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The relationship between perceived supportive/ defensive communication behaviors of adult education instructors and the decision to drop out or persist by adult learners

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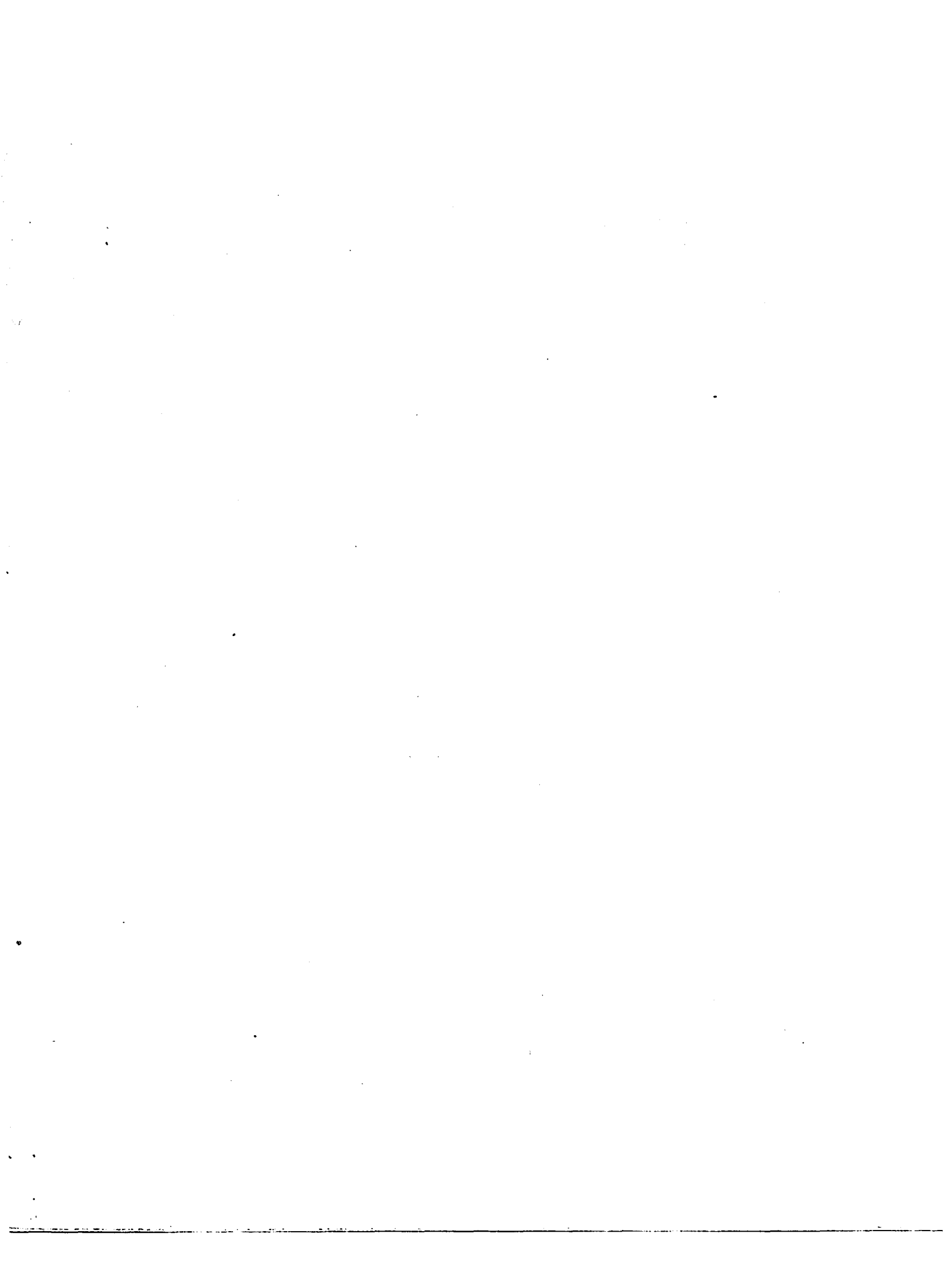
The relationship between perceived supportive/defensive

communication behaviors of adult education instructors

and the decision to drop out or persist by adult learners

by

Denise Ann Vrchota

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Background

Research is not lacking in the area of participation in adult education. Especially in the instance of multi-session institutionalized adult education programs, researchers have sought reasons why some adults are willing to commit themselves to such an experience and others are not.

Much less attention is given the question, "Once you get them there, how do you keep them there?" In other words, despite the adult learner's initial decision to participate, why is it that many do not complete their original commitment? Why is it that some adults persist and others drop out of various adult learning experiences? Little is known about this participation-related issue.

Despite the "learner-centeredness" orientation of adult education, within the multi-session type program the instructor does assume a key role. While researchers in other areas of education have drawn conclusions about the influence of various instructor communication behaviors on learners, little has been done if the learners are adults.

An interesting research area which emerges is to examine whether there is a relationship between instructor communication behaviors and the decision by adults to persist or drop programs to which they have initially committed themselves; if such a relationship does exist, what interpersonal communication behaviors are likely to be instrumental in the decision to persist vs. drop an adult education class?

This introduction presents an overview of research in the areas of adult participation, influences of instructor communication behaviors, and

Jack Gibb's (1961) defensive communication behaviors which may be especially pertinent to the communication climate in the adult learning situation.

Following the overview is a statement of the problem, definitions, conjectures and rationale, hypotheses, assumptions, and design, significance, and limitations of the study.

Adult participation

Few areas of adult education have received as much attention as has participation. Unfortunately, few areas have achieved such a paucity of useful results.

The resolution of problems surrounding participation research is hindered by a lack of systematic study which further results in a lack of sound theory (Boshier, 1972, 1973; Garrison, 1985, 1987; Verner & Davis, 1964). This state of affairs has crippled participation research as well as the related area of dropout/persistence research for decades.

Typically, studies have compared discrete personality or social characteristics of individuals enrolled in programs with those of individuals who could be but are not. The attempt to credit single variables for what Boshier (1972) viewed as more complicated has been limiting to adult education; although these characteristics may describe participants vs. nonparticipants, they may not themselves be causal (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Douglah & Moss, 1968).

Other researchers believe that more useful results can be obtained by turning toward psychological dimensions and motivational antecedents.

Other research has resulted in clusters of reasons. Boshier and Riddell (1978), Burgess (1971), and Morstain and Smart (1974) all found that reasons given for participating could be factored into six or seven similar groups.

An area which is believed related to participation is that of learner dropout. Initial enrollment is rarely retained throughout an adult education program. Attendance typically is characterized by a sporadic but persistent decline (Dickinson & Verner, 1967). This has been the case since as early as 1814, writes Boshier (1971a, 1973), when Thomas Pole advised that educators should visit at home "adults absenting themselves from classes...to prevent learners from relaxing their attendance."

Dropout/persistence research results appear to parallel those of participation research in that these results are categorizable according to discrete qualities. For example, age, educational attainment, and economic status are typical characteristics differentiating learners who drop out vs. those who persist (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Douglah & Moss, 1968; Sainty, 1971), but they are not causes of dropout decisions.

Noteworthy in relation to the research reported here is the work of Boshier (1977), who concluded that the decision to drop a class was psychologically motivated. His hypothesis was based on a growth-deficiency continuum. "Growth" individuals have satisfied lower order needs and their participation in educational programs was seen by Boshier as a means of self-actualization; however, "deficiency" individuals participate to survive, and their participation is more likely

to be sporadic as they feel they have acquired the necessary information to fulfill immediate needs.

Instructor influence

"The difference between knowing and teaching is communication" (Hurt, Scott, & McCroskey, 1978). While admittedly the instructor is a central figure in most classrooms, in adult education the instructor occupies a less prominent position. Consequently, research relating to the influence of communication behaviors of the instructor, while prevalent in both education and communication journals, is available only minimally in adult education literature.

For example, surveys of adult educators result in agreement that interpersonal skills are possibly the most important skill or proficiency an adult educator can possess (Daniel & Rose, 1982; Knox, 1980).

As with other groups of learners, Cole and Glass (1977) found that achievement scores of adult learners were higher and that more positive attitudes by adult learners toward education resulted if the atmosphere was perceived by learners as interactive.

Despite the lack of research concerning the influences of instructor communication behaviors in the adult learning environment, it is appropriate to consider the influence on an educational situation of interpersonal communication behaviors. As Nussbaum and Scott (1979) commented, while the instructional environment is unique in many respects, it is a microcosm of the larger interpersonal environment; thus variables influencing interactions in the interpersonal environment should also be expected to influence interactions in the instructional environment. This

may be particularly true when applied to the adult learning environment
due to the emphasis placed on one approach to adult learning, andragogy,
the art of teaching adults.

Malcolm Knowles (1970, 1978) describes four crucial assumptions upon
which andragogy is premised. They are related to (1) the adult's changing
self-concept; (2) the accumulation of life experiences; (3) a readiness to
learn which is oriented to the developmental tasks of social roles; and
(4) an orientation to immediacy of application, or a problem-centeredness
rather than a subject-centeredness. To fulfill each of these assumptions,
certain interpersonal behaviors must be displayed by the instructor.
Knowles believes that the quality and amount of learning of adults is
clearly influenced by the quality and amount of interaction between the
learner and the instructor/educational environment. Thus, it is
especially appropriate in the adult environment to consider the influence
exerted by instructor interpersonal behaviors. Menlo and Miller (1976)
concluded, for example, that in adult classes in which an andragogical
instructional approach was used, adult learner involvement occurred more
frequently. They also found that the instructor's perceived willingness
to interact with adult learners, to encourage learner involvement, and to
display nondefensive behaviors was instrumental to the extent learners
were willing to expend energy in the class.

Other researchers also concluded that a relationship existed between
the andragogical orientation of instructors and that individual's
interpersonal behavior.

Beder and Darkenwald (1982) found that the communication style of andragogically-oriented instructors differed from the pedagogically-oriented in that responsive, learner-centered behaviors were emphasized. Holmes (1982) determined that the andragogically-oriented instructor perceived his/her relationship to learners as that of helper, resource, consultant, and co-learner. The goal of the andragogical instructor seemed to be to increase the effectiveness of the learning situation by cultivating an environment in which cooperative interaction, increased participation, and learning were results for learners.

Defensive communication behaviors

As was implied in the previous paragraphs, some researchers believe a relationship exists between the interpersonal communication behaviors of the instructor and that individual's andragogical orientation. If that is the case, then interpersonal behaviors which enhance andragogical behaviors are those which should be considered in this project.

It would seem, for example, that the instructor of adults should be one who would accept, respect, and support the adult learner, and show a willingness to collaborate with the learner and a willingness to interact in a person-centered manner.

A communication model from which to identify more specifically appropriate interpersonal behaviors for adult educators may be one developed by Jack R. Gibb (1961). Gibb's research rested heavily on an affective state model of Rogers which speculated that the necessary conditions for personal growth and change were qualities of genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathy (Winer & Majors, 1981).

From 1953-1961, Gibb analyzed tapes of human relations training
sessions in industrial, educational, and community settings. His
conclusions are based on analyses of these tapes. Gibb felt that
communication should be viewed as a people process rather than as a
language process. One alteration which he felt could be made in
counterproductive situations was to reduce the degree of defensiveness
which existed between individuals. He defined defensive behavior as "that
behavior which occurs when an individual perceives threat or anticipates
threat...." When defensiveness is perceived, the individual devotes
energy to defending him/herself, often at the expense of the communication
interaction. The resulting behavior tends to create similarly defensive
postures in others and the resulting reciprocity may become increasingly
destructive.

Gibb pointed out that as one becomes more and more defensive, s/he
becomes less and less able to accurately perceive messages of the other
individual. Both sent and received messages become distorted.

The opposite is also true; i.e., the more defense-reducing or
"supportive" the climate, the less participants are likely to distort
messages, and the more clear and effective is the resulting communication.

Few empirical studies have dealt with Gibb's original work. However,
some studies conducted in various educational environments have
investigated specific communication variables or skills which operate
within the defensive or supportive mode.

In traditional undergraduate classrooms, "liked classes" were
perceived as characterized by a more supportive environment than disliked

classes; this tended to influence and encourage learner use of coping

mechanisms when interacting with instructors (Rosenfeld, 1983).

Speech students retained significantly more information when a critic

evaluated speeches in a supportive climate (Hays, 1967). Similarly,

Stephenson and D'Angelo (1973) found that confederates who consistently

evaluated another student's position negatively were more likely to evoke

ratings of defensiveness than more passive confederates.

A major concern of educators and institutions which provide

educational opportunities to adults is to identify variables which are

likely to contribute to the adult learner's decision to drop a course, or

to persist and complete the course.

A major concern of many educators and communication specialists is to

identify influences of a variety of instructor communication behaviors on

learning outcomes of students.

Specifically of interest to adult educators and educational

institutions is any relationship which may occur when observing the

communication climate of an adult learning environment, and the propensity

of the adult learner to persist or drop a class.

Statement of the Problem

Few areas of adult education appear to have received such scrutiny as

has participation (Douglah & Moss, 1968; Garrison, 1985, 1987); yet for

all of the attention, little if any useful conclusion has resulted.

Studies generally correlate discrete variables of participants with

nonparticipants. For example, participants are generally better educated

than nonparticipants. Concurrently, researchers originally sought single

variables as causes of dropout/persistence while in both cases it may be that the phenomena are actually combinations of many variables (Boshier & Baker, 1979).

Although recent research has concentrated on clusters of motivational and/or psychological variables (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Berry, 1971; Boshier, 1976; Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985), the area is characterized by lack of sound theory by which to organize it (Boshier, 1972, 1973; Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985; Verner & Davis, 1964).

Interestingly much of this research is based on learner variables independent of the learning environment. Whether learners may be influenced to persist in or drop an adult education program due to variables within the educational environment is not often considered. Yet while Knowles (1970, 1978) has described the necessary contribution of one environmental variable, the instructor, this was done without benefit of empirical support.

Other researchers were able to determine that various relationships do exist between the instructor and other variables. Beder & Darkenwald (1982), Cole and Glass (1977), Holmes (1982), Menlo and Miller (1976), Yee-Lay and Wong (1974) all concluded that certain interpersonal behaviors of the instructor such as expressing a desire to cooperate, or displaying a willingness to interact, resulted in increased attendance, increased learner involvement, and a more interactive atmosphere.

Based on this summary, a research question emerges regarding these areas. Is there a relationship between some of the psychological variables which characterize adult learners and the communication

behaviors of adult education instructors? If such a relationship exists, does it have any bearing on the decision of the learner to drop out or to persist?

