

Experiences of adult English language learners previously enrolled in English as a second language noncredit (ESLN) courses and currently enrolled in credit courses at a California community college

by

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B.A., University of California, Los Angeles, 2012
M.S., California State University, San Bernardino, 2016

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Department of Community College Leadership
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

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Approved by:

Major Professor
George Boggs, Ph.D.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	ix
List of Tables.....	x
Acknowledgements.....	xi
Dedication	xii
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Background of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions	6
Theoretical Framework	7
Methodology.....	9
Delimitations	10
Assumptions	10
Significance of the Study	10
Definitions of Terms	11
Chapter Summary	13
Organization of the Study.....	13
Chapter 2 - Literature Review	14
English Language Learners	15
Terminology Used to Identify ELLs.....	17
Noncredit ABE in the United States	19
Noncredit ABE in California.....	22
Adult ESLN Education in the United States	24
Adult ESLN Education in California.....	25
Student Support Services in Higher Education in the United States	27
Student Support Services in Higher Education in California.....	28
Studies on Student Support Services in Community Colleges.....	30
Guthrie-Clarkson (2018).....	30
Spriggs (2018).....	31
Theoretical Framework	32
Four Dimensions of Model.....	35
Nontraditional Student Attritional Model in Studies	38
Barnhart (2011).....	39
James (2013)	40
Reed (2013).....	41
Ydoyaga (2015).....	42
Hancock (2018).....	42
ESLN Students.....	44
Janis (2012).....	44
Lansangan-Sabangan (2019).....	45
Proulx (2018)	46
ESLN Students Transitioning to Credit Courses	47
Becker (2011).....	47
Institute of Education Sciences (2019).....	48
Beam et al. (2019)	49

Spurling et al. (2008).....	50
Raufman et al. (2019).....	50
Conclusion.....	51
Chapter 3 - Methodology	52
Purpose of the Study	52
Research Questions.....	52
Theoretical Framework.....	53
Study Setting.....	54
Study Participants.....	55
Instrumentation.....	56
Data Analysis.....	60
Ethical Considerations	63
Limitations.....	64
Summary	65
Chapter 4 - Findings.....	66
Participants	67
Data Analysis.....	68
Presentation of Findings.....	72
Research Question 1.....	73
Theme 1: Experiences as a Credit Student Impacted by the Need to Increase Time Dedicated to Academics	73
Theme 2: Strong Attendance and Knowing Major are Impactful in Experiences as Credit Students.....	76
Research Question 2.....	80
Theme 3: Self-Perceived English Language Abilities Create Stressful Experiences in Academic Settings.....	80
Research Question 3.....	84
Theme 4: Instructors and Family Provide Encouragement That Create Positive Experiences	85
Research Question 4.....	93
Theme 5: Family Responsibilities, Associated With Age, Limit the Time Available to Engage in Academics	93
Research Question 5.....	97
Theme 6: Student Support Services Provide Resources That Contribute to Participants' Academic Success.....	97
Chapter 5 - Conclusion.....	103
Overview of the Problem	103
Purpose of the Study	103
Review of the Methodology and Data Analysis.....	104
Discussion and Interpretation of Study Findings.....	105
Theme 1: Experiences as a Credit Student Impacted by Need to Increase Time Dedicated to Academics	106
Theme 2: Strong Attendance and Major Certainty Helpful in Academic Success in Classes	107
Theme 5: Family Responsibilities Associated With Age Limit the Time Available to Engage in Academics	110

Theme 6: Student Support Services Provide Resources That Contribute to Academic Success.....	110
Implications for Practice	112
Recommendations for Future Research	113
Concluding Remarks.....	114
References	115
Appendix A – Study Email Invitation.....	128
Appendix B – Consent Form.....	129
Appendix C – Interview Protocol and Interview Questions	131

List of Figures

Figure 1 Bean and Metzner's (1985) Conceptual Model of Nontraditional Student	37
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List of Tables

Table 1.1 Participant Characteristics	68
Table 1.2.	68
Table 1.3 Data Analysis: Code Clusters Used to Develop Themes	69
Table 1.4 Research Question and Themes	71

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to my family: Isidro, Eligio Mazatlzin and Marisol Tonantzin Zepeda. Isidro, you have always loved me for who I am, and I have been able to achieve my goals because of your support. Eligio and Marisol I love you more than anyone, and by achieving this I hope to show you that with hard work, gratitude, and humility you can achieve your goals. I also dedicate this to my parents, Maria Elena and Feliciano Macias, who have always supported my dreams. My sisters Alejandra and Valeria Macias who helped me in various ways throughout my educational journey. My cousin Kimberly Quiñonez has always been one of my biggest cheerleaders and brought me joy and laughter when I most needed it throughout my educational journey. Lastly, I would like to thank Myrna and Luis Rodriguez who encouraged me to continue on my professional and academic journey, and demonstrate what it means to be strong, intelligent individuals.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The United States continues to become a more linguistically diverse country with more than 350 different languages spoken as of 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). More than 67 million individuals over the age of 5 speak a language other than English at home, 60% of these individuals are English proficient (Batalova & Zong, 2016). The U.S. Census Bureau defines English proficient as someone who self-identifies as speaking English “very well” (Batalova & Zong, 2016, p.1). Individuals who lack English proficiency are often broadly identified as English language learners (ELL; Raufman et al., 2019). The ELL population is comprised of various cultures, ethnicities, ages, immigration statuses, languages, professional experiences, and academic goals. Adult ELLs can enroll in English as a second language courses to improve English language skills. Adult ELLs have been described as “students in transition” who often enroll in coursework to improve English language skills to transition from one phase of their lives to another (Vinogradov, 2016). Adult ELLs may need improved English skills to better navigate their surrounding communities and communicate with families. Data demonstrates ELLs often choose community colleges to improve their English language skills (Bergey et al., 2018). This study focused on adult ELLs enrolled at a California community college.

