation, accompanying PowerPoint slides, and the 12 hour follow up observation check list are available by contacting the author at alisa.belzer@gse.rutgers.edu

**REFERENCES**


Adult educators and vocational counselors often look for ways to help learners explore careers and potential career pathways. One way to gain this information is through free online career exploration videos. This Web Scan suggests web sites that have good collections of career exploration videos and includes tips on how to use them.

How to find career videos

You can find lots of career-related videos on YouTube (http://youtube.com). You will have to be specific in your search by using terms like “union carpenter” (even with quotes around the phrase, you’ll get over 1,000 results), “electrical engineer” (over 21,000 results), “phlebotomist,” (over 3,000 results) or “certified Nursing Assistant” (nearly 4,000 results). Previously, it was difficult to find videos on YouTube relevant to adult education; now there are so many videos that it is hard to sort the wheat from the chaff. If YouTube is blocked at your program or school, you may still be able to use YouTube videos if you can access and preview them at home, a library, or another place where YouTube is not blocked. You could use free software such as DVD VideoSoft (http://www.dvdvideosoft.com) to download and save the videos to a portable storage device such as a flash or jump drive or external hard drive. (Note that currently DVD VideoSoft free software is only available for PCs, not Macs.) You could then connect the storage device to a computer and multimedia (LCD) projector to show the video(s) in your classroom. Another solution would be to ask your school or program LAN manager to make an exception so you can use YouTube videos in class.
Tip: Preview videos before showing or assigning them to students. If possible, form a team of teachers or counselors to review and share good career videos. This could include teachers and counselors at your school or program, a group from several programs in your area or state, or it could be an online team. You could use free online group software like Wiggio, Yahoo, or Google groups or—for real-time video meetings of up to nine people—Google Hangouts. For larger groups, Skype is available for up to 25 people. Of course, someone needs to take the lead and invite others to join, moderate the meetings, and follow up after the sessions.

Multi-career Video Sites

1. CityTownInfo.com
   http://www.citytowninfo.com/career-videos
   Hundreds of professionally produced videos describing careers and jobs, including job requirements, daily activities, and more. Videos are typically several minutes in length, and they provide an excellent overview of a single career. Videos feature actual workers in each field and are closed-captioned for broad accessibility.

2. Vector (Canada)
   http://www.vector.cfee.org/english/explorevideo.php
   Sign in as a guest and choose Explore the Career Video Library for access to 100 short videos that you can search by industry, interests/skills, income level, education level, or other keywords.

3. New Jersey Next Stop...Your Career
   http://www.state.nj.us/njnextstop/videos/
   Nearly 100 videos organized by industry/career sector.

4. Career One Stop Cluster and Career Videos
Video Challenge: Medical Lab Technician

Then, they analyze the results and

5. Career Videos Challenge
http://www.dol.gov/dol/videochallenge.htm#.UJKQ2oVcRvw

U.S. Department of Labor 15 Career Videos Challenge winners.

6. YOUniversityTV Career Videos
http://www.youniversitytv.com/careers

This site includes 90 career videos but does show commercials.

7. Careers Out There
http://careersoutthere.com/

Nearly 60 career videos available.

8. Career Aisle
http://knowitall.scetv.org/careeraisle/students/hs/index.cfm

Geared toward high school students, this website offers hundreds of videos organized by industry.
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