It would be important to ascertain whether such a relationship exists. At the least it would imply that certain types of situations in which interaction is minimal (lecture, for example) should be downplayed, perhaps even avoided.

Even more important are the implications which exist for behavior of adult education instructors. If it can be determined that specific interpersonal communication behaviors do mesh with psychological variables prevalent in adult learners, then those behaviors which appear to be related to dropout must be discouraged, and those which appear to be related to persistence must become a "priority behavior" of instructors.

Definitions

Adult learner: One not enrolled full time as a learner who has assumed responsibilities of adult status such as work, marriage, or parenthood (Beder & Darkenwald, 1982) and who is currently enrolled in a course for continuing education credit.

Participant: An adult learner who officially commits him/herself to an adult learning situation by completing the necessary registration procedure and who establishes participation by attending the first course meeting.

Persister: An adult learner who fulfills attendance requirements for a continuing education course by attending 80% or more of the course meetings.

Dropout: An adult learner who does not fulfill attendance
requirements for a continuing education course by attending less than 80%
of the course meetings.

Adult education instructor: The individual who acts as a resource or
collaborator with the adult learner, enabling the learner to achieve
his/her educational goal.

Defensive communication behaviors: Communication behaviors which
stimulate one to perceive or anticipate threat, causing the individual to
expend energy to defend him/herself (Gibb, 1961).

Supportive communication behaviors: Communication behaviors which
reduce levels of threat or defensiveness (Gibb, 1961).

Conjectures and Rationale

Based on exit interviews with course dropouts and content analysis of
written reasons for their withdrawal, Boshier (1971a) found that factors
in the educational environment correlated with dropout/persistence.
Specifically, the degree of congruence the learner felt between self,
instructor, other learners, and ideal self was related to the
dropout/persistence decision.

Boshier (1973) determined dropout to be an extension of
nonparticipation; variables associated with one were also associated with
the other. Both persistence and dropout stemmed from an interaction of
internal psychological and external environmental variables.

Boshier asserted that congruence (borrowed from Rogerian
self-psychology) within the participant and educational environment
determined participation/nonparticipation, dropout/persistence. The

decision to persist vs. dropout could be understood as a function of the magnitude of the incongruence.

Boshier also viewed participants in noncredit adult education courses as "deficiency" or "growth" motivated, as derived from Maslow. Maslow's growth-motivated individual has a superior perception of reality, an acceptance of self and others; s/he is spontaneous, autonomous, coping; the growth motivated individual is synonymous with Rogers's fully functioning person.

Boshier speculated that such an individual has satisfied lower order needs and may be better equipped to cope with and adapt to environmental inconsistencies; i.e., the individual does not view him/herself as a reactive, but a coping person. Participating in an educational opportunity for a growth-motivated individual is associated with intra-self and self-other congruence. Thus, threat is minimal or nonexistent and psychological adjustment is optimal. Persistence rather than dropout is likely to be the result.

Conversely, the deficiency-motivated individual is motivated by social and environmental pressures and is concerned with achieving gratification of lower order needs. This person tends to fear the environment (rather than cope with it) because the environment may fail or disappoint. Such anxiety may breed hostility or defensiveness.

Boshier hypothesized that to enroll in an educational program for deficiency reasons is associated with intra-self incongruence which leads to self-other incongruence and ultimately results in dissatisfaction with the educational environment. Upon discovering that one's self-concept and

environmental variables are incongruent, dropout may occur. This may never be acknowledged by the dropout, however. Dropouts may be defensive about divulging their reasons for dropping a course. A noncourse related reason (i.e., transportation difficulties) may be more acceptable to the dropout than to admit s/he is unable to cope with or feel comfortable in the educational environment. Based on his interviews with dropouts, Boshier concluded that noncourse related variables will not trigger dropout, but are used to rationalize it.

If this is the case, several questions occur.

If incongruencies originally reside within the self, will attempts to alleviate environmental discrepancies also alleviate intra-self discrepancies? If, as Boshier suggests, an internal incongruence predisposes the individual to educational environmental incongruencies, can it be possible that congruence within the environment will influence intra-self congruencies to occur?

If environmental variable manipulation is within the realm of possibility, a second consideration is to determine which variable is most powerful in alleviating an incongruence. The instructor seems the logical choice. Essentially the instructor serves as a "pivotal" figure who has both the opportunity and the responsibility to influence environmental factors. Therefore, in instances in which an incongruence is present, would the instructor be the key figure to restore congruence?

Finally, how could the instructor restore congruence? In the explanation of Gibb's supportive/defensive behaviors, defensiveness was defined as a perceived threat to one's self-concept. The individual

perceiving such a threat becomes intent upon protecting his/her
self-concept by responding in kind. The converse is true of
supportiveness. Can it be assumed that the results would be similar in an
educational environment? Can it be assumed that adult learners would be
able to perceive differences in supportive vs. defensive behaviors? If a
nondefensive message is used consistently in the educational environment,
and if the deficiency motivated person perceives that supportiveness is
occurring, is the incongruence likely to be reduced and dropout
alleviated?

Hypotheses

1. Actual persisters will be significantly ($p \leq .05$) more positive in
perceptions of "MYSELF," "MYSELF AS I WOULD LIKE TO BE," "OTHER ADULT
EDUCATION STUDENTS," and "ADULT EDUCATION LECTURER," than will actual
dropouts.

2. Actual persisters will perceive instructors as significantly
($p \leq .05$) more supportive than defensive.

3. Actual dropouts will perceive instructors as significantly
($p \leq .05$) more defensive than supportive.

4. Predicted dropouts who actually drop out will perceive
significantly ($p \leq .05$) greater instructor defensiveness than will predicted
dropouts who do not drop out.

5. Predicted dropouts who do not drop out will perceive
significantly ($p \leq .05$) greater instructor supportiveness than will
predicted dropouts who drop out.

6. Predicted persisters who actually persist will perceive significantly (p$\leq$.05) greater instructor supportiveness than predicted persisters who do not persist.

7. Predicted persisters who do not persist will perceive significantly (p$\leq$.05) greater instructor defensiveness than will predicted persisters who do persist.

8. There will be no significant (p$\leq$.05) difference between predicted dropouts who drop out and predicted persisters who drop out on their perceptions of instructor defensiveness.

9. There will be no significant (p$\leq$.05) difference between predicted dropouts who drop out and predicted persisters who drop out on their perceptions of instructor supportiveness.

Assumptions

1. Boshier's Deficiency/Growth Motivation Model is an appropriate framework for organization of this project.

2. The use of Boshier's (1971a) Personality and Educational Environment Scale (PEES) is a reliable and otherwise appropriate instrument for this project.

3. The Communication Climate Questionnaire (CCQ) originated by Hays (1967) and adapted by Rosenfeld (1983) is a reliable and otherwise appropriate instrument for this project.

4. The sample chosen for the study is comprised of adult learners representative of those attending continuing education course offerings.

Design of the Study

The study surveyed 103 adults enrolled in evening continuing education courses at a community college.

Subjects completed a three-part questionnaire at the beginning of their first class meeting. Part one of the questionnaire requested demographic information and information concerning the subject's participation history in adult learning situations; part two was Boshier's Personality and Educational Environment Scale (PEES) which measures the learner's perception of self, ideal self, instructor, and other learners; part three was Rosenfeld's Communication Climate Questionnaire (CCQ) which measures the subject's perception of the communication climate of the educational environment.

Since the study was interested in identifying possible contributions to the adult learner's decision to persist in vs. drop an adult education class, the design reflected the causal-comparative method (Borg & Gall, 1983). The statistic applied was the t-test.

Adult learners who did drop their courses were sent a short follow-up questionnaire which asked them to identify reasons they felt were instrumental in their decisions to drop their courses. The questionnaire is based on a list of common reasons for dropout identified by Cross (1981).

Significance of the Study

Much has been done to determine why adults participate in adult learning situations. Yet despite the dearth of material, on the one hand research consists of numerous studies which are atheoretical, descriptive

rather than analytical, and limited in focus to a few psychological, demographic, or social background variables. These studies tend to replicate earlier studies in design, questions asked, and results reported (Cookson, 1986; Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985). On the other hand, "explanations of the phenomenon are characterized by non-cumulativeness and independence from empirical inquiry" (Cookson, 1986).

In other words, the research has yielded much fragmented material without benefit of any organizational framework. The current project has the potential to benefit for the following reasons.

1. Through replication of Boshier's (1973) study and use of his Growth/Deficiency model, it is intended that this project will contribute support to existing theory.

2. The PEES used with this project may well be a useful prediction instrument to be used in spotting potential dropouts before they are allowed to occur.

3. The emphasis on the CCQ highlights an important but seldom mentioned variable: the instructor. Despite the "learner-centeredness" of the adult education situation, the CCQ may open an area of research prevalent in other areas of education, the influence of the instructor on the learning environment.

4. The CCQ may also be used as a prediction instrument for acknowledging instructor communication behavior. Individuals can be trained away from defensive behaviors.

Limitations

Due to the diversity of adult education environments and learners, limitations of this study were posed by the sample and the specific adult learning situation.

Since "adult education" is a term applied to many diverse learning situations, conclusions resulting from this sample should be generalized to other populations with caution.

The fact that subjects were enrolled in evening classes may be limiting also. Are learners in evening classes more likely to perceive defensiveness, for example, than learners whose classes meet at other times? Likewise is there a chance that the PEES results might show different discrepancies, or no discrepancies, in classes scheduled at other times?

The relatively short duration with which the classes met as well as variations in class scheduling may not only influence actual dropout rate of subjects, but may inhibit generalizability to more long lived classes, or more standardized classes.

Finally, the focus of the study, i.e., the relationship of instructor communication behaviors, and adult learners' decisions to drop out or persist may create limitations. For example, the CCQ has not previously been used with adults. There may be scenarios in the items on the instrument which simply do not occur to adults, or which are unlikely to occur in adult classrooms.

Even more important is the fact that supportive/defensive behaviors do not cover the spectrum that is interpersonal communication. While it

may be legitimate to assume that instructor communication behaviors exert an influence on adult learners due to the perceived similarities to andragogy, perhaps other behaviors within the interpersonal realm influence adults' decisions to persist in or drop their adult education commitments.

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

This project focused on adult learner decisions to drop out or
persist in continuing education courses. The major concern was to examine
the relationship between persistence decisions and learners' perceptions
of supportive or defensive communication behaviors of adult educators.
The purpose of this chapter is to develop a literature base for this
research effort. The literature is organized in three sections:
participation and dropout research, andragogy and adult educator
communication behaviors, and a discussion of theory upon which the
research is based.

The section on adult learner participation and dropout reviews
research describing participants and considers reasons for which some
participants drop a course and others persist and complete the course.

The second section discusses andragogy and educator communication
behaviors which influence adult learners.

The third section presents a discussion of Boshier's Congruence Model
and Gibb's Supportive and Defensive Communication Behaviors.

A rationale for the research reported follows this section.

Participation and Dropout Research

The major focus of this research is dropout. Boshier (1973) projects
a relationship between participation and dropout: that is, both stem from
an interaction of internal psychological and external environmental

variables. It is appropriate to review both participation and dropout research for the purpose of identifying similarities in the two areas.

The majority of research on participation centers mostly on characteristics of participants. Typically studies correlate discrete personality or social characteristics of those participating with those who could be but are not. The most common single variable differentiating participants and nonparticipants is educational attainment (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Cross, 1981; Douglah & Moss, 1968; Sainty, 1971; many others). Age is the next most common characteristic associated with participation (Cross, 1981; Sainty, 1971). Other commonly cited characteristics of participants vs. nonparticipants include gender, occupation, employment, marital status, number of children, ethnic origin, number of jobs held in the past year, and geographical distribution (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Douglah & Moss, 1968; Sainty, 1971).

The attempt by research to identify singular reasons for participation has been limiting to adult education according to Douglah and Moss (1968). Also, as Aslanian and Brickell (1980) indicate, demographic characteristics describe participants but are not causes of participation.

Another area of participation research centers on motivational antecedents. Houle (1979), through indepth interviews with learners, found that participation was based on one of three orientations: (1) goal, (2) activity, (3) learning.

Boshier and Riddell (1978), Burgess (1971), and Morstain and Smart (1974) all found that participation motivation could be factored into

several similar clusters. Among them are: escape/stimulation; external expectations; professional advancement; social welfare and contacts.

Career related reasons have been long cited as motivators with inconsistent results. Berry (1971) and Peters (1969) found that career related reasons limited learner motivation. On the other hand, Aslanian and Brickell (1980) concluded that 56 percent of participants had been influenced by career related reasons. In their research, career related reasons were given as the motivation to participate more than all other reasons combined.

Other motivations for participation have been identified. Johnstone and Rivera (1965) concluded that participation occurred to help individuals become better informed. According to Aslanian and Brickell (1980), 83 percent of learners identified a major event in their lives as a reason to participate. Participation helped them cope with this event.

Some researchers believe the decision to participate is based on a mingling of variables. Cookson (1986) presented a model based on a combination of situational variables, social background characteristics, social roles, and external contexts. It was believed the resulting model provided practical significance in suggesting points for intervention which might increase the possibility of participation.

Despite the contribution of participation research, little information is provided which explains why some adults commit themselves to educational events, or participate, and others do not.

As in the case of participation research, single variables are viewed as instrumental in influencing dropout and persistence. Londoner (1972)

concluded that a relationship existed between personal responsibilities exerted by changing social roles and dropout/persistence. As age, marital status, employment, or income increased, the importance of achieving external goals also increased. Londoner concluded that among persisters there was a decided shift to the specific tangible goals achieved through adult education. Dropouts tended to be individuals whose social roles had not changed. Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) found that in course segments spanning several weeks, time constraints, costs, and various personal problems influenced dropout.

Cross (1981) reported that barriers to learning could be categorized as situational, relating to cost, time, or home and job responsibilities; institutional, relating to lack of information about course offerings, attendance requirements, or other institutional policies; and dispositional, such as lack of energy or confidence, lack of motivation to study, or fear of success.

Aslanian and Brickell's (1980) research with participants also concluded that some persisters were likely to be coping with a major event in their lives which influenced them to participate. The researchers suggest the ability to identify major events as the key to answering questions concerning participation, dropout, and persistence.

This area of research shows that the decision to participate in educational events and the ensuing decision to persist or drop a course is varied. Due to the range of reasons put forth in the research and the general lack of continuity of the research itself, educators simply do not

have available a useful framework which enables them to understand adults'
participation or dropout habits.

The research implies that to drop a course is an undesirable
decision. It is important to recognize that such a decision may be valid.
In instances in which the learner has realized the original goal for
participating in a course, dropout may be a logical action. The concern
of this research is to identify dropout motivations which occur before the
learner's goal is attained.