Because this study focused on adults previously enrolled in English as a second language noncredit (ESLN) education at a community college, it was informed by the definitions and descriptions of the Research and Planning Group, a nonprofit research organization focused on researching community college topics that define the adult ELL as an adult student enrolled in adult education or noncredit English coursework (Beam et al., 2019). It was also informed by the research and definitions of Hodara (2015) who stated the adult language learner category has a

diverse subpopulation with variations in first language, educational background, and educational goals.

California community colleges provide a variety of academic programs. These programs include 2-year associate degrees for vocational preparation, university transfer options, short-term career preparation certificates, and noncredit education. Credit courses can be college level or developmental. In California, developmental instruction is optional and aimed to improve skills if the student is not considered to be college level (Raufman et al., 2019). Credit courses are fee-based and earn students a certificate or degree (Ran & Xu, 2015). Meanwhile, noncredit courses often function to prepare students for college credit pathways or the workforce and are tuition-free. Noncredit courses also offer the opportunity for personal enrichment. However, noncredit courses do not allow students to earn credit toward an associate degree, certificate for vocational preparation, or university transfer. More than 68,000 students across California enrolled in noncredit courses at community colleges in 2019 (Community College League of California, 2019).

Noncredit courses are offered at 70% of California community colleges. ESLN courses make up more than 51% of all noncredit courses throughout California community colleges (San Diego Continuing Education Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 2017). ESLN courses are free classes focused on English language acquisition (California Community College Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], 2020b). These courses may have a vocational preparation emphasis or focus on grammar, reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Upon completing ESLN courses, students can choose to enter the workforce or transition into credit coursework at community colleges. The purpose of the study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of adult learners formerly enrolled in ESLN courses while they persisted in credit coursework.

Statement of the Problem

Although community college transfer and graduation rates have improved throughout California, they remain low throughout the community colleges system (Jackson et al., 2019). Only 48% of students whose goal was to graduate and transfer to a 4-year institution did so within 6 years (Jackson et al., 2019). These rates are lower for adult learners who begin community college in noncredit English as a second language (ESL) programs (San Diego Continuing Education Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 2017). According to Kanno and Cromley (2013) one in six ELL students completed a college degree within 6 years compared to one in three non-ELL students (Kanno & Cromley, 2013). Not only do adult students formerly enrolled in ESLN have lower transfer and graduation rates, but they are also less likely to enter credit coursework (Hodara, 2015). Adult students formerly in ESLN also persist in credit courses at lower rates than adult learners not previously enrolled ESLN (Raufman et al., 2019). For example, a study conducted at an urban community college in 2015 found ESLN students accumulated fewer credits in their 1st- and 2nd-year of credit coursework than students who started in ESL credit (Hodara, 2015). Furthermore, students who enroll in ESLN courses are less likely to enter college-level math or English courses, and they have overall weaker postsecondary outcomes than students who do not enroll in ESLN (Raufman et al., 2019). To understand why former ESLN students do not persist, this study described and aimed to understand experiences of former ESLN students who persisted in credit coursework at a community college. The study also explored how student support services impacted the experiences of former ESLN students as they persisted in credit coursework.

Background of the Problem

Research demonstrates the ESLN student population is less likely to experience completion rates and other positive academic outcomes (Bergey et al., 2018; Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; Spurling et al., 2008). The CCCCO website in 2021 for noncredit adult education includes data on noncredit students and ESLN students; the data are not separated. The launch board demonstrates fewer than 15% of ESLN and adult basic education (ABE) students enrolled in postsecondary coursework in the year following completion of either ESLN or ABE coursework (CCCCO, 2020a). Ran and Xu (2015) also found ESLN and noncredit students experienced high dropout rates and inconsistent enrollment patterns.

Along with lower academic outcomes, ESLN students tend to come from lower socioeconomic statuses. Data demonstrates ESLN students are more likely to live in poverty and experiences less economic gains (Batalova & Zong, 2016). Along with demonstrating low transition rates, the CCCCO data launch board also stated fewer than 20% of ESLN or ABE students became employed upon exiting programs, and those who entered the workforce earned an average of \$26,400 a year (CCCCO, 2020a). According to the 2021 U. S. federal guidelines, a yearly income of \$26,500 for a family of four falls under poverty guidelines (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2021). However, students are more likely to improve their economic status if they complete a credit program. Data shows completing a minimum credit certificate can double an individual's income over the span of 3 years (Community College League of California, 2019).

Research has indicated ESLN students experience unique barriers when transitioning to credit coursework. In previous research (Bergey et al., 2018; Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; Spurling et al., 2008) ESLN students have been described as nontraditional students: students

over the age of 24 who have work, family responsibilities, or circumstances that can interfere with their higher education (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). A study on noncredit community college students extending back to 2003 documented significant challenges faced by these students, who are often immigrant adults needing job retraining, and individuals with limited understanding of and exposure to the U.S. higher educational system (Grubb et al., 2003). According to data gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2013, adult males who did not identify as English language proficient were, “more likely to work in construction, natural resources, and maintenance occupations than English-proficient men” (Batalova & Zong, 2016, p.1). A more recent study by Ran and Xu (2015) confirmed ESLN students are more likely to be older and come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds when compared to college credit students.

According to researchers at the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, ESLN programs at community colleges are the best educational environment for adult ESL learners because they provide better access to student support services and pathways to academic programs, which in turn create better economic outcomes and increased quality of life (Chisman & Crandall, 2007). Nevertheless, research demonstrates ESLN students transition into and complete credit programs at low rates (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; Spurling et al., 2008). In their 2019 position paper on the history and status of noncredit instruction across the state, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC, 2019) noted all the aforementioned factors contributed to the increased likelihood of noncredit students having undefined academic and professional goals and being less likely to receive counseling and student support services. ASCCC further maintained, although California does provide noncredit student support services, these services are not adequate to meet the unique needs of noncredit

students. They argued for improved student support services to improve academic outcomes (ASCCC, 2019). The Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates was a taskforce that included representation from the California community college, the University of California, and the California State University systems. The Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates developed a survey that found less than 60% of California community college survey participants had counseling services for ESL or ESLN students. Additionally, tailored counseling services targeting the most “at-risk” ESL and ESLN students are even more limited (Frodesen et al., 2006). In 1986, the CCCCCO acknowledged and documented the need for improved counseling services that address the complex needs of incoming students, including students enrolling in ABE and ESLN (Menegas, 2000).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of adults previously enrolled in ESLN courses while they persisted in credit coursework through the lens of Bean and Metzner’s (1985) nontraditional student attrition model. The study specifically focused on the experiences related to academic, psychological, environmental, and background factors as identified in Bean and Metzner’s model. In addition, the purpose of the study was to examine how student support services had an impact on the experiences in persisting in credit coursework.

Research Questions

The overarching question that guided this study: How do former ESLN students perceive the impact of academic, psychological, environmental, and background factors, as defined by Bean and Metzner’s (1985) nontraditional student attrition model, in their experiences while they persist in credit coursework?

The research questions that guide this study:

- Research Question 1: How do academic factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?
- Research Question 2: How do psychological factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?
- Research Question 3: How do environmental factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?
- Research Question 4: How do background factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?
- Research Question 5: How do student support services impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework can be used to explain phenomenon and provides guidelines for organization of the study (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019, p. 105). The nontraditional, undergraduate student attrition model (Bean & Metzner, 1985) was used as a theoretical framework to guide the study. The theory states nontraditional students experience various factors traditional students do not when enrolling and persisting in higher education. Bean and Metzner (1985) further noted a nontraditional student's decision to withdraw or continue with their higher education is determined by their level of social integration and various other factors not related to the institution. According to the theory, there are four sets of factors that can impact nontraditional adult learners' persistence: academic, environmental, background and defining factors, and psychological outcomes (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Some of these factors have a direct impact on

student attrition, including background and environmental factors; other factors have an indirect impact, such as academic factors.

Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model was selected as the theoretical framework because Bean and Metzner recognized the unique barriers nontraditional students' experience in their persistence in undergraduate studies when developing the framework. The purpose of the study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of former ESLN students while they persisted in credit coursework through the lens of Bean and Metzner's nontraditional student attrition model. The study specifically looked at the experiences related to academic, psychological, environmental, and background factors as identified in Bean and Metzner's model. The theory is very closely aligned with the purpose of the study and the background information of the problem. Bean and Metzner's nontraditional student attrition model was used to gather and collect data and interpret results. In addition, the purpose of the study was to examine how student support services had an impact on their experiences in persisting in credit coursework. Student support services were included in research questions because the literature review identified multiple barriers faced by current and former ESLN students that can be potentially addressed by student support services.

The four sets of factors identified by Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional undergraduate student attrition model that impact a student's decision to withdraw or continue with their college education served as the lens of the study (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Academic factors used to develop research questions included: study habits, academic advising, course availability, absenteeism, and major uncertainty. The second set of factors that framed the research questions were environmental factors. Environmental factors included: finances, weekly work hours, family responsibilities, outside encouragement, and available transfer opportunities.

The third set of factors used included the following background and defining factors: age, enrollment status, residence, educational goals, high school performance, ethnicity, and gender. The fourth set of factors were psychological outcomes: utility, satisfaction, stress, and social commitment.

The four sets of factors in Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model were selected as a theoretical framework because they provided a clearly structured outline and specific identification of factors that can impact student persistence. Along with identifying factors that impact persistence, Bean and Metzner also explored the severity of impact of each factor on students.

Methodology

This phenomenological study collected qualitative data to describe and understand former ESLN students' experiences as they persisted in credit courses at a Southern California community college. In addition, the purpose of the study was to examine how student support services had an impact on their experiences in persisting in credit coursework. The researcher conducted interviews to collect detailed, in-depth data from students (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The study began by identifying the number of students who completed ESLN courses and transitioned to credit coursework in a community college, and of these students, identified how many completed two semesters of credit courses with passing grades. This group of students were identified through a review of students' academic records. These data were used to establish eligible students and invite them to participate in interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, and questions were open-ended. Gift cards were provided as compensation for participation.

Delimitations

The sample included students who completed the highest level of the ESLN program (i.e., 5th level) and a minimum of two credit semesters. The type of credit courses and the number of courses they completed were identified. The study excluded ESLN students who transitioned into another noncredit program. The study also only included ESLN students enrolled in one community college in California. In addition, the study primarily included students who self-identified as Hispanic. It is possible that students who identify with different cultures might provide different responses.

Assumptions

The researcher assumed ESLN students who transitioned to credit courses intended to complete a credit program of study rather than pursue credit coursework to enhance a skill without earning a degree. It was also assumed respondents answered all interview questions truthfully and fully understood each question.

Significance of the Study

In recent years, the California community college system increased funding for noncredit programs. In 2013, California Assembly Bill 86, Adult Basic Education Grant, increased funding for consortia and programs designated for noncredit ABE, including ESLN (Aschenbach & Young, 2016). The following year, the state increased funding rates for career development education and college preparation education, short-term academic programs, noncredit education courses, and vocationally focused education. Even though funding increased to improve noncredit programs, a study conducted by San Diego Continuing Education, sponsored by the CCCCO (2020), stated further research is needed to create better programming infrastructure to improve student success rates on a statewide level. Although previous researchers identified

barriers ESLN students have experienced, thorough examination of these barriers has not been robustly analyzed to assist students in academic success (Becker, 2011).

This study contributed to a better understanding of the needs of the ESLN population in California higher education. Study results can be used to make informed, data-driven decisions on student support services and programs available for those students on the verge of transitioning and for those who continue to be enrolled in credit courses. Currently, there is limited research and literature on the community college experiences and outcomes of ESL learners (Raufman et al., 2019). Furthermore, little research has focused solely on ESLN students and their experiences after entering their academic journey of credit coursework.