An interesting characteristic specific to dropout research is the
implication that dropout decisions lie solely with the learner. Another
influence in the adult learning situation is the educator. A learner's
decision to drop out or persist may be related to influence exerted by the
educator. Is it possible that the method in which the educator presents
him or herself through communication behaviors, or the method in which the
educator interacts with adult learners exerts an influence on the
learner's decision to persist in or drop out of a course?

Andragogy and Adult Educator Interpersonal Behaviors

The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship
between adult learner dropout or persistence and perceived educator
communication behaviors. It is conjectured that if the educator is an
influence on the persistence or dropout decision of the learner, it would
be the educator's communication behaviors through which the learner would
gain the perception influencing the decision to drop out or persist.

Educator communication behaviors would likely be influenced by an
andragogically philosophical approach to adult education.

Andragogy

Andragogy, the art and science of helping adults learn, is based on four assumptions (Knowles, 1970, 1978): (1) the change of self-concept from dependence toward self-direction, (2) an increasing accumulation of life experiences that serve as resources for learning, (3) a readiness to learn related to the developmental tasks of social roles and responsibilities, (4) an orientation to immediacy of application of knowledge.

The goal of the andragogically-oriented educator is to increase the effectiveness of the learning situation by cultivating an environment in which cooperative interaction, increased participation, and learning are results. In order for the benefits of andragogy to be realized, the interpersonal communication behavior of the instructor must be considered a key factor. Research does support that interpersonal skills are the most important skills the adult educator possesses (Daniel & Rose, 1982; Knox, 1980). Research also shows that an andragogical orientation coupled with interpersonal skills provides a beneficial environment for the adult learner.

Andragogy and adult educator communication behaviors

Both Beder and Darkenwald (1982) and Kerwin (1980) found that increased participation in class discussion and activities by learners resulted when educators adhered to an andragogical orientation as opposed to a pedagogical orientation. Educators tended to emphasize responsive, learner-centered behaviors which resulted in the increased learner participation.

Holmes (1982) determined that andragogically-oriented educators perceived relationships with adult learners in a more cooperative manner than did pedagogically-oriented educators. Holmes observed the andragogically-oriented educator was more likely to initiate interpersonal contacts with learners and more often assumed the role of helper, resource person, consultant, and co-learner than did the pedagogically-oriented educator.

Menlo and Miller (1976) also concluded that in adult classes in which an andragogical instructional approach was used, adult learner involvement occurred more frequently. They also found that the instructor's perceived willingness to interact with adult learners, to encourage learner involvement, and to display nondefensive behaviors was instrumental in influencing the amount of energy learners were willing to expend in the classroom. The researchers theorized that adult learners do not resist action or change, but they do resist consequences which diminish their self or social esteem. It was believed that a prime duty of educators was the promotion of a philosophy of learner involvement. Interpersonal behaviors of educators which were perceived as arousing, activity, and participation-oriented were recommended. These behaviors included supportive messages encouraging learners' involvement, nonintrusive messages which extended unconditional respect for learners' decisions, messages revealing a willingness to collaborate and cooperate with learners, and nondefensive behaviors demonstrating an ongoing commitment to explore issues and alternatives.

Schuetz (1981) identified the competent communicator-educator as one who is adaptive, flexible, sensitive to the demands and concerns of others, and sensitive to different situational contexts. The competent communicator-educator has the ability to collaborate effectively and to be interdependent. Schuetz also indicated a need for interpersonal flexibility on the part of the educator in assuming the role of co-learner and to accept and respect learners' concerns.

When adult learners were exposed to educators who encouraged learner collaboration in program planning, the learners had higher achievement scores, and higher positive attitude scores than learners denied the planning opportunities (Cole & Glass, 1977).

Of importance to this study is the work of Yee-Lay and Wong (1974), who found that the relationship between the amount of informal interaction and perceived approachability of the educator was the major motivation of learners' attendance. The researchers recommended that "a greater amount of formal and informal interaction should be conscientiously structured to narrow instructor-learner social distance and to enhance adult learners' positive attitudes of the course" (p. 140).

All of this research is similar in two ways. First, researchers agree that educator communication behaviors are important in establishing andragogically-oriented learning environments. Second, those specific communication behaviors which are likely to positively influence learning outcomes are stated in vague terms. For example, one researcher recommends that adult educators be interpersonally flexible. However, specific word choices, phrase or sentence structures, or nonverbal

behaviors which constitute interpersonal flexibility are not identified. This is the case in all of the work cited.

Researchers agree that when learners are adults, andragogically-oriented educators display a specific range of interpersonal communication behaviors which contribute to a more satisfying learning experience for adult learners. Instructor communication behaviors which create a cooperative learning environment and which encourage interaction and participation are recommended.

Besides the need for communication behaviors which concur with the andragogical approach to learning, another concern of this research is to provide more specific recommendations for communication messages which are likely to result in positive educational outcomes. The purpose of this research is to identify specific educator communication behaviors which influence adults' dropout and persistence decisions.

Theory

The purpose of this research is to investigate adult learner dropout and persistence decisions. Research indicates that dropout is a problem in adult education, yet no solution is offered to resolve it. While research does indicate that educator communication behaviors do influence the adult learner, no research has investigated the possible relationship of learner dropout or persistence and educator communication behaviors.

Boshier's Congruence Model (1973) and Jack Gibb's Supportive and Defensive Communication Behaviors (1961) provide a viable framework for this research.

Boshier's Congruence Model

The Congruence Model (Figure 1) was developed within the framework of Carl Rogers' self-concept theory, central to which was the notion of incongruency between self and experience (Boshier, 1971a). Boshier also based the model on the idea that dissatisfaction with school is related to discontentment based on other psychological motivations.

Boshier hypothesized that adults reside on a growth-deficiency continuum. "Deficiency" individuals participate in adult education to survive and acquire utilitarian knowledge. Their participation is likely to be more sporadic as they feel they have acquired the necessary information to fulfill their immediate needs. "Growth" individuals have satisfied lower order needs and participate in adult education as a means of self-expression. They are never satiated and they view educational participation as self-actualizing. The perceived degree of congruence or incongruence experienced between the learning environment and the learner influences persistence or dropout decisions. According to Boshier, a "deficiency" learner is likely to perceive intra-self incongruence which influences additional incongruence between the learner and other learners, the educator, and other variables in the environment. Depending upon the degree of incongruence, dropout is likely to result. Conversely, the "growth" individual is likely to perceive intra-self congruence as well as congruence with other variables in the environment, and persistence is likely.
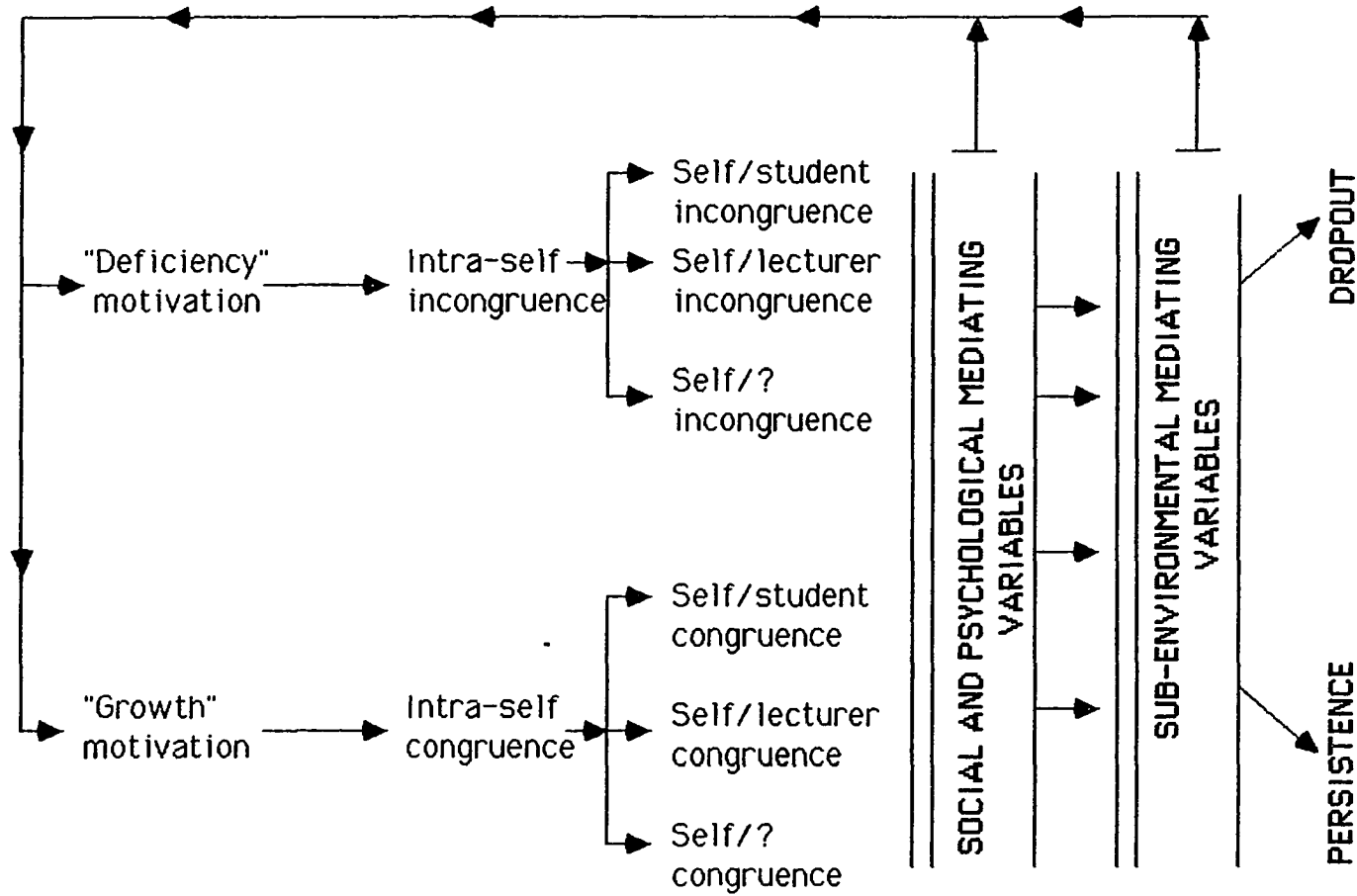
Figure 1. Boshier's congruence model (1973)

The theory has not been widely tested. Garrison (1987) found that dropouts had less intra-self incongruence than did persisters, the converse of Boshier's theory. Garrison suggested that generalization of results of the model be limited to specific populations.

The model is considered appropriate for this research in that it provides a framework by which to differentiate predicted dropouts and predicted persisters. It allows testing of these groups in relation to their perceptions of educator interpersonal behaviors.

Interpersonal communication

The type of communication that occurs in the classroom which is of greatest interest here is interpersonal communication. Literally defined, interpersonal communication is communication among people. Adler and Towne (1987) offer a more specific definition of interpersonal communication as:

> a continuous, irreversible, transactive process involving participants who occupy different but overlapping environments and are simultaneously senders and receivers of messages, many of which are distorted by external, physiological, and psychological noise (p. 15).

A legitimate concern is to question whether concepts present in communication theory are also present in the interaction which occurs between educator and learners in the classroom.

Cooper (1986) advances the theory that communication may be the entire point of education:

> In our work with students, it may be the quality of our relationships with them, not the content we teach, that is the most significant element determining our effectiveness.... The relationships

> we create with our students affect us, our students,
> and the educational outcome of our instruction.
> Much research suggests that when a teacher's
> communication response to students is one of 'I
> accept you,' the achievement of students is
> advanced...our job of teaching is really a job of
> communicating (p. 6).

Hurt, Scott, and McCroskey (1978) believe the difference between simply knowing and the ability to teach is dependent upon communication in the classroom.

Powell and Nicholsen (1984) concluded that shaping a pattern of classroom behavior is dependent upon communication behavior. Educators must be aware and fully understand specific ways to influence learners as well as recognizing that they are influenced by learners.

Researchers agree that interpersonal concepts which influence relationships in other areas also influence and are fundamental to the classroom relationship of educator and learner. Research which has examined duties, qualities, and skills of educators typically includes interpersonal communication skills.

When learners are adults, interpersonal behaviors which enhance andragogical behaviors are those worthy of consideration. The instructor of adults should exhibit acceptance, respect, and support for the adult learner, and display a willingness to collaborate and interact with the learner. A communication model from which to identify more specifically appropriate interpersonal behaviors for adult educators may be one developed by Jack R. Gibb (1961).

Gibb's Supportive and Defensive Communication Behaviors

Gibb's research rested heavily on an affective state model of Carl Rogers which speculated that the necessary conditions for personal growth and change were qualities of genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathy (Winer & Majors, 1981).

From 1952-1961, Gibb analyzed tapes of human relations training sessions in industrial, educational, and community settings. His conclusions are based on analyses of these tapes. Gibb felt that communication should be viewed as a people process rather than as a language process. One alteration which he felt could be made in counterproductive situations was to reduce the degree of defensiveness which existed between individuals. Defensiveness is defined by Gibb (1961) as "that behavior which occurs when an individual perceives threat or anticipates threat.... The person who behaviors defensively...devotes an appreciable portion of his energy to defending himself" (p. 141). Gibb indicated that the converse, supportiveness, was also true. "The more supportive or defensive reductive the climate, the less the receiver reads into the communication distorted loadings which arise from projections of his own anxieties, motives, and concerns" (p. 142).

These two prevailing categories actually comprise twelve behaviors, six characteristic of supportive behavior, six characteristic of defensive behavior. The behaviors can be likened to opposite sides of a coin. In other words, each defensive behavior has a corresponding supportive behavior. These behaviors are:

DEFENSIVE BEHAVIORS	SUPPORTIVE BEHAVIORS
Evaluation	Description
Control	Problem Orientation
Strategy	Spontaneity
Neutrality	Empathy
Superiority	Equality
Certainty	Provisionalism

Evaluation and description   Any communication message which is perceived as evaluative or judgmental increases defensiveness. On the other hand, descriptive messages expressed without implied judgment or which are perceived as genuine requests for information are supportive.

Control and problem orientation   Controlling communication evokes resistance from the receiver of the message. Problem orientation, Gibb believed, was the antithesis of persuasion. When the sender of a message desires to collaborate to seek a solution, the attitude is created in the listener. Problem orientation allows the receiver to set goals, make decisions, and evaluate progress without feeling controlled by another.

Strategy and spontaneity   The receiver may become defensive if the sender's motivation to communicate is perceived as ambiguous or based on some hidden strategy or motivation. Spontaneous messages are perceived as free of deception and are likely to produce minimal defensiveness.

Neutrality and empathy   Gibb labeled any communication which might be perceived as displaying a lack of concern, neutrality. He felt that this low effect communication could be perceived as rejection. Empathy was the label for any communication which indicates speaker identification with the listener. Gibb concluded that a combination of empathy with no

accompanying effort to initiate change was perceived as extremely supportive.

Superiority and equality   Defensiveness occurs when a receiver perceives the sender as expressing superiority in any manner. When messages are perceived as implying a willingness to enter into trusting and respectful participation, an environment marked by equality occurs. While imbalances in power, accomplishments, etc. may still exist, Gibb indicates that in a supportive environment, little importance is attached to them.

Certainty and provisionalism   Certainty, or dogmatism, can produce defensiveness in two ways. First, others are not allowed an opportunity to disclose their opinions or impressions and this creates defensiveness. Second, in Gibb's work, listeners often perceived senders displaying certainty as manifesting feelings of inferiority. Defensiveness was created due to the perceived need of the individual to exercise control. Defensiveness is reduced when one is willing to experiment with one's own behavior, attitudes, and ideas. To display provisionalism or openmindedness creates the impression that the receiver has some control over the goal of the interaction.

Few empirical studies have dealt with Gibb's original work; however, some studies in professional and educational environments have investigated specific variables which operate within the defensive or supportive mode.

Professional environments   The decision to accept or deny an applicant benefits of various social service programs appeared to be

dependent upon the perceived supportive or defensive verbal or nonverbal behaviors of the interviewer (Civikly, Pace, & Krause, 1977). When social service interviewers displayed behaviors perceived as either supportive or defensive, the resulting response of the applicant often contributed to the decision of the interviewer.

Maladaptive families tended to exhibit defensive communication patterns and adjusted families, supportive patterns, according to research by Alexander (1973a, 1973b). In other family environments, DeSalvo and Zurcher (1984) determined that female parents displayed greater sophistication in using supportive behaviors, while male parents tended to display inconsistency through use of defensive behaviors. Alexander (1979) concluded that supportive family communication patterns facilitated conflict resolution.

Before Gibb conducted his research, Malmo, Boag, and Smith (1957) found different physiological reactions to supportive vs. threatening relationships between patients and their doctors. The researchers found that following praise from their doctors, a patient's muscle tension fell rapidly in contrast to continued muscle tension when patients received criticism.

Other research concerning influence of supportive defensive behaviors has been conducted in educational environments.

Educational environments   Hays found (1967) that high school students could differentiate between supportive and defensive classroom climates. Hays later (1970) concluded that high school students retained significantly more information when critics evaluated their work in

supportive climates. Stephenson and D'Angelo (1973) found that confederates who consistently evaluated another's position negatively were more likely to evoke defensiveness than more passive confederates.

Among undergraduates, liked classes were perceived as more supportive environments than disliked classes (Rosenfeld, 1983).

Winer and Majors (1981) found that perceived supportiveness or defensiveness is dependent on certain verb forms as well as on pronoun choice. Similarly, Cline and Johnson (1976) concluded that pronoun choice, specifically use of "I" vs. "you" influenced perceptions of supportive or defensive messages. In two separate studies, a relationship was found between one's ability to persuade and the perceived supportive or defensive climate (Eadie, 1974, 1982).

To combat an attrition rate of greater than 50 percent in a community college, classes were developed to respond to needs of the student population based on the combined theories of Gibb and Knowles. Changes resulted in improvement of student attitudes, improved reading power, and a retention rate of 75 to 80 percent (Goldman, 1981).

Specifically of interest to adult educators is any relationship which occurs when observing the communication climate of an adult learning environment and the propensity of the adult learner to persist or drop a class. When an adult educator adheres to Gibb's supportive behaviors, it may be that andragogical qualities of the environment are enhanced. Of greater importance is the possibility that dropout may decrease.

Summary

Dropout and persistence are major areas of research in adult education. Research in the areas of dropout and persistence indicates that studies generally correlate discrete variables of dropouts vs. persisters. In actuality, it may be that the phenomena are combinations of many variables. Recent research has concentrated on clusters of motivations or psychological variables, yet the area remains characterized by lack of theory to organize it. Few useful conclusions have resulted.

Boshier's congruence theory based on a growth deficiency continuum presents a means of identifying dropouts and persisters. According to Boshier, "growth" individuals have satisfied lower order needs and their participation in educational pursuits is a means of self-actualization. "Growth" individuals are likely to persist. "Deficiency" individuals participated to satisfy lower order survival needs. Their participation is likely to be sporadic as they feel they have acquired necessary information to fulfill their needs and they drop out.

While identification of dropout and persistence habits is a major concern, little adult education research proposes the instructor as a possible influence on these results. While the instructor occupies a less central position in the adult classroom than instructors in other educational settings, this individual does exert an influence.

Research indicates that in educational environments, relationships exist between instructor interpersonal communication behaviors and various student learning outcomes. In adult education, researchers have concluded that a relationship exists between the andragogical orientation of

instructors and that individual's interpersonal behavior. Andragogically-oriented educators, for example, tend to emphasize more responsive, learner-centered behaviors than pedagogically-oriented educators. They tend to increase the effectiveness of the learning situation by cultivating an environment in which cooperation and interaction, increased participation, and higher achievement scores resulted for learners.

A communication model by which to identify more specifically appropriate behaviors for adult educators may be one developed by Jack R. Gibb (1961). While few studies have dealt with Gibb's Supportive and Defensive Behaviors, studies conducted in educational settings have concluded with positive educational outcomes.

If it can be determined that specific interpersonal behaviors such as Gibb's Supportive and Defensive Behaviors mesh with psychological variables of adult learners, those behaviors related to dropout can be isolated and discouraged, and behaviors related to persistence must become priorities of adult educators.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the method employed to investigate relationships between perceptions of instructor communication behaviors by adult learners and the influence of these perceptions on the adult learner's decision to persist in or drop out of an adult education course.

The research was undertaken to answer the following questions:

1. Do adult learners perceive themselves differently than they perceive their ideal selves, instructors, and other learners?

2. If differences in these perceptions exist, can they predict an adult learner's decision to persist in or drop a course?

3. Is the decision to persist in or drop a course related to the learner's perception of the instructor's communication behaviors; specifically, whether the instructor is perceived as supportive or defensive?

Design

To obtain data for this study, a causal comparative design was used. The purpose of the research is to identify possible causes of adult learner dropout. Subjects who dropped their adult education courses are compared to subjects who persist and complete their courses.

Causal comparative studies are concerned with:

1. Identifying possible causes of a behavior pattern by comparing subjects in whom this behavior pattern exists with subjects in whom it does not exist;

2. Identifying possible causes of behavior patterns in which experimental manipulation is not feasible;

3. Identifying possible causes of behavior patterns for verification in subsequent studies (Borg & Gall, 1983).

Sample

In order to conduct the research, it was necessary for the sample to meet several qualifications. Subjects needed to be actual participants in an adult education course in order to differentiate persisters and dropouts. It was also desirable to survey subjects enrolled in a variety of courses to ensure that research results were a product of subjects' perceptions of instructor communication behaviors in general rather than of a specific instructor. A number of courses meeting several times was necessary to provide the opportunity for dropout to occur. Finally, it was important to choose an educational environment which would lend itself to a clear definition of dropout or which already defined dropout in a concrete manner.

With these requirements in mind, participants enrolled in evening continuing education courses at a community college were selected as an appropriate sample. Courses were selected based on permission of administrators and cooperation of instructors. Some courses were cancelled due to insufficient enrollment. The sample became individuals enrolled in the remaining courses.

The sample totaled 103 subjects enrolled in thirteen different subjects.

Procedure

Data for this project were obtained from surveys completed by subjects enrolled in adult continuing education courses offered during the summer session at a community college. Formats of courses were varied in the number of times they met per week and the number of weeks each course was scheduled. For example, courses met either once or twice per week from two to thirteen weeks.

Each course was visited at the beginning of the first meeting. All participants received a packet containing a cover letter explaining the purpose of the research, a questionnaire requesting demographic information, the Personality and Educational Environmental Survey (PEES), and the Communication Climate Questionnaire (CCQ) (see Appendix C). Instructions for completing the PEES and the CCQ were also included.

Packets were coded to identify the course in which the subject was enrolled. As each subject received a packet, a subject identification code corresponding with the class list was added to facilitate follow-up work. Class lists were provided by each instructor.

After receiving their packets, subjects were read aloud the cover letter which explained the purpose of the project as well as ensuring confidentiality. Although printed instructions for completing both the PEES and CCQ were included in each packet, a brief oral explanation was given and an example of one item from each questionnaire was drawn on the board. Subjects completed the items in their packets, and the packets were collected.

Subjects in thirteen different courses were surveyed. The number of actual courses was less than originally estimated due to cancellation of courses with insufficient registration. Eleven different instructors taught these courses. One instructor taught three of the thirteen courses. When subjects enrolled in more than one course taught by this individual, the subject completed only one set of questionnaires. Although 103 subjects completed questionnaires the first night of classes, eighteen questionnaires were incomplete and were discarded, leaving 85 usable questionnaires.

Instructors were requested to provide attendance records at the completion of each course. Based on these attendance records, those participants who had completed packets of information during the first course session, but who had since dropped their courses, were sent follow-up questionnaires (Appendix D). The follow-up questionnaires sought identification of reasons for the subjects' dropout decisions.

Dropout was defined as attendance at less than 80 percent of the class meetings. Seventeen individuals did not attend 80 percent of the class meetings of their courses and were designated dropouts. Ten dropouts returned the follow-up questionnaire indicating their reason(s) for dropout.

Instrumentation

The Personality and Educational Environment Scale (PEES) developed by Boshier (1971a) identified predicted dropouts and persisters (Appendix C). The Communication Climate Questionnaire (CCQ) adapted by Rosenfeld (1983)

identified learners' perceptions of educators' communication behaviors
(Appendix C).

Personality and Educational Environment Scale (PEES)

The PEES test is a fifteen item semantic differential which is
repeated by the subject on four concepts. First the subject is requested
to respond to the concept "MYSELF." The subject also responds to the
concepts "MYSELF AS I WOULD LIKE TO BE," "MY ADULT EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR,"
and "OTHER ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS." For the fifteen scales associated
with each of these four concepts, subjects check the numerical point on a
seven-point continuum that represents their perceptions of the concept.
On the continuum, one is high, seven is low. Six of the items were
reversed in order to detect whether subjects checked the same response for
all items. Subjects were requested to work quickly and to respond to each
concept based on their general perception of that concept as opposed to
considering a specific example of the concept. Following is an example of
the instrument's scale using this measurement technique:

```
          ALWAYS  OFTEN  OCCAS.  EQUALLY  OCCAS.  OFTEN  ALWAYS
 STRONG      1       2      3        4        5      6      7     WEAK
```

Figure 2. PEES measurement technique

Four scores were computed for each subject. Prior to scoring, the
six items reversed were returned to their original order to make them
consistent with the other items. Each score was computed by averaging the
subject's responses to the fifteen items on each semantic differential. A

statistically significant difference between the subject's mean on "MYSELF" vs. the mean on any one or all of the other three concepts indicates the potential for dropout.

<u>Reliability and validity</u>   Originally developed by Boshier (1971a), the PEES has not been widely used. Boshier's theory is dependent on discrepancies within the educational environment. The Semantic Differential has potential for specifying differences between concepts. Concepts and scales on the PEES were generated from exit interviews with dropouts who provided their reasons for dropping courses. Concepts were derived from content analysis of these reasons which indicated that besides the self-concept of the dropout, other factors in the environment associated with dropout are the educator and other learners. Scales used on the PEES were derived by identifying the most frequently occurring adjectives dropouts used to describe "students," "lecturer," and other elements of the environment. Originally 41 pairs of adjectives were assembled.

Fifty-four university extension students served as subjects for the reliability study. Tested on the concepts "MYSELF," and "OTHER ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS," 27 of the 41 scales were found "sufficiently reliable (p. 5)" ($p \leq .05$) on both concepts for inclusion on the final PEES form.

To ensure the final form included a representative sample of all adjectives that dropouts had reported, the 41 scales were factor analyzed and rotated to oblique structure. The rotation yielded twelve factors which accounted for 78.7 percent of the variance associated with dropout.

The factoring procedure along with the reliability check resulted in the inclusion of the fifteen items used on the final form of the PEES.

To test validity of the instrument, 1,274 university extension students were mailed the PEES (Boshier, 1971a). Results indicated that low discrepancies are associated with persistence while high discrepancies are associated with dropout (Appendix A).

In another study (Boshier, 1973), the subjects were 2,436 participants enrolled in two separate adult education programs. Boshier's original theory stated that a discrepancy between self and ideal self, educators, or other students, would result in dropout. Boshier correlated the PEES scores of these subjects for self with the other variables. A total discrepancy score was also correlated. Boshier concluded that the resulting correlations (Table 1) strongly supported the notion that dropout is associated with self/environment incongruence. The negative r's indicate that high self/other discrepancy scores are associated with dropout behavior. Correlation between the total discrepancy scores and dropout accounted for over 30 percent of the variance in dropout.

Table 1. Comparison of learners in two programs on correlations between dropout and self/other discrepancy scores (Boshier, 1973)

Groups	Program 1	Program 2
A. Self/Other adult education students	-.43	-.56
B. Self/My adult education lecturer	-.43	-.59
C. Self/Self as I would like to be	-.46	-.44
Total PEES D-Scores (A+B+C)	-.55	-.58

A weakness in the results, according to Boshier, is the inability to predict direction in the relationships between self and the other variables. The original theory indicated that a self/ideal self incongruence would manifest itself in the other variables, but Boshier felt that the results in Table 1 did not lend support to this part of the theory.

Communication Climate Questionnaire (CCQ)

The CCQ measures perceptions of supportive and defensive communication as defined by Gibb (1961). The original CCQ was developed by Hays (1967) as a preliminary study for his dissertation. The version used in this project was shortened by Rosenfeld (1983). The CCQ contains sixteen statements; eight are representative of Gibb's supportive behaviors, eight are representative of Gibb's defensive behaviors. For this research, the subject indicates on a six-point Likert-type scale, the extent to which each statement is descriptive of adult educators in general. Subjects were requested to work quickly and indicate their first response to each item. It was also requested that they respond with their general perception of adult educators. It was stated that if they had previously participated in adult education, they should not consider a specific instructor in responding to the CCQ. On the other hand, if they had never participated in adult education before the current time, they probably had a general perception of an adult educator. It was emphasized that it was the general perception that was of interest. Following is an example of the instrument's scale using the measurement technique:

"In general, an adult education instructor is straightforward and
honest."