Definitions of Terms

Adult English Learners: An adult English language learner is an adult student enrolled in ESL education in community colleges, adult schools, or at 4-year institutions (Hodara, 2015).

Americanization: Americanization is immigrants' adaptability to the U.S. lifestyle and acquisition of solely English language for communication (Ovando, 2003).

Bilingualism: Bilingualism is an immigrant's ability to maintain their original culture and language while adapting to lifestyle and language of the United States (Ovando, 2003).

Credit Courses/Credit-Bearing Courses: Credit courses or credit-bearing courses are fee-based college-level or developmental education courses (Ran & Xu, 2015).

Developmental Education: Developmental education is comprised of courses recommended or required to improve skills for college-level coursework (Bailey & Cho, 2010).

English Language Learner (ELL): An English language learner is a student enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade (K–12) education whose first language is not English (August et al., 2014). Chapter 2 provides further discussion of this term and its many alternate definitions.

English as a Second Language (ESL): English as a second language courses are classes focused on reading, writing, and oral communication for students whose native language is not English (Hodara, 2012).

English as a Second Language Noncredit (ESLN): English as a second language noncredit courses assist students in English language acquisition intended for those learning English as a second language (CCCCO, 2020). ESLN courses are free at California community colleges.

Generation 1.5: Generation 1.5 is a term used to describe a group of students who have completed some years of formal elementary, middle school, or high school education in the United States in English but were born and primarily raised and educated outside of the country (Peterman, 2002).

Matriculation: Matriculation is defined as “a process that brings a college and a student who enrolls for credit into an agreement for the purpose of realizing the student’s educational objectives” (Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act, 2012, p. 91)

Noncredit: Noncredit courses are free and assist students in accomplishing personal, academic, and professional goals. These courses do not earn credit toward credential (CCCCO, 2020a).

Nontraditional Student: A nontraditional student is an adult student who does not live on campus and possibly attends college part-time (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Persistence: Persistence is when students return to a higher education institution for a second academic year (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2020).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 provided an overview of various elements of this study, identified the problem, background of the problem, and purpose of the study. Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model as the theoretical and conceptual framework that guided the study was also presented. The chapter concluded by acknowledging delimitations and assumptions while also stating the significance of the problem and defining terms.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provided an introduction of the theoretical framework that guided the study. Chapter 2 provides a literature review of the history of ABE, ESLN education, matriculation services, and previous studies on ESLN students in community colleges. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology and provides an explanation of how these methods were applied to conduct the study. Chapter 4 presents the results, and Chapter 5 provides recommendations and conclusions.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The purpose of the study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of former English as a second language noncredit (ESLN) students while they persist in credit coursework through the lens of Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model. The study specifically looked at the experiences related to academic, psychological, environmental, and background factors as identified in Bean and Metzner's model. In addition, the purpose of the study was to examine how student support services had an impact on students' experiences while they persist in credit coursework.

The literature review is organized by identifying, summarizing, and synthesizing topics relevant to the study. The chapter begins with information on the English language learner to provide data on the student population included in the study. The chapter then includes an exploration of terms that identify the adult English language learner in current scholarship. Exploring these terms helps the reader understand the student population and provide context for this study and can inform future research. History and synthesis of adult basic education (ABE) and English as a second language (ESL) adult education in the United States and California are presented to provide context and background information for the focus and significance of the study. A history of matriculation services in the United States and California is presented to reinforce the purpose of the study. An explanation of Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional undergraduate student attrition model and its use in past studies is provided to rationalize the research questions and provide a lens for data collection and analysis. This chapter ends with an analysis of the current scholarship on the ESLN student, persistence ESLN students in credit coursework, and student support services. These analyses identify gaps in the past and present literature and supported the need for this study.

English Language Learners

The English language learners (ELL) population is comprised of various cultures, ethnicities, ages, immigration statuses, languages, professional experiences, and academic goals. ELLs are children and adults with limited proficiency in the English language (USC Rossier, 2019). The ELL population has increased over the last few decades due to increased migration from countries where English is not the primary language (Batalova & Zong, 2016). The U.S. Census Bureau defines a person with English proficiency as someone who self-identifies as speaking English “very well” (Batalova & Zong, 2016, p.1). An individual who lacks English proficiency (LEP) identifies as someone who speaks English less than “very well” (Batalova & Zong, 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.), as of 2015, there were 4.8 million ELLs in the public-school system.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2021) indicated there are ELLs in every state of the country although most of them live in Western states and urban regions. California, Texas, and New York have the highest concentration of ELLs (Batalova & Zong, 2016). According to data from 2015 the majority of ELLs are Hispanic or Latino (77.8%) and the most common language spoken is Spanish. Asian students make up 11% of ELLs followed by White students who make up 6% (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

ELLs can be foreign born or U.S. citizens (Batalova & Zong, 2016). ELLs can also be refugees, the children of immigrants, or international students. According to Batalova and Zong (2016), ELLs born in the United States grow up formally learning English in schools and the community while speaking or hearing a language other than English in their households. Immigrants learn English in the workplace, communities, and schools (Batalova & Zong, 2016). Data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau (2015) and analyzed by the Migration Policy Institute

(2016) confirmed individuals who self-identified as being limited in the English language were more likely to be older immigrants; 81.7% of LEP individuals were foreign-born (Batalova & Zong, 2016).