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	OCCAS. AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	NOT EXPERIENCED
1	2	3	4	5	6

Figure 3. Example of item from the CCQ

Questionnaires of subjects who indicated "not experienced" to more
than one item or who omitted more than one item were discarded.

The supportive variable was calculated by finding the means of items
1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15. The defensive variable was calculated by
finding the means of items 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16.

Reliability and validity   In developing the original instrument,
Hays wished to ascertain if high school students could differentiate
between supportive and defensive messages. Statements were generated
which reflected Gibb's perceptions of supportive and defensive behaviors.
Each statement was originally written to reflect these criteria: (1) Does
it fairly represent the Gibb model? (2) Is it understandable to high
school students? (3) Does it call for a judgment based on perception?

Four classes of high school students responded to each of the
statements on the Likert-type scale indicated above. The students were
requested to identify the extent to which the statement described a
teacher. Hays concluded that the use of the four classes produced a
replication of the same problem. The use of this replication in the study
produced a joint replication error level of no weaker than .001. Hays
interpreted this as strong statistical support for believing the perceived
dimensions of defensiveness and supportiveness do not overlap and that

individuals are able to distinguish supportiveness from defensiveness. While indicative of reliability, it was also concluded the test reflected content validity.

In another study, Hays found that high school students retained more information in a supportive climate, indicating construct validity (Hays, 1970).

Rosenfeld (1983) used a shortened version of the instrument with university students as subjects. He concluded it was useful in distinguishing liked from disliked courses. In a more recent study (1985), Rosenfeld and Jarrard again dealt with factors prevalent in liked vs. disliked classes. In order to determine variables that best discriminate the two types of classes, a stepwise multiple discriminant analysis was conducted to separate liked from disliked courses. The analysis produced six variables. The first which carried the most weight was supportiveness with a standardized canonical discrimination function weight of .545. Rosenfeld concluded supportiveness was the single most important variable distinguishing climates of both liked and disliked classes. The result also confirmed that learners can perceive differences between supportive and defensive classroom environments.

Rosenfeld's version of the CCQ is used for this research with two minor changes. The phrase "my teacher..." at the beginning of each item was changed to "adult education instructor..."; also, one question considered irrelevant to the adult environment was omitted.

Hypotheses

Hypotheses were developed to study the relationship between persistence and dropout and the learners' perceptions of the supportive and defensive communication behaviors of adult educators.

It was hypothesized that actual persisters, predicted dropouts who did not drop out, and predicted persisters who persist would perceive instructors as more supportive than defensive. The opposite was also hypothesized, that actual dropouts, predicted dropouts who drop out, and predicted persisters who do not persist would perceive instructors as more defensive than supportive. It was predicted there would be no difference in perceptions of instructor defensiveness or supportiveness by predicted persisters who do not persist and predicted dropouts who drop out. Finally, it was predicted that acatual persisters would be more positive on perceptions of the four PEES concepts than actual dropouts.

The criterion for rejecting all research hypotheses was established at $p \leq .05$.

Data Analysis

Data collected from surveys were coded (Appendix C) and the information was keypunched for statistical analysis. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS[x], 1986) was used to analyze the data. The inferential statistic used in the study was the t-test.

Establishing subgroups

To test hypotheses in the study, it was necessary to identify several groups. Learners who actually dropped or actually persisted were

identified by attendance records. Predicted dropouts and predicted

persisters as well as combinations of the actual and predicted groups were

left to be identified.

The predicted dropouts and persisters were identified through

Boshier's (1971a) PEES test. Boshier believed that participation and

dropout occurred as a function of the magnitude of the discrepancy between

the learner's self-perception (MYSELF) and his/her perception of ideal

self (MYSELF AS I WOULD LIKE TO BE), the educator (ADULT EDUCATION

INSTRUCTOR), and other learners (OTHER ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS). A

significant discrepancy between "MYSELF" and any one, two, or three of the

other variables is indicative of dropout. Predicted persisters are those

for whom no discrepancy occurs.

To identify predicted persisters and predicted dropouts, three paired

t-tests were computed for each subject. A "MYSELF" score was computed by

averaging a subject's responses to the fifteen items on the appropriate

semantic differential. Three additional scores for each subject were

computed for each scale in the same manner. Three paired t-tests were

computed comparing the "MYSELF" score for each subject with each of the

other three scores for that subject. If one, two, or all three of the

t-test comparisons resulted in a significant difference, the subject was a

predicted dropout. If no significant differences occurred, the subject

was predicted to persist.

Groups of predicted dropouts and persisters were identified using

Boshier's PEES and groups of actual dropouts and persisters were

identified using instructor attendance records. Predicted dropouts who

did not drop out and predicted persisters who did not persist are two additional emerging groups.

Summary

The methodology used in completing the research project was described in this chapter. The research sample was 103 adult learners enrolled in continuing education courses. Subjects completed two instruments, Boshier's Personality and Educational Environment Scale (PEES) and Rosenfeld's Communication Climate Questionnaire (CCQ). Demographic data were also collected from each subject. Dropouts, identified by instructor-maintained attendance records, completed a short follow-up questionnaire.

Data were analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS[X], 1986). Both paired and independent t-tests were used for all hypothesis testing.

CHAPTER IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the statistical analysis applied to the research data. The study focused on learner decisions to drop out of, or persist in, adult education courses.

All subjects were enrolled in adult education courses. Each subject completed a three part questionnaire at the first class meeting of each course. The first part requested demographic information about each subject as well as information concerning the subject's participation history in adult education. The second part, the Personality and Educational Environment Scale (PEES), identified individual subject's attitudes towards themselves, themselves as they would like to be, their instructors, and other adult learners. Results of this part enabled prediction of persistence or dropout. The third part, the Communication Climate Questionnaire (CCQ), identified subjects' general perceptions of the supportive-defensive communication behaviors of adult educators. A supportive variable was calculated by finding the mean of items 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 13, and 15. A defensive variable was calculated by finding the mean of the remaining items, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 16.

Instructor maintained attendance records identified subjects who actually dropped out of their adult education courses. These individuals received an additional questionnaire by mail. The purpose of this questionnaire was to assess reasons given for which the actual dropout occurred.

This chapter is organized according to the order of the hypotheses. The method used to test each of the nine hypotheses as well as the results of each statistical test are reported. The statistical test used was the t-test. Frequencies of various demographic characteristics of the sample are also reported.

The Sample

The sample was 103 adult learners enrolled in continuing education at a community college. Approximately 72.0% (n=61) of the subjects were male. The largest percentage of subjects (43.5%, n=37) were between the ages of 18 and 30 years. Sixty-seven percent (n=57) were married. Approximately 52% (n=44) had no children although 44.7% (n=38) indicated one to three children.

Eighty-four percent (n=71) of subjects worked full time. Forty percent (n=34) indicated an income of $10,001-25,000 and 37.6% (n=32) indicated an income of $25,001-45,000.

Forty-two percent of the sample (n=36) had completed some college credits and almost 71.0% (n=60) had previously participated in adult education courses. The majority of these previous participants (85.9%) had completed their courses. The 12 individuals who dropped out of previously enrolled courses gave no reasons for their dropout decisions.

Major reasons for taking the current course were "to become qualified for another job or promotion" (52.9%), "to learn about a new subject which may be interesting" (44.7%), and "to keep up-to-date in my current job or to retain my current job" (41.2%).

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 states that persisters will be more positive on perceptions of "MYSELF," "ADULT EDUCATION LECTURER," "MYSELF AS I WOULD LIKE TO BE," and "OTHER ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS," than will dropouts. This prediction was addressed by testing the null hypothesis using a two-tailed test with $\alpha = .05$.

To test Hypothesis 1, persisters and dropouts were identified through instructor attendance records. Seventeen dropouts and 68 persisters were identified. Independent t-test comparisons were made of the overall means on the "MYSELF" scale for the persister and dropout groups. The same comparison for the other three scales was made.

Table 2 presents a summary of the findings. Homogeneity of variance was tested. None of the F-values for the four concepts was significant. Therefore, the pooled variance estimate was used.

The results indicate no significant difference at the .05 level of probability between persisters and dropouts on any of the four concepts.

Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported. There is no difference between dropouts and persisters on any of the four concepts.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 states that persisters will perceive instructors as more supportive than defensive. This prediction was addressed by testing the null hypothesis using a two-tailed test with $\alpha = .05$.

To test Hypothesis 2, persisters were identified as stated in the section addressing Hypothesis 1.

Table 2.   Means, standard deviation, and t-tests of dropouts and
            persisters on four concepts of PEES test

Concept	Mean[a]	S.D.	Pooled variance t-value	2-tail prob.	df
"MYSELF"					
Actual dropouts	3.17	0.63	−0.01	0.99	83
Actual persisters	3.17	0.60			
"ADULT EDUCATION LECTURER"					
Actual dropouts	2.87	0.59	−1.90	0.06	83
Actual persisters	3.18	0.61			
"MYSELF AS I WOULD LIKE TO BE"					
Actual dropouts	2.49	0.61	−0.50	0.62	83
Actual persisters	2.56	0.58			
"OTHER ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS"					
Actual dropouts	3.18	0.82	−0.97	0.33	83
Actual persisters	3.35	0.62			

[a]Range of possible scores is 1-7; 1=high, 7=low.

To test Hypothesis 2, a paired t-test compared the supportive and defensive means of persisters.

Table 3 shows results of the findings. A significant difference was found at the less than .05 level of probability between persisters' perceptions of instructor supportiveness and instructor defensiveness. The results support Hypothesis 2; that is, persisters tend to perceive more supportiveness of instructors than defensiveness.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and t-tests of persisters'
          perceptions of instructor supportiveness and defensiveness

Variable	Mean[a]	S.D.	t-value	2-tail prob.	df
Supportiveness	3.99	0.85			
			3.55	0.001	67
Defensiveness	3.54	1.01			

[a]Range of possible scores is 1-5; 1=low, 5=high.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 states that dropouts will perceive instructors as more
defensive than supportive. This hypothesis was addressed by testing the
null hypothesis using a two-tailed test with α=.05.

To test Hypothesis 3, dropouts were identified as stated in the
section addressing Hypothesis 1.

To test Hypothesis 3, a paired t-test compared the supportive and
defensive means of dropouts.

Table 4 shows results of the findings. The results were not
significant at the .05 level of probability. The hypothesis was not
supported. There was no significant difference in the perceptions of
dropouts of instructor supportiveness versus defensiveness.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 states that predicted dropouts who drop out will
perceive greater instructor defensiveness than will predicted dropouts who

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and t-tests of dropouts' perceptions of instructor supportiveness and defensiveness

Variable	Mean[a]	S.D.	t-value	2-tail prob.	df
Supportiveness	4.09	1.08			
			1.98	0.07	16
Defensiveness	3.67	1.06			

[a]Range of possible scores is 1-5; 1=low, 5=high.

do not drop out. This hypothesis was addressed by testing the null hypothesis using a two-tailed test with α=.05.

To test Hypothesis 4, it was necessary to identify those subjects who, based on PEES results, were predicted to drop out. Fifty-three subjects were identified as predicted to drop out. Of these, ten actually dropped and the remaining 43 persisted and completed their courses.

To test this hypothesis, an independent t-test compared the defensiveness means of the ten predicted dropouts who dropped out with that of the 43 predicted dropouts who did not drop out.

Homogeneity of variance was tested. There was no significant difference in the variance of the groups, therefore, the pooled variance estimate was used. Results of testing the hypothesis are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Means, standard deviations, and t-tests of dropouts' perceptions of instructor defensiveness

Group	Mean[a]	S.D.	Pooled variance t-value	2-tail prob.	df
Predicted dropouts who drop out	3.93	1.25	1.12	0.27	51
Predicted dropouts who do not drop out	3.51	1.00			

[a]Range of possible scores is 1-5; 1=low, 5=high.

The hypothesis was not supported. Predicted dropouts who dropped out did not perceive greater instructor defensiveness than predicted dropouts who did not drop out.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 states that predicted dropouts who do not drop out will perceive greater instructor supportiveness than will predicted dropouts who do drop out. This hypothesis was addressed by testing the null hypothesis using a two-tailed test with α=.05.

To test Hypothesis 5, predicted dropouts who do not drop out and predicted dropouts who do drop out were identified in the manner described in the section addressing Hypothesis 4.

To test Hypothesis 5, an independent t-test compared the supportiveness means of the 43 predicted dropouts who did not drop out

with the supportiveness means of the ten predicted dropouts who did drop out.

Homogeneity of variance was tested. There was a significant difference in the variance of the groups, thus, the separate variance estimate was used. Results of the testing are shown in Table 6.

The results do not support the hypothesis. Predicted dropouts who do not drop out do not perceive instructor supportiveness as significantly greater than predicted dropouts who do drop out.

Table 6. Means, standard deviations, and t-tests of .dropouts' perceptions of instructor supportiveness

Group	Mean[a]	S.D.	Variance 2-tail prob.	Separate variance t-value	2-tail prob.	df
Predicted dropouts who do not drop out	4.08	1.33	0.04	0.08	0.94	10
Predicted dropouts who do drop out	4.11	0.84				

[a]Range of possible scores is 1-5; 1=low, 5=high.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 states that predicted persisters who persist will perceive instructor supportiveness greater than predicted persisters who do not persist. This hypothesis was addressed by testing the null hypothesis using a two-tailed test with $\alpha=.05$.

To test Hypothesis 6, it was necessary to identify those subjects who, based on PEES results, were predicted to persist. Thirty-two

predicted persisters were identified. Twenty-five of these did persist, but seven of the predicted persisters dropped their courses.

To test this hypothesis, an independent t-test compared the supportiveness means of predicted persisters who actually persisted with the supportiveness means of predicted persisters who did not persist.

Table 7 presents findings of the test on the hypothesis. Homogeneity of variance was tested and the results were not significant. Therefore, the pooled variance estimate was used. Predicted persisters who persisted did not perceive instructors as significantly more supportive than predicted persisters who did not persist. The hypothesis was not supported.

Table 7. Means, standard deviations, and t-tests of persisters' perceptions of instructor supportiveness

Group	Mean[a]	S.D.	Pooled variance t-value	2-tail prob.	df
Predicted persisters who persist	3.85	0.87	0.57	0.58	30
Predicted persisters who do not persist	4.05	0.69			

[a]Range of possible scores is 1-5; 1=low, 5=high.

Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 states that predicted persisters who do not persist will perceive instructor defensiveness greater than predicted persisters who do

persist. This hypothesis was addressed by testing the null hypothesis using a two-tailed test with α=.05.