California has the most ELLs in the country and the highest number of ELLs in its public, primary, and secondary educational systems (Bialik et al., 2018). According to the Pew Research Center (2018; as cited in Bialik et al., 2018), educational experiences vary for ELLs depending on where they reside in the country due to state policy on how these students are identified and how policy outlines student programs and services. *State Policies to Advance English Learners' Experiences and Outcomes in California's Schools* is a 2018 report published on behalf of the Policy Analysis for California Education, a California research center and written by Umansky (2018). The report examined California policies and their impact on academic outcomes of ELLs in preschool, K–12, and postsecondary learning systems. The report highlighted multiple barriers ELLs face in current educational environments. One of the first being the categorization of ELLs in three distinct educational systems (Umansky, 2018). ELLs are often grouped into one collective student population. ELLs in California are diverse in their educational strengths and needs, but state policy does not reflect these characteristics. Some of these include ELLs with diagnosed and undiagnosed disabilities, ELLs who recently arrived in the United States, and ELLs who have resided in the country long term (Umansky, 2018).

The study noted most postsecondary institutions in California do not have a procedure to identify ELLs and resources to support them (Umansky, 2018). California does not have state mandates to identify ELLs in postsecondary education nor does the state require specific educational services to be delivered. Furthermore, the report noted because ELLs are classified into a homogeneous group, they experience unequitable access to educational content that

increases likelihood of positive academic outcomes. Often, ELLs are enrolled in more classes focused on English acquisition and are more likely to take fewer college preparatory courses, and ELLs in postsecondary instruction take remedial and lower-level coursework than their counterparts (Umansky, 2018).

Terminology Used to Identify ELLs

Terms used to identify and describe English learners vary greatly in higher education scholarship in the United States. The term ELL is defined differently by researchers and organizations. The term's meaning can vary depending on student age, immigration status, and language capabilities. The terms found most often in the literature are identified and explained in this chapter to provide context for the population included in this study. The terms also assist the synthesis of current data on ESLN students and provide additional data for future studies.

ELLs are often broadly identified as a group of students formally enrolled in academic programs to improve or acquire English language skills (Raufman et al., 2019). Because English is not the primary language spoken at home, this limited use of English impacts ELLs' academic outcomes, professional opportunities, and need for additional academic support (Bergey et al., 2018). ELLs can be limited to students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade (August et al., 2014). Often, when describing English language learners, references to student's race, ethnicity, immigration status, and educational backgrounds are considered (Raufman et al., 2019). According to a panel of ELL educators, the term was adopted by the U.S. Department of Education in 2001 under the No Child Left Behind Act (Fleischer, 2017).

Limited English proficiency (LEP) refers to "anyone above the age of 5 who reported speaking English less than "very well," as classified by the U.S. Census Bureau" (Batalova &

Zong, 2016, p.1). LEPs can be immigrants or children born of immigrants that reside in the United States.

Meanwhile, adult English language learners specify students 18 years or older enrolled in ESL credit (i.e., ESL) or ESL noncredit (i.e., ESLN) education at community colleges, adult schools, or 4-year institutions (Hodara, 2015). Adult ELLs are often described as immigrants with varying academic and professional goals and experiences. Adult ELLs have diverse linguistic capabilities and characteristics and often need basic English skills preparation, making them more likely to enroll in ESL and ESLN courses (Bergey et al., 2018).

An international student specifically refers to a student on an international student visa who is enrolled in a higher learning institution in the United States (Bergey et al., 2018). International students can come to the United States with various goals, including specifically improving English, earning a postsecondary degree, or taking specific coursework without obtaining a degree (Bergey et al., 2018). International students are in the United States temporarily and often have long-term plans to return to home country (Raufman et al., 2019).

Linguists and researchers developed the term Generation 1.5 to broadly identify students who have completed some years of formal elementary, middle school, or high school education in the United States in English, but were born, partially raised, and educated outside of the country (Peterman, 2002; Roberge et al., 2009). This student population often has strong oral English skills but need support in academic English coursework (Doolan, 2010). These students often enroll in ESL or ESLN courses.

ESLN students are often identified as a subgroup of ABE. An ABE student is an adult who has not gained a secondary school diploma and has literacy levels below 9th grade reading (U.S. Department of Education: Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2013). ABE students

can be enrolled in a high school diploma program, General Education Development basic skills, and English as a second language courses to improve numeracy and literacy skills (Jacobs & Tolbert-Bynum, 2008). These programs are often provided at community centers, adult schools, or community colleges.

In reviewing terms throughout the literature, there is lack of uniformity in their use. In a 2019 policy brief released by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, the researchers acknowledged the term ELL has various definitions in published studies and among school districts throughout the nation. For example, when using the term ELL, certain researchers specify the age of the student and the academic program for which they enrolled (see August et al., 2014; National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, n.d.; Oropeza et al., 2010; Peterman, 2002) though other researchers do not (e.g., Hodara, 2015; Raufman et al., 2019). When describing adult ELLs, literature has merged ESL and ESLN students into one category (e.g., Bergey et al., 2018; Raufman et al., 2019). In other studies and publications, ESLN learners have been grouped together with ABE students (e.g., California Community College Chancellor's Office [CCCCO] 2020a; Ran and Xu, 2015).

Noncredit ABE in the United States

Prior to the formalization of noncredit ABE by the federal government in 1964, ABE was offered in various forms throughout the nation. In the 1720s, Benjamin Franklin created Juntos: weekly meetings to share and discuss current scholarship for the purpose of improving one's skill set and the surrounding community (Florida Atlantic University College of Education, n.d.). Ullman (2010) traced the beginning of ABE to the settlement house movement in the 1880s, which offered adult education to immigrants who recently arrived in the United States. During the 1900s, it was common for community organizations including churches, community centers

and social service agencies to offer literacy and numeracy skills courses to adults (Ullman, 2010; West, 2005; San Diego Continuing Education, 2017).