To test Hypothesis 7, predicted persisters were identified in the manner described in Hypothesis 6. Predicted persisters who do not persist and predicted persisters who do persist were the groups used to test this hypothesis.

To test Hypothesis 7, an independent t-test compared the defensiveness mean of predicted persisters who did not persist with the defensiveness mean of predicted persisters who did persist.

Table 8 presents results of the comparison. Homogeneity of variance was tested and the results were not significant, thus, the pooled variance estimate was used. The hypothesis was not supported. Predicted persisters who did not persist did not perceive instructors as significantly more defensive than predicted persisters who did persist.

Table 8. Means, standard deviations, and t-tests of persisters' perceptions of instructor defensiveness

Group	Mean[a]	S.D.	Pooled variance t-value	2-tail prob.	df
Predicted persisters who do not persist	3.30	0.62	-0.70	0.49	30
Predicted persisters who do persist	3.60	1.04			

[a]Range of possible scores is 1-5; 1=low, 5=high.

Hypothesis 8

Hypothesis 8 relates to dropouts' perceptions of instructor defensiveness. Hypothesis 8 states that there will be no significant difference (α=.05) between predicted dropouts who drop out and predicted persisters who drop out on their perceptions of instructor defensiveness. Within the sample of 85 subjects, 17 subjects were identified as dropouts through instructor maintained attendance records. Of the 17 dropouts, ten had been predicted by the PEES to drop their courses, and seven had been predicted to persist in their courses. The sizes of these two groups limit the generalizability of findings related to this hypothesis, but given the total sample size, the actual number of dropouts is not unexpected.

To test Hypothesis 8, a t-test compared the perceptions of instructor defensiveness of subjects predicted to drop out who did drop out with the perceptions of instructor defensiveness of subjects predicted to persist who dropped their courses.

Table 9 presents results of the testing of Hypothesis 8. Homogeneity of variance was tested and the results were not significant. The pooled variance estimate was used. Dropouts, whether predicted to drop out or persist, did not significantly differ in perceptions of instructor defensiveness, providing support for the hypothesis.

Table 9. Means, standard deviations, and t-tests of predicted dropouts who drop out and predicted persisters who drop out on perceptions of instructor defensiveness

Group	Mean[a]	S.D.	Pooled variance t-value	2-tail prob.	df
Predicted dropouts who drop out	3.93	1.25	1.21	0.25	15
Predicted persisters who drop out	3.30	0.62			

[a]Range of possible scores is 1-5; 1=low, 5=high.

Hypothesis 9

Hypothesis 9 investigated perceptions of instructor supportiveness of dropouts. Hypothesis 9 states that there will be no significant difference ($p \leq .05$) between predicted dropouts who drop out and predicted persisters who drop out on their perceptions of instructor supportiveness. The dropouts were divided into two groups as described in Hypothesis 8. Due to the size of each of the resulting groups, limited generalizability continues to be the case as it was in Hypothesis 8.

To test Hypothesis 9, a t-test compared the perceptions of instructor supportiveness of the two groups.

Table 10 presents results of testing Hypothesis 9. Homogeneity of variance was tested and the results were not significant. The pooled variance estimate was used.

The findings are not significant. Dropouts, whether predicted to persist or drop out, do not differ significantly in their perceptions of instructor supportiveness.

Besides collecting data to test the research hypotheses, demographic data were also collected from each subject.

Table 10. Means, standard deviations, and t-tests of predicted dropouts who drop out and predicted persisters who drop out on perceptions of instructor supportiveness

Group	Mean[a]	S.D.	Pooled variance t-value	2-tail prob.	df
Predicted dropouts who drop out	4.11	1.33	.11	0.92	15
Predicted persisters who drop out	4.05	0.69			

[a]Range of possible scores is 1-5; 1=low, 5=high.

Demographic Data

A third set of data included demographic information and subjects' participation history in adult education. While it would be desirable to compare demographic characteristics of predicted dropouts who drop out, predicted dropouts who do not drop out, predicted persisters who persist, and predicted persisters who do not persist, the sizes of some of these groups are so small that such comparisons would have little meaning. The analysis was precluded. (Frequency tables are printed in Appendix B.)

One portion of the questionnaire, reasons for which subjects are participating in the current course may provide information about subjects' decisions to drop out or persist in the current course.

Motivations for participation in current courses

When indicating reasons for taking the current course, a greater proportion of predicted dropouts who do not drop out cited job related reasons as their motivations for participating in the current adult education course. Predicted dropouts who did not drop out were also slightly more likely than predicted dropouts who did drop out to attribute the motivation for the current course to a desire to learn for the sake of learning (Table 11).

Predicted dropouts who did drop out were more likely to cite a variety of non-job related reasons than predicted dropouts who did not drop out.

A slightly greater proportion of predicted persisters who did not persist cited job related reasons as their motivations for taking the current course as compared to predicted persisters who did persist. Predicted persisters who did not persist also cited more non-job related reasons for their participation than did predicted persisters who did persist (Table 12).

All courses were scheduled to meet for a total of four, six, seven, or thirteen class meetings. The majority of dropouts were enrolled in courses scheduled for six class meetings (Table 13).

Table 11. Reasons for which predicted dropouts enrolled in current course
(subjects may indicate more than one reason)

Variable	Predicted to Drop and did not drop		Predicted to Drop and did drop	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
To fulfill recommendations of another person.	5	11.6	3	30.0
To take another course from this instructor.	0	0	0	0
To meet new people.	1	2.3	1	10.0
To become qualified for another job or promotion.	23	53.5	4	40.0
To take a course from an instructor I have heard is a good choice.	3	7.0	0	0
To learn about a new subject which may be interesting.	16	37.2	4	40.0
To provide a break in my usual routine.	12	27.9	3	30.0
To keep up-to-date in my current job or to retain my current job.	19	44.2	4	40.0
To learn for the sake of learning.	9	20.9	1	10.0
Other reasons.	4	9.3	1	10.0

Table 12. Reasons for which predicted persisters enrolled in current
course (subjects may indicate more than one reason)

Variable	Predicted to Persist and did persist		Predicted to Persist and did not persist	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
To fulfill recommendations of another person.	2	8.0	2	28.6
To take another course from this instructor.	0	0	0	0
To meet new people.	2	8.0	0	0
To become qualified for another job or promotion.	13	52.0	5	71.4
To take a course from an instructor I have heard is a good choice.	0	0	0	0
To learn about a new subject which may be interesting.	13	52.0	5	71.4
To provide a break in my usual routine.	4	16.0	1	14.3
To keep up-to-date in my current job or to retain my current job.	10	40.0	2	28.6
To learn for the sake of learning.	4	16.0	3	42.9
Other reasons.	3	12.0	0	0

Table 13. Comparison of total enrollment and actual dropouts based on number of class meetings

No. meetings	Total sample		Actual dropouts	
	Frequency	Valid %	Frequency	Valid %
4	14	16.4	0	0
6	33	38.8	8	47.1
7	19	22.4	3	17.6
13	19	22.4	6	35.3
	85	100.0	17	100.0

Results of Dropout Questionnaire

The 17 actual dropouts were sent questionnaires requesting additional information for their dropout decisions (Appendix D). These actual dropouts were requested to indicate as many reasons as they wished which they felt influenced their decisions to drop their courses (Table 14). Following is a summary of results received from the ten subjects who responded to the questionnaire.

The two responses to "OTHER" were both related to instructor teaching style. Both subjects indicated their instructors taught in a manner which did not facilitate learning.

Since the majority of research results were not supported by the data, and differences between demographic characteristics of test groups were minimal, several post hoc analyses were undertaken.

Table 14. Summary of actual dropouts' reasons for dropping adult
           education courses

Reason	Frequency of responses
Original goal or reason for taking the course was achieved	3
Subject was no longer of interest	1
Cost (child care, transportation, books, etc.)	0
Time (class required more time than expected)	0
Responsibilities (at home or at work)	3
Inconveniences (related to work or family)	1
Lack of support (from family or friends)	0
Personal reasons (lack of energy or confidence)	3
Other	2

Post Hoc Analysis

The focus of this study was to identify in what ways adult learner
decisions to persist or not persist in adult education courses are
dependent upon their perceptions of instructor supportive and defensive
communication behavior.

It was conjectured that subjects predicted to drop their adult
education courses who did drop and subjects predicted to persist in their
adult education courses but who dropped would perceive instructors more
defensively than supportively. It was also conjectured that subjects
predicted to drop their courses who did not drop and subjects predicted to
persist who did persist would perceive instructors more supportively than
defensively.

The majority of hypotheses were not supported by the data. Post hoc
analyses were undertaken to identify reasons why predictions about

persistence and dropout decisions on the basis of perceptions of instructor communication behaviors were not supported.

Several options for the post hoc analysis presented themselves. One was to examine whether a relationship exists between course content or number of course meetings and dropout decisions. Another was to assess the potential for relationships between previous participation and perceptions of supportiveness and defensiveness. An informal examination of the data in terms of these comparisons indicated there was little support for pursuing these options further.

Summary

The results of the statistical analyses support only one research hypothesis; that is, actual persisters perceive instructors as significantly more supportive than defensive.

Generally there does not appear to be a relationship between adult learners' decisions to drop out or persist in adult education courses and the perceptions of these learners of the supportive or defensive communication behaviors of instructors. Both dropouts and persisters seemed to perceive instructors as more supportive than defensive, and dropouts appeared to perceive instructors as more supportive and also more defensive than persisters.

Frequencies of demographic characteristics of subjects did not provide insight into decisions to drop out or persist.

Since predictions set forth in the research hypotheses were generally not supported, several post hoc analyses were run.

An informal examination indicated no relationship between subject matter of course, number of course meetings, previous participation, and subjects' decisions to drop courses or persist.

CHAPTER V.
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This section summarizes rationale, methodology, and results of the study. The focus of the study was to compare dropout and persistence decisions of adult learners in relation to perceptions of the communication behaviors of adult educators.

Rationale for the study

Research has attempted to identify reasons for dropout in adult education. Most of this research has identified discrete characteristics which describe dropouts, but which do not necessarily explain causes of dropout (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Douglah & Moss, 1968).

Researchers in education have drawn conclusions about influences on learners of various instructor communication behaviors; however, little has been done if the learners are adults. The purpose of this study was to examine whether instructor communication behavior might influence the dropout decisions of adult learners.

Methodology

Subjects were enrolled in adult education courses at a community college. All subjects were requested to complete a questionnaire with three parts. One part identified predicted dropouts and predicted persisters. Subjects completed the same 15-item semantic differential on four concepts. The second part identified subjects' perceptions of instructor supportive and defensive communication behaviors. In this

part, subjects responded to 16 statements on a six-point Likert-type scale. The third part requested demographic information and information concerning participation history of each subject.

Based on instructor maintained attendance records, actual dropouts were identified. These subjects were sent a follow-up questionnaire requesting their reasons for dropping their adult education courses. The questionnaire is based on a list of reasons which adults commonly provide for dropping out of courses (Cross, 1981).

Data from the questionnaire were analyzed using paired and independent t-tests. T-tests compared differences in perceptions of instructor supportive and defensive behaviors of actual dropouts and actual persisters, predicted dropouts and predicted persisters, and predicted dropouts who do not drop out and predicted persisters who do not persist.

Frequencies were compiled of demographic characteristics of subjects and subjects' participation histories.

Results of the study

Actual persisters were the only group of subjects to report differences in supportive and defensive communication behaviors of adult instructors. They also perceived instructors to be significantly more supportive than defensive.

Summaries of all findings are:

1. There is no significant difference ($p \leq .05$) between persisters and dropouts on perceptions of "MYSELF," "MYSELF AS I WOULD LIKE TO BE," "OTHER ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS," or "ADULT EDUCATION LECTURER."

2. There is a significant difference ($p \leq .05$) by persisters in perceiving instructors as more supportive than defensive.

3. There is no significant difference ($p \leq .05$) by dropouts in perceiving instructors as more defensive than supportive.

4. There is no significant difference ($p \leq .05$) in perceptions of instructor defensiveness between predicted dropouts who actually drop out and predicted dropouts who do not drop out.

5. There is no significant difference ($p \leq .05$) in perceptions of instructor supportiveness between predicted dropouts who do not drop out and predicted dropouts who do drop out.

6. There is no significant difference ($p \leq .05$) on perceptions of instructor supportiveness between predicted persisters who actually persist and predicted persisters who do not persist.

7. There is no significant difference ($p \leq .05$) on perceptions of instructor defensiveness between predicted persisters who do not persist and predicted persisters who do persist.

8. There is no significant difference ($p \leq .05$) on perceptions of instructor defensiveness by predicted dropouts who do drop out and predicted persisters who do drop out.

9. There is no significant difference ($p \leq .05$) on perceptions of instructor supportiveness by predicted dropouts who do drop out and predicted persisters who drop out.

The findings were surprising in that all groups tested perceived instructors as more supportive than defensive. While this might be expected of persisters, it was also the case of dropouts. None of the

results in testing the dropout groups was significantly different, but on examining dropout means of supportiveness and defensiveness, dropouts perceived instructors as more supportive than defensive. Also, the supportive means of dropouts were higher than the supportive means of persisters, and the defensive means of dropouts were higher than the defensive means of persisters.

Discussion of Results

The purpose of this study was to identify the extent to which adult learners were influenced in their dropout or persistence decisions by perceptions of instructor supportive and defensive communication behaviors.

The study is based on the congruence theory of Boshier (1973) and Gibb's (1961) supportive and defensive communication behaviors.

Boshier conjectured that a learner's decision to drop out or persist in an adult education course was based on the relationship of the learner's perception of self, his or her ideal self, other learners, and the adult educator. Boshier hypothesized that if an incongruence existed between the self and one or more of these factors, dropout was likely to occur. He labeled individuals exhibiting such an incongruence "deficiency-motivated." Deficiency-motivated people tend to be afraid of the environment and are likely to be enrolled in courses to fulfill lower order needs. They are more likely to become dropouts. Individuals who do not exhibit incongruences were labeled "growth-motivated." Growth-motivated learners are less likely to experience incongruences between themselves and other factors in the environment, or they are less

likely to be adversely influenced by them. They tend to be self-actualizing individuals who are autonomous, self-directed, and seem more likely to persist than deficiency-motivated learners.

The major factor upon which this research focused was the communication behavior of instructors. It was predicted that perceived communication behaviors of the instructor would be a major factor contributing to incongruence between the learner and the educator and would likely influence dropout. Jack R. Gibb's (1961) supportive and defensive communication behaviors provided an appropriate framework for this communication focus. Gibb believed that defensive communication behaviors which caused individuals to perceive or anticipate personal threat were likely to contribute to counterproductive interactions, or in the educational environment, drop out. Supportive communication behaviors were those behaviors which reduced a defensive communication climate. Perceived supportive communication behaviors exhibit respect and acceptance and may encourage persistence.