In the 1950s and 1960s, poverty increased throughout the United States (Bailey & Duquette, 2014). As an effort to decrease poverty and counter the lack of adult training, President Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) in 1964. Under this legislation, multiple domestic welfare programs were established, including the first federal ABE program (U.S. Department of Education: Office of Vocational and Adult Education 2013). The program aimed to improve adult literacy and numeracy skills of disadvantaged groups for a more competitive economy. State agencies were granted monies to create and manage ABE programs. In 1966, the Adult Education Act formally acknowledged ESL education as necessary to increase adult literacy and formally incorporated ESLN courses. In 1970, the act expanded to provide educational resources for ESLN learners to transition into high school completion courses. This provision was the first acknowledgment of the need for ESL learners to transition to elevated training beyond English language acquisition. Enrollments in ABE continued to grow throughout the country in multiple learning environments, including elementary, local governmental offices, and community colleges. In 1988, the Adult Education Act was revised again to increase course offerings and student support services for students.

According to Raufman et al. (2019), the Job Training and Partnership Act of 1982 and Family Support Act of 1988 focused on domestic welfare programs but provided partial monetary support for ESLN education. From the 1980s to 1990s, federal government limited its funding and creation of policies focused on adult learners (Raufman et al., 2019). The federal government sought to consolidate multiple legislative acts aimed at retraining adults and created

the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System, 2021). WIA made partial funding available for ESLN education.

Federal efforts to reduce poverty and create a competitive workforce were effective as the number of families in poverty decreased from the 1960s to 1970s (Chaudry et al., 2016). However, in the 1970s, a stagnation in salary increased poverty levels once more, and shifts in the national and global economy paired with population growth increased poverty rates inequitably among certain populations (Chaudry et al., 2016). Black adults, Hispanic adults, and adults with low education and low wages experienced higher levels of poverty. The same report noted multiple studies found adults with increased training and education beyond high school experienced increased yearly salaries by 6%–9% (Chaudry et al., 2016). In response, the federal government passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2014 (Chaudry et al., 2016) and replaced the WIA. WIOA was the first change the federal government made to ABE and adult vocational training programs in 16 years. Under Title II of WIOA, institutions were tasked with investing in program development and student support services for adult immigrant and ESLN learners (National Immigration Forum, 2017). WIOA was one of the first instances in which the federal government also required assessment of adult programs, including ESLN programs, initiating the collection of data and academic outcomes for adult workers (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System, 2021).

It is important to understand how ABE has evolved nationally because it provided context to the development of ESLN education. In 1970, the National Advisory Council on Adult Education published a report calling for greater accountability, data collection of student outcomes, and monetary support from the federal government. These concerns are still present in current scholarship. For instance, Bergey et al. (2018) pointed to the absence of a national system

in collecting academic outcomes for adult English learners in higher education as a barrier to conducting current and future research on this student population. Adult English language learners have historically been either excluded or identified as subgroups of a larger population of federal and state policies, consequently omitting or limiting data and funds for program development and student support services (Raufman et al., 2019). Furthermore, as a subgroup of ABE, ESLN data were often not divided, making the gathering and examining of ESLN student data difficult for researchers. Historically, federal and state support of ABE has allowed educational institutions to identify barriers and diverse characteristics of ELL students (Sugarman, 2016). The history of ABE also gives precedent for the current shift in focus of the federal government. This study will be addressed in upcoming sections of this chapter.

Noncredit ABE in California

California's noncredit ABE programs have grown due to the increase of population, and immigrant residents, and citizens (West, 2005). The first adult school in California was established by the San Francisco Board of Education in 1856 to assist immigrants with citizenship, elementary education, numeracy skills, and vocational training (San Diego Continuing Education, 2016). Due to immense growth in enrollment and the advocacy of ABE instructors, the San Francisco School District waived student tuition, officiating noncredit ABE that still exists in California today (West, 2005).

Throughout the early 1900s, multiple legislation and demographic changes helped to shape adult ABE in California. Increased populations and returning veterans from the First World War increased the demand for ABE in the early 1900s (San Diego Continuing Education, 2016). The California Supreme Court acknowledged adult education programs as separate from

elementary and secondary institutions and granted them their own funding that expanded instruction availability (San Diego Continuing Education, 2016).

The EOA of 1964 helped California improve and grow its ABE program. With the funds of EOA, California doubled its ABE offerings throughout the state, invested in pedagogical research, and improved established programs. In the 1970s, California's education system saw severe financial cuts with the passage of legislation causing decreased ABE offerings, drastically reducing student enrollment (San Diego Continuing Education, 2016).

In the 1980s, funding and enrollment increased once more. In 1987, California's community college chancellor's office passed the Strengthening Academic Standards policy (Menegas, 2000), which focused on better preparing incoming community college students by increasing offerings of noncredit adult basic and prerequisite courses. Data at the time indicated students needed basic skills education, and the chancellor's office deemed it an essential part of the community college mission. This policy increased the offerings of ESLN courses throughout community colleges, which lead to 20% of California community colleges to establish new ESLN courses. Although institutions added new courses, community colleges struggled to provide appropriate matriculation services (Menegas, 2000).

In the early 1990s, California continued to increase funding in ABE education and enrollment (Menegas, 2000). The state also began requiring accountability reports for ABE programs, allowing for the collection of academic outcomes of adult learners. Requiring accountability reports is a trend still present in California ABE. In the 2000s, multiple initiatives in California increased funding and refocused resources to ABE: the Basic Skills Initiative (BSI), the Adult Education Block Grant, and Career Development and College Preparation (San Diego Continuing Education, 2016).

The history of noncredit ABE in California was reviewed to provide context of the setting of the study, a Southern California community college. Due to the change in funds, there is a need to understand how existing resources can be used to increase noncredit students' success (San Diego Continuing Education, 2016). The history also helps the reader better understand the rationale for the selected research question and provides background information for student population.

Adult ESLN Education in the United States

Ullman (2010) noted settlement homes not only provided basic education to recently arrived immigrants, but they also offered ESLN courses to assist immigrants, many from European countries, including Germany and Ireland, to help with their acclimation to the United States. In the late 1880s, *bilingualism*, the idea of immigrants maintaining their original culture and language while adapting to the lifestyle and language of the United States, was heavily promoted by immigrants and generally accepted by U.S. residents (Ovando, 2003). According to Ricento (1995), a researcher of bilingual education, national attitudes and policies began to contradict bilingualism. Multiple states began adopting English as the official state language and implemented policies of English-only instruction in their public education systems (Ricento, 1995). This had an impact on the availability of ESLN courses.

In the 1890s and early 1900s, attitudes toward bilingualism began to shift and calls for Americanization—the adaptability to the American lifestyle and acquisition of solely the English language for communication—became evident in the national culture and legislation of the United States (Ovando, 2003). After World War I, anti-immigrant sentiments increased, specifically toward German immigrants (Ullman, 2010). The Bureau of Immigration and the Bureau of Naturalization were created and tasked with developing pathways to citizenship and

providing oversight to the naturalization process (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2020). These offices were established to create and promote uniformity in language and culture in immigrants and naturalized citizens (Ovando, 2003). One of the requirements was all immigrant applicants be able to speak English. In 1918, the Bureau of Naturalization and the Bureau of Education provided federal funds to help immigrants learn English. With these funds, school districts and chambers of commerce expanded the availability of ESL education to adults (Ullman, 2010). The promotion of monolingualism continued to grow after World War I, and it heightened again during the beginning of World War II.

Sentiments toward ESL adult education shifted once more during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Bilingual education gained federal and state support via legislation and funding, and the Bilingual Education Act was passed in 1968 (Center for Applied Linguistics, n.d.; Ricento, 1995). In the 1980s, another strong shift toward Americanization began, limiting the policy focus on ESLN adult education (Ricento, 1995).

Federal and state policies established throughout U.S. history have impacted adult ESLN learners and ESLN education. The lack of funding has greatly impacted learners through limited accessibility and resources. Researcher and professor Eyring (2014) explained the limited funding of ESLN programs forced institutions to reduce offerings or combine multiple levels into one course, which resulted in decreased student engagement, attendance, learning, and completion. This history of adult ESLN provides background information needed to better understand the established research questions and purpose of the study.

Adult ESLN Education in California

ESLN courses were offered starting in the late 1800s, specifically to Chinese and Irish immigrants. Just as ABE education expanded in the following decades, so did ESLN education

in California. After the First World War, California experienced an increase of immigrant arrivals, and ESLN education expanded outside of major cities and into rural areas of the state (West, 2005). In the 1950s, California had limited federal funding and used federal and state taxes to fund its ABE and ESLN programs, which reduced the number of offerings. In the mid-1960s, with the passage of the federal Economic Opportunity Act, California had the funds to explore pedagogical practices to improve the quality of ESLN programs and retention of ESLN students (West, 2005). This led to the development of vocational English as a second language courses, English courses with an emphasis on vocational training. The EOA and research in pedagogy diversified the curriculum for adult ELL learners (West, 2005).

After the Vietnam War, California had an increase of immigrants from Vietnam and other Asian countries. In the 1980s, the demand for ESLN instruction tripled due to the changing demographics of the state (West, 2005). Increased migration from Mexico and Asia caused a greater demand for ESLN instruction (West, 2005). After the passage of the Adult Education Act of 1991, the California Department of Education released the ESL implementing effective adult education programs that provided a guide to develop and evaluate ESLN programs throughout the state (West, 2005).

It is relevant to understand the history of ESLN education in California because this study's setting is at a southern California community college. The increase and decrease of funding impacted the student population and potential data to gather in this study. Furthermore, the fluctuations of funding have impacted the data currently available (San Diego Continuing Education, 2016).

Student Support Services in Higher Education in the United States

A brief history of student support services is provided to give context to the research questions and selection of conceptual and theoretical frameworks. There are multiple terms found in higher education scholarship to describe the departments that assist students with educational matters outside of the classroom, including student affairs, student support services, and student personnel services.

Prior to the 1900s, instructional faculty in higher education often assisted students with academic matters outside of the classroom including acclimation, navigation of institutional processes, and students' well-being (Doyle, 2004). As the number of higher education institutions increased throughout the United States, student populations diversified, institutional processes became more complex, and new services became readily available. Institutions hired personnel to assist students with matters outside of the classroom. After World War I, student support personnel were present in most higher institutions (Doyle, 2004). In 1937, the American Council of Education published a report called *The Student Personnel Point of View*, which argued institutions must educate students both in and outside of the classroom. This approach focused on students' overall well-being. The report argued student support services also help to develop physical, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of students (Long, 2012). In 1949, the American Council of Education described areas comprehensive student support services programs should offer. Some of these areas include, but are not limited to, admissions and records, financial aid, orientation, assessment, and registration (Williamson, 1961). These programs are still considered components of student support services departments (Long, 2012).

Under the Higher Education Act of 1965, the federal government established the Student Support Services Program (SSSP). The program's goal was to increase retention and persistence

of disadvantaged students through matriculation services, including academic tutoring, academic advising, financial aid assistance, and counseling services (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2016). Currently, there are more than 1,000 SSSP programs throughout the United States. A report conducted by the U.S. Department of Education found students who participate in SSSP are more likely to complete more units and complete a degree than students who do not receive these services (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2016).

It is important to present the history of student support services because it provides historical context for the student support services former adult ESLN students included in this study will receive. Although federal funding has been made available for student support services, there are limited funding and policies focused on student support services for adult ELLs continuing into higher education (Raufman et al., 2019). Moreover, lack of policy makes it difficult to gather data on student support services offered to ESLN students, further supporting the need for this study.