According to the results of the study, perceptions of instructor supportive or defensive communication behaviors do not influence learner dropout or persistence decisions. Since the predicted relationships were not born out, other factors which might influence the results were considered. They are demographic characteristics of the sample, results of a follow-up questionnaire, and the results of some post hoc analysis.

Demographics

A criticism of dropout research is that it tends to dwell on discrete factors which may describe dropouts, but which do not necessarily explain why dropout occurs (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Douglah & Moss, 1968).

The demographic results of this research did not generally provide information to explain subjects' decisions to drop out or persist in their courses. The strongest reasons for explaining the differences in behavior may be related to motivations for current participation. Subjects predicted to drop out but who did not drop the current courses seemed to be participating for more personal, goal oriented reasons than those who were predicted to drop out and did drop out of their current courses. Subjects predicted to persist who did persist indicated job related reasons for taking the current courses whereas those predicted to persist who did not persist indicated more personal reasons.

Follow-up questionnaire

Follow-up questionnaires completed by dropouts were sorted according to whether the dropout had been predicted to drop out or persist. Seven of the ten returned questionnaires were from predicted dropouts. The majority of these questionnaires indicated that dropout had occurred for non-course related reasons such as illness or job commitments. One questionnaire of a predicted dropout indicated the class did not meet personal expectations. Another, also from a predicted dropout, indicated dissatisfaction with changes in class schedule and location and lack of classroom equipment.

Three of the returned questionnaires were from predicted persisters. These provided insight into dropout motivations. Two indicated dissatisfaction with their instructor's teaching methods:

> Did not feel I was learning anything other than following his instructions.

> Teacher was intelligent but extremely boring. He had no feel...or grasp of the subject in regard to students.

The third respondent stated the original purpose for taking the course had been achieved, implying that to complete the course was unnecessary.

The non-course related responses of the predicted dropouts are consistent with Boshier's findings that dropouts tend to dwell on one incident as the prime reason for the dropout, or they cite non-course related reasons as the cause of dropout. Boshier believed that dropouts were hesitant to cite course related reasons because it reflected on their own inability to learn or to survive in the classroom environment. The responses of predicted persisters who dropped out indicates that these individuals may be more sensitive to instructor behaviors than the predicted dropouts who did not drop out. Also, predicted persisters may be more likely to admit they cannot or choose not to tolerate certain instructor behaviors.

Post hoc analyses

Since the majority of the predictions made in the hypotheses were not supported, several post hoc analyses were undertaken, but the majority did not provide additional insight.

Implications for Adult Educators

The majority of the research hypotheses were not supported. A significant difference did result from the hypothesis predicting that actual persisters would perceive instructors to be more supportive than defensive. Although a causal relationship is not implied, actual persisters seem to be sensitive to differences in supportive and defensive behaviors. Based on the results of the other unsupported hypotheses, it is not possible to conclude a relationship between supportiveness and persistence or dropout and defensiveness.

Combining the theory of Boshier (1973) and Gibb (1961), it would seem that instructor communication behaviors are not so important in the influence they exert on the persister who would likely persist despite the perceived communication behaviors of the instructor. The results of the majority of research hypotheses support this. If andragogy and Gibb's supportive behaviors are complementary, a supportive environment is still desirable in that it may facilitate the achievement of the persisters' goals.

Instructor supportive behaviors could also benefit the dropout. If the dropout is destined to drop out as Boshier indicated, supportive behaviors would eradicate one reason available to the dropout in explaining the dropout decision. Although it cannot be substantiated by the research, common sense dictates that caution should be taken in minimizing the potential of the supportive environment.

Demographic characteristics of subjects provide some information for adult educators concerning dropout and persistence. When comparing

predicted dropouts who dropped out with those who did not drop out, dropouts who did not drop out cited job related reasons as their motivation for participating. Those who did drop out indicated they were participating upon the recommendations of another person. Similarly in comparing reasons for current participation of persister groups, those who did persist listed job related reasons as their reasons for participating. Subjects predicted to persist who did not persist indicated they were currently participating for non-job related reasons. Although not a major focus of this research, there may be a relationship between persistence and motivation for enrolling in a course. Houle (1979), through indepth interviews with learners, identified three orientations upon which most participation was based: (1) goal, (2) activity, (3) learning. It could be that the greater the extent to which a course fulfills the need for enrolling in the course, the more likely the individual will persist. If that is the case, it behooves the instructor to become acquainted with the learners' motivations for participation.

Course instructors identified dropouts who were contacted for follow-up information. Unfortunately attendance records were not consistently available, nor were they requested as a part of this research. It would be important to identify a specific class meeting after which the majority of dropouts were likely to occur. To pinpoint this specific class could enable the instructor to plan activities to deter dropout.

Follow-up questionnaires provided additional information about dropout decisions which may be valuable to adult educators. The most

informative responses were those returned by predicted persisters who did not persist. These subjects criticized instructor teaching methods as influential in their decisions to drop their courses. The comments seem to indicate a lack of interaction between the educator and learner which lends support to the major concern of this research that instructor communication behaviors exert an influence on learner dropout decisions.

Although not strongly substantiated by the data, caution is advised in downplaying the importance of supportive and defensive communication behaviors. Follow-up questionnaires indicate that a lack of interaction with adult learners may influence dropout decisions. Instructors who are concerned about dropout might also link course content to learner career goals as well as other motivations. Experimentation with classroom formats which result in cohesiveness may also combat dropout in adult education.

Recommendations for Future Research

Perceptions of instructor supportive and defensive communication behaviors do not appear to be significant factors in persistence or dropout decisions of adult learners. This does not mean that supportive or defensive behaviors can be discounted by instructors or that they are not important to adult learners. Other research indicates that instructor communication behaviors, specifically supportiveness and defensiveness, are influential in the educational environment. Considering that the results of this research do not corroborate a relationship between persistence decisions and communication behaviors of instructors, several questions are appropriate should this research be replicated.

Is the PEES test an appropriate instrument to predict subjects likely to drop out or persist in their adult education courses? According to the results of this study, it is not. Boshier (1973) did use the instrument under different circumstances compared to this research. He typically used much larger samples compared to the sample size used in this research. He also used the PEES for testing the Congruence Model, while this research was interested in identifying subjects predicted to drop out or persist with respect to their perceptions of educator supportiveness and defensiveness.

Along with these differences, there are at least two problems with the PEES test. Concepts within the test are unclear. Subjects may have had difficulty interpreting the meaning of concepts to which they responded. The PEES is also lengthy. Incomplete PEES may indicate that subjects became impatient. Before similar research is conducted, other ways of identifying propensity to drop out or persist should be investigated.

Did the courses in which subjects were enrolled influence outcomes of this research? All subjects were enrolled in courses with a technically-oriented content. It may be that there are differences between technically- and nontechnically-oriented courses, not only in course content, but in general format or perceived demands on learners which may influence dropout or persistence decisions. Subsequent research should be conducted with subjects enrolled in courses which are not so technically oriented.

Do number of courses in which subjects are enrolled any one term influence dropout or persistence? It could conceivably be the case that learners over-enrolled themselves. That is, they registered for more courses then they would expect to complete. If courses were cancelled, or if some courses appeared less desirable than others, they would still have a course or courses to attend. Future research should identify the number of courses for which each subject is registered.

Is there a specific class meeting after which dropout is likely to happen? The literature does not indicate when dropout is likely to occur in relationship to number of class meetings. Future research might include an inspection of actual attendance records of instructors to identify a point at which dropout is likely to occur.

Is it possible that an anticipated reward for completing a course could overcome the most negative classroom circumstances? In this research, subjects who indicated they were enrolled for job related reasons were less likely to drop courses than subjects related for non-job related reasons. If subjects enrolled for job related reasons were confident that a promotion or raise would reward their completion of the course, that incentive may have stimulated them to persist. Future research should more thoroughly investigate motivations for participation. It might also be beneficial to interview subjects for more indepth information about participation.

If subjects' dropout decisions are based on perceptions of instructors, will subjects indicate that to be the case if given the opportunity? Subjects who dropped out received follow-up questionnaires

to identify reasons for dropout decisions. Subjects who had dropped out of previous courses were requested to respond to the same items to identify reasons for the previous dropout. The items were taken from a list the literature indicated were common reasons among adults for dropout. None of the items referred to the instructor. This is consistent with findings by Boshier who indicated a dropout is unlikely to cite a course related item for fear of admitting personal weakness or fault. Despite that respondents were provided an open-ended opportunity to acknowledge other reasons for their dropout, very few indicated that the instructor was influential. If instructor related items were included, citing them as the reason for dropout could become more acceptable.

Is it possible that the facet of andragogy stating that adults are most interested in gaining information for immediate use also was instrumental in their willingness to complete the research questionnaire? In most instances where questionnaires were discarded, it was because the PEES was insufficiently complete to be useful. Consistently not completing the PEES seemed to provide a barrier to completing the CCQ as well. Since the focus of the research was on the communication behavior of the instructor, future research might eliminate the PEES and use the CCQ only with instructor maintained attendance records.

Could perceptions of supportiveness or defensiveness of other learners influence subjects' own persistence decisions? According to Boshier, when any course related reason is indicated as the dropout motivation, it is more likely to be related to other learners as opposed

to the instructor. Future research might request learners to complete the

CCQ twice, once in relation to perceptions of the instructor, a second

time in response to perceptions of other learners.

Did the emphasis on general perception of the instructor bias this

research? The current study was concerned with adult learners'

perceptions of factors in the adult education environment in general. As

the questionnaire was administered, subjects were cautioned verbally by

the researcher to respond based on their general perceptions only. It was

suggested that if subjects had previous experience in adult education

courses, they not concentrate on one specific experience, but consider

their general impressions. Similarly, if subjects had no previous

experience with adult education, it was suggested they probably had some

general perceptions which they could consider in responding to the

questionnaires. Similar cautions were printed on covers of both the PEES

and CCQ. It may be this concern for general perceptions which influenced

the results. Individuals who had not previously participated had no

perceptions to which they could refer and a wider range of variance in

responses resulted.

Future research might be strengthened by allowing learners to

reference their perceptions of their present instructors in completing the

CCQ. This would reduce the ambiguity and abstraction that resulted from

the emphasis on general impressions. In requesting that subjects respond

to the questionnaire based on their perceptions of their own instructors,

it would be more possible to establish whether instructor communication

behaviors play a part in dropout. Rather than results computed on the

basis of individual subjects, means of each class would be compared to means of other classes.

Although Gibb's supportive and defensive behaviors are important communication skills, there are other interpersonal skills which may be equally valuable in creating an optimum learning environment for adults. Future research should explore influences of other behaviors. It would be interesting to identify nonverbal behaviors which contribute to learners' perceptions of the educational environment. To what extent do instructor listening skills influence learners? Are there communication skills more conducive to technically-oriented classes as opposed to other types of courses? Future research should identify other important communication behaviors.

Summary

This study provided data regarding adult decisions to drop out or persist in adult education courses in relation to the perceived supportive or defensive behaviors of adult educators. The sample was a group of adult learners enrolled in continuing education courses at a local community college. The CCQ provided information concerning learners' perceptions of adult educators' supportive and defensive communication behaviors. Recommendations for future research were identified. These included suggestions for revision of questionnaires, for use of other subjects as the sample, for a change in research design, and a focus on other interpersonal communication behaviors.

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APPENDIX A.

BOSHIER'S DISCREPANCY SCORES

MYSELF/MY IDEAL-SELF			TOTAL SCALE DISCREPANCIES		
P	D	CD	P	D	CD
2.86	2.89	2.99	7.22	7.81	8.23
1.44	1.46	1.61	4.84	5.74	6.52
2.30	2.55	2.56	6.26	6.92	7.40
1.52	1.55	1.73	5.57	6.05	6.53
1.63	2.04	2.09	4.93	6.04	6.20
1.44	1.75	1.59	4.69	5.86	6.33
1.93	2.48	2.50	6.25	7.79	8.29
1.89	2.22	2.57	5.95	6.81	7.73
2.46	2.74	2.57	7.30	8.34	5.72
1.65	1.64	1.65	4.94	5.65	8.33
2.17	2.66	2.59	6.75	8.20	8.35
2.02	2.22	2.35	6.12	7.43	8.14
1.79	2.02	1.91	6.98	7.64	7.80
1.79	1.77	1.76	5.43	6.07	6.63
1.66	1.58	1.69	6.23	6.54	7.02
28.55	36.02	32.16	89.46	94.55	109.22

APPENDIX B.

COMPOSITE DEMOGRAPHIC TABLES

Table 15. Gender of subjects

Variable	Total sample		Actual dropouts		Actual persisters	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
Female	24	28.2	6	35.3	18	26.5
Male	61	71.8	11	64.7	50	73.5
	85	100.0	17	100.0	68	100.0

Predicted to drop and did not drop		Predicted to drop and did drop		Predicted to persist and did persist		Predicted to persist and did not persist	
Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
9	20.9	4	40.0	9	36.0	2	28.6
34	79.1	6	60.0	16	64.0	5	71.4
43	100.0	10	100.0	25	100.0	7	100.0

Table 16. Ages of subjects

Variable	Total sample		Actual dropouts		Actual persisters	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
18-30 yrs.	37	43.5	7	41.2	30	44.1
31-40 yrs.	21	24.7	5	29.4	16	23.5
41-50 yrs.	18	21.2	2	11.8	16	23.5
Over 50 yrs.	9	10.6	3	17.6	6	8.8
	85	100.0	17	100.0	68	100.0

Predicted to drop and did not drop		Predicted to drop and did drop		Predicted to persist and did persist		Predicted to persist and did not persist	
Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
20	46.5	4	40.0	10	40.0	3	42.9
11	25.6	4	40.0	5	20.0	1	14.3
9	20.9	1	10.0	7	28.0	1	14.3
3	7.0	1	10.0	3	12.0	2	28.6
43	100.0	10	100.0	25	100.0	7	100.0

Table 17. Number of children of subjects

Variable	Total sample		Actual dropouts		Actual persisters	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
0	44	51.8	12	70.6	32	47.1
1-3	38	44.7	5	29.4	33	48.5
4-5	2	2.4	-	0	2	2.9
Omit	1	1.2	-	0	1	1.5
	85	100.0	17	100.0	68	100.0

Predicted to drop and did not drop		Predicted to drop and did drop		Predicted to persist and did persist		Predicted to persist and did not persist	
Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
21	48.8	8	80.0	11	44.0	4	57.1
20	46.5	2	20.0	13	52.0	3	42.9
1	2.3	0	0	1	4.0	0	0
1	2.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
43	100.0	10	100.0	25	100.0	7	100.0

Table 18. Marital status of subjects

Variable	Total sample		Actual dropouts		Actual persisters	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
Single	20	23.5	6	35.3	14	20.6
Married	57	67.1	8	47.1	49	72.1
Divorced	6	7.1	2	11.8	4	5.9
Other	1	1.2	1	5.9	0	0
Omit	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.5
	85	100.0	17	100.0	68	100.0

Predicted to drop and did not drop		Predicted to drop and did drop		Predicted to persist and did persist		Predicted to persist and did not persist	
Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
10	23.3	5	50.0	4	16.0	1	14.3
31	72.1	3	30.0	18	72.0	5	71.4
2	4.7	1	10.0	2	8.0	1	14.3
0	0	1	10.0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	1	4.0	0	0
43	100.0	10	100.0	25	100.0	7	100.0

Table 19. Educational attainment of subjects

Variable	Total sample		Actual dropouts		Actual persisters	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
Some high school	4	4.7	3	17.6	1	1.5
High school graduate	24	28.2	4	23.5	20	29.4
Some college	36	42.4	4	23.5	32	47.1
B.A.	11	12.9	2	11.8	9	13.2
Graduate credits	3	3.5	2	11.8	1	1.5
Graduate degree	6	7.1	2	11.8	4	5.9
Other	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.5
	85	100.0	17	100.0	68	100.0

Predicted to drop and did not drop		Predicted to drop and did drop		Predicted to persist and did persist		Predicted to persist and did not persist	
Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
1	2.3	2	20.0	0	0	1	14.3
13	30.2	1	10.0	7	28.0	3	42.9
20	46.5	3	30.0	12	48.0	1	14.3
6	14.0	1	10.0	3	12.0	1	14.3
0	0	1	10.0	1	4.0	1	14.3
3	7.0	2	20.0	1	4.0	0	0
0	0	0	0	1	4.0	0	0
43	100.0	10	100.0	25	100.0	7	100.0

Table 20. Employment status of subjects

Variable	Total sample		Actual dropouts		Actual persisters	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
Full-time	71	83.5	16	94.1	55	80.9
Part-time	8	9.4	0	0	8	11.8
Unemployed	4	4.7	1	5.9	3	4.4
Other	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.5
Omit	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.5
	85	100.0	17	100.0	68	100.0

Predicted to drop and did not drop		Predicted to drop and did drop		Predicted to persist and did persist		Predicted to persist and did not persist	
Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
35	81.4	9	90.0	20	80.0	7	100.0
4	9.3	0	0	4	16.0	0	0
2	4.7	1	10.0	1	4.0	0	0
1	2.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	2.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
43	100.0	10	100.0	25	100.0	7	100.0

Table 21. Income of subjects

Variable	Total sample		Actual dropouts		Actual persisters	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
$10,000 or less	3	3.5	1	5.9	2	2.9
$10,001-$25,000	34	40.0	9	52.9	25	36.8
$25,001-$45,000	32	37.6	4	23.5	28	41.2
Greater than $45,000	11	12.9	2	11.8	9	13.2
Omit	5	5.9	1	5.9	4	5.9
	85	100.0	17	100.0	68	100.0

Predicted to drop and did not drop		Predicted to drop and did drop		Predicted to persist and did persist		Predicted to persist and did not persist	
Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
2	4.7	1	10.0	0	0	0	0
15	34.9	4	40.0	10	40.0	5	71.4
17	39.5	4	40.0	11	44.0	0	0
6	14.0	1	10.0	3	12.0	1	14.3
3	7.0	0	0	1	4.0	1	14.3
43	100.0	10	100.0	25	100.0	7	100.0

Table 22. History of participation of subjects in adult education

Variable	Total sample		Actual dropouts		Actual persisters	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
Yes	60	70.6	12	70.6	48	70.6
No	25	29.4	5	29.4	20	29.4
	85	100.0	17	100.0	68	100.0

Predicted to drop and did not drop		Predicted to drop and did drop		Predicted to persist and did persist		Predicted to persist and did not persist	
Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
27	62.8	7	70.0	21	84.0	5	71.4
16	37.2	3	30.0	4	16.0	2	28.6
43	100.0	10	100.0	25	100.0	7	100.0

Table 23. Enrollment in a previous adult education course which was not completed

Variable	Total sample		Actual dropouts		Actual persisters	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
Yes	12	14.1	4	23.5	8	11.8
No	73	85.9	13	76.5	60	88.2
	85	100.0	17	100.0	68	100.0

Predicted to drop and did not drop		Predicted to drop and did drop		Predicted to persist and did persist		Predicted to persist and did not persist	
Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
4	9.3	4	40.0	4	12.0	0	0
39	90.7	6	60.0	21	88.0	7	100.0
43	100.0	10	100.0	25	100.0	7	100.0

Table 24. Subjects´ reasons for failing to complete a previous course
(subjects may check more than one reason)

Variable	Total sample		Actual dropouts		Actual persisters	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
Cost	0	0	0	0	0	0
Time	4	4.7	2	11.8	2	2.9
Responsibilities	4	4.7	2	11.8	2	2.9
Inconveniences	2	2.4	1	5.9	1	1.5
Lack of support	1	1.2	1	5.9	0	0
Personal reasons	3	3.5	0	0	3	4.4
Subject uninteresting	3	3.5	2	11.8	1	1.5
Other	2	2.4	0	0	2	2.9

Predicted to drop and did not drop		Predicted to drop and did drop		Predicted to persist and did persist		Predicted to persist and did not persist	
Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	4.7	2	20.0	0	0	0	0
0	0	2	20.0	2	8.0	0	0
1	2.3	1	10.0	4	16.0	0	0
0	0	1	10.0	0	0	0	0
2	4.7	0	0	1	4.0	0	0
1	2.3	2	20.0	0	0	0	0
1	2.3	0	0	1	4.0	0	0

Table 25. Reasons for which subjects enrolled in the current course
(subjects may check more than one reason)

Variable	Total sample		Actual dropouts		Actual persisters	
	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
To fulfill recommendations of another person	12	14.1	5	29.4	7	10.3
To take another course from this instructor	0	0	0	0	0	0
To meet new people	4	4.7	1	5.9	3	4.4
To become qualified for another job or promotion	45	52.9	9	52.9	36	52.9
To take a course from an instructor I have heard is a good choice	3	3.5	0	0	3	4.4
To learn about a new subject which may be interesting	38	44.7	9	52.9	29	42.6
To provide a break in my usual routine	20	23.5	4	23.5	16	23.5
To keep up-to-date in my current job or to retain my current job	35	41.2	6	35.3	29	42.6
To learn for the sake of learning	17	20.0	4	23.5	13	19.1
Other reasons	8	9.4	1	5.9	7	10.3

Predicted to drop and did not drop		Predicted to drop and did drop		Predicted to persist and did persist		Predicted to persist and did not persist	
Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %	Freq.	Valid %
5	11.6	3	30.0	2	8.0	2	28.6
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	2.3	1	10.0	2	8.0	0	0
23	53.5	4	40.0	13	52.0	5	71.4
3	7.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	37.2	4	40.0	13	52.0	5	71.4
12	27.9	3	30.0	4	16.0	1	14.3
19	44.2	4	40.0	10	40.0	2	28.6
9	20.9	1	10.0	4	16.0	3	42.9
4	9.3	1	10.0	3	12.0	0	0

APPENDIX C.

QUESTIONNAIRE PACKET

IOWA STATE
UNIVERSITY

Dear Adult Learner:

As a part of my graduate work at Iowa State University, I wish to identify
reasons for which adult learners such as you decide to complete or drop
adult education courses in which they are enrolled. Des Moines Area
Community College has generously agreed to cooperate with this study.

By completing the survey which follows, you can provide important
information which will be valuable to those who plan future adult
education courses; in fact, you may benefit in this way as well.

On the following pages you will find:

    1. a short questionnaire to determine information about you and
    your past experience as a participant in adult education courses;

    2. a survey titled PEES which requests you to respond with your
    general impressions of some very important factors in the educational
    environment: yourself; instructors; yourself as you would like
    to be; other adult education participants;

    3. finally, a survey titled CCQ upon which you are requested to
    indicate your general impressions of the communication climate in
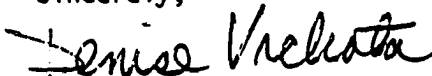   the adult learning situation.

Please take a few minutes to complete these pages. Your responses will remain
totally confidential; the code number at the top of the first page is to enable
me to determine that everyone in this class has received this packet. Your
participation is, of course, totally voluntary as well.

I urge you to work quickly because your first response is often the most true
indicator of the way you feel about the item.

If you have questions about the results of this research, feel free to contact
me at the above address.

For your time and effort in completing this material, I am appreciative.

Sincerely,

Denise Vrchota

Please provide the information requested below. All responses will be confidential. The following information is needed for statistical purposes.

1. AGE

____ under 18 years

____ 18-30 years

____ 31-40 years

____ 41-50 years

____ over 50 years

2. GENDER

____ female

____ male

3. MARITAL STATUS

____ single

____ married

____ divorced

____ widowed

____ other

4. CHILDREN AT HOME

____ none

____ 1-3

____ 4-5

____ more than 5

5. ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME IN DOLLARS

____ less than 10,000

____ 10,001-25,000

____ 25,001-45,000

____ more than 45,001

6. EMPLOYMENT STATUS

____ full time

____ part time

____ unemployed

7. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

____ some high school

____ high school

____ some college

____ B.A.

____ graduate credits

____ graduate degree

8. Have you previously attended any type of adult education course? _____ YES _____ NO

9. Why are you enrolled in this course? Indicate the reason(s) which apply to you.

   A. To fulfill recommendations of another person (employer, etc.). _____

   B. To take another course from this instructor. _____

   C. To meet new people. _____

   D. To become qualified for another job or a promotion. _____

   E. To take a course from an instructor I have heard is a good choice. _____

   F. To learn about a new subject which may be interesting. _____

   G. To provide a break in my usual routine. _____

   H. To keep up-to-date in my current job, or to retain my current job. _____

   I. To learn for the sake of learning. _____

   J. Other (Please specify):

10. Have you ever enrolled in a course but not completed it?

    Yes _____ No _____

11. If you indicated "Yes," Please check the reason(s) below for which you did not complete the course:

    A. Cost (child care, transportation, etc.)   ____

    B. Time (class required more time than expected) ____

    C. Responsibilities (at home or work)   ____

    D. Inconveniences (related to work or family)   ____

    E. Lack of Support (from family or friends)   ____

    F. Personal Reasons (lack of energy or confidence) ____

    G. Subject Was No Longer Of Interest   ____.

    H. Other (please specify):

Thank you for your cooperation.

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not been filmed at the request of the author.
They are available for consultation, however,
in the author's university library.

These consist of pages:

UMI

APPENDIX D.

DROPOUT FOLLOW-UP LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE

IOWA STATE
UNIVERSITY

Summer 1987

Dear Adult Learner:

You were recently enrolled in a class at the Des Moines Area Community College, _____. On the first meeting of that class, you very kindly agreed to complete a questionnaire for a research project on which I am working. The purpose of this project is to identify reasons why adult learners complete or drop classes in which they are enrolled.

Now I need your help one last time. According to attendance records, you did not attend all the meetings of the DMACC class named in the above space. There are, of course, many reasons for which an adult learner may not attend all meetings of a course. On the enclosed sheet are listed a few of them.

Please take a minute to check the reason (or reasons) which describe why you did not attend all sessions of the course in which you were enrolled. If none of the reasons listed is appropriate, feel free to write your reason(s) in the space provided.

Your response will be kept confidential. For your convenience, a stamped envelope in which to return your response is enclosed.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Denise Vrchota

PLEASE CHECK THE ITEM(S) BELOW WHICH YOU FEEL COME CLOSEST TO DESCRIBING
THE REASON YOU DID NOT COMPLETE OR DID NOT ATTEND ALL CLASS MEETINGS OF

_____.

ORIGINAL GOAL OR REASON FOR TAKING THE COURSE WAS ACHIEVED ____

SUBJECT WAS NO LONGER OF INTEREST ____

COST (child care, transportation, books, etc.) ____

TIME (class required more time than expected) ____

RESPONSIBILITIES (at home or at work) ____

INCONVENIENCES (related to work or family) ____

LACK OF SUPPORT (from family or friends) ____

PERSONAL REASONS (lack of energy or confidence) ____

OTHER: (please specify briefly) ____

PLEASE INSERT THIS SHEET IN THE ENCLOSED POSTAGE PAID ENVELOPE AND MAIL.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

APPENDIX E. HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

1. Title of project (please type): The Relationship Between Perceived Supportive/Defensive

Communication Behaviors of Ad. Ed. Instructors and the Decision to Drop Out or Persist

By Adult Learners

2. I agree to provide the proper surveillance of this project to insure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are properly protected. Additions to or changes in procedures affecting the subjects after the project has been approved will be submitted to the committee for review.

Denise Vrchota

Typed Named of Principal Investigator

Date 4/24/87

Signature of Principal Investigator

321 Pearson, SPCM Dept

Campus Address

294-3263

Campus Telephone

3. Signatures of others (if any)

Date 4/24

Relationship to Principal Investigator
Major Professor

4. ATTACH an additional page(s) (A) describing your proposed research and (B) the subjects to be used, (C) indicating any risks or discomforts to the subjects, and (D) covering any topics checked below. CHECK all boxes applicable.

☐ Medical clearance necessary before subjects can participate

☐ Samples (blood, tissue, etc.) from subjects

☐ Administration of substances (foods, drugs, etc.) to subjects

☐ Physical exercise or conditioning for subjects

☐ Deception of subjects

☐ Subjects under 14 years of age and(or) ☐ Subjects 14-17 years of age

☐ Subjects in institutions

☒ Research must be approved by another institution or agency

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5. ATTACH an example of the material to be used to obtain informed consent and CHECK which type will be used.

☐ Signed informed consent will be obtained.

☒ Modified informed consent will be obtained.

6. Anticipated date on which subjects will be first contacted:

	Month	Day	Year
	4	30	87

Anticipated date for last contact with subjects:

	Month	Day	Year
	6	25	87

7. If Applicable: Anticipated date on which audio or visual tapes will be erased and(or) identifiers will be removed from completed survey instruments:

Month Day Year

8. Signature of Head or Chairperson   Date   Department or Administrative Unit

9. Decision of the University Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research:

☒ Project Approved   ☐ Project not approved   ☐ No action required

George G. Karas