Student Support Services in Higher Education in California

Community colleges serve diverse groups of students with varied educational needs. Limited student persistence and program completion rates drew concern from the Board of Governors in the 1970s. In 1979, a taskforce created by the Board of Governors published a report stating comprehensive student support services were necessary to guide students in program completion at community colleges (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges [ASCCC], 1993). The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC; 2019) echoed these findings and reiterated the personal and academic issues experienced by the community college student counseling faculty and student support services staff must address. With an increasingly diversified student population and continued growth enrollment, it became

evident appropriate counseling was increasingly important (ASCCC, 1993). In 1986, the Seymour-Campbell Matriculation Act was established to address emerging issues of equity, access, and student success through matriculation. The Campbell Matriculation Act identified matriculation services community colleges must provide all students (Menegas, 2000). Matriculation is defined as “a process that brings a college and a student who enrolls for credit into an agreement for the purpose of realizing the student’s educational objectives” (A.B. 705 2017, p. 91). A report examining the implementation of the Seymour-Campbell Act of 1986 conducted by the Chancellor’s Office Matriculation Unit in 1991 found the established matriculation services improved academic performance and persistence of students, specifically for students whose first language was not English (Menegas, 2000). In 1998, California began providing funding for noncredit matriculation services (Columbia College, 2014). Funding for noncredit services was eliminated in the 2008–2009 academic year. From the early 1990s to 2013–2014 academic year, California increased (1997–2001, 2006–2009, 2013–2014) and decreased (2002–2006, 2009–2012) funding for matriculation services (Columbia College, 2014).

In 2012, the Seymour-Campbell Act was revised and funding increased. The act renamed matriculation as SSSP and provided direct funding to community colleges for providing students orientation, assessment, counseling, advising, and other education planning services that assist students in completing academic programs (Columbia College, 2014). In the following academic year, 2013–2014, SSSP funds were specifically allocated for noncredit students, including ESLN. This is one of the few state programs that mandated noncredit students be provided services in persisting and transitioning. Additionally, the funding for noncredit students allowed California to start gathering data on this under researched student population.

Along with mandating student support services, the California legislature passed Assembly Bill 705 in 2017. This bill states community colleges must maximize a student's probability of completing college-level English and math in the first year of enrollment, thus eliminating entry assessment tests and many prerequisite courses (California Community College Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], 2018). Community college counselors must use the following types of assessments to advise students: "student's study skills, English language proficiency, computational skills, aptitudes, goals, learning skills, career aspirations, academic performance, and need for special services" (Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act, 2017, p. 91).

It is important to review student support services in California because the discussion of services provides context to the type of services students included in this study can receive. The history also provides context for the rationale behind the research questions. Furthermore, reviewing the history of state legislation focused on student support services assists the reader to understand the purpose for this study and rationale for selecting research questions.

Studies on Student Support Services in Community Colleges

The following section is a literature review of studies conducted on student support services in community colleges in the United States.

Guthrie-Clarkson (2018)

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore which student support services participants found most helpful in completing their degree. The study focused on English and math tutoring, financial aid, and student support services (Guthrie-Clarkson, 2018). Participants were former or current nontraditional students at a community college over the age of 24. Eight participants completed semi-structured interviews.

All participants concluded student support services were critical in their progress of completing their degrees. The most reoccurring theme that emerged in the results was the lack of availability of student support services for the nontraditional students that served as participants (Guthrie-Clarkson, 2018). Counseling, financial aid, and tutoring services were perceived by participants as inconvenient due to location, inflexible business hours, and face-to-face interactions (Guthrie-Clarkson, 2018).

The study included formerly enrolled students; it is possible that the availability and quality of services had changed since their dates of attendance. Additionally, some of the participants were current community college students while others were in masters and doctorate programs. These varied educational experiences could have impacted their responses.

Spriggs (2018)

This phenomenological study explored participants' perceptions of how they were able to be successful and how student support services contributed to their academic success. Participants were low-income community college students in North Carolina 6 months away from completing a program of study (Spriggs, 2018). Eight eligible students participated in two interviews. In the first interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and intended to develop a comfortable environment. The second interview was in-depth and focused on the research questions (Spriggs, 2018).

Three major themes surfaced in the findings in relation to what helped students' progress and complete: the experience of being low-income, the importance of supportive relationships, and institutional support systems (Spriggs, 2018). The researcher also identified eight sub-themes, "limited choices; self-motivation and self-determination; work ethic; self-doubt and fear; family support; peer support; faculty and staff support; the positive impact of institutional

support; and the negative impact of lack of institutional support” (Spriggs, 2018, p.143). The participants expressed their reliance on institutional supports, especially counseling and financial aid, to help with their completion.

As noted by the researcher, much of the data collected focused primarily on the participants’ experiences as low-income students. In-depth analysis could have been more constructive if the researcher narrowed the research questions. In the analysis, it was also revealed participants were not aware of all the student support services available, potentially impacting results.

Theoretical Framework

According to Roberts and Hyatt (2019), a theoretical framework can be described as, “a discussion about related concepts, assumptions and generalizations” (p. 105). A theoretical framework gives the study structure and clearly provides guidelines for the organization of the study (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Grant and Osanloo (2014) explained the theory, “provides a lens from which one’s thinking on the problem and analysis of the data” (p.15). Bean and Metzner’s (1985) nontraditional student attrition model was the theoretical framework for this study because of the consideration the theory has for unique barriers nontraditional students experience in their persistence in undergraduate studies. The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of former ESLN students currently enrolled in credit coursework. The theory aligned very closely to the purpose of the study and background information of the problem. Bean and Metzner’s nontraditional student attrition model was used to interpret the data.

Bean and Metzner’s (1985) nontraditional student attrition model states nontraditional students’ experience multiple dynamics traditional students do not when enrolling and persisting in higher education. Bean and Metzner further note a nontraditional student’s decision to

withdraw or continue with their higher education is determined by their level of social integration and various other factors not related to the institution. According to the theory, there are four sets of factors that can impact nontraditional adult learners' persistence: academic, environmental, background and defining factors, and psychological outcomes. Some of these factors have a direct impact on student attrition, including background and environmental factors; other factors have an indirect impact, such as academic factors. Detailed information on each dimension is provided under the conceptual framework portion of the literature review. Bean and Metzner stated nontraditional students are diverse in age, enrollment status, goals, and needs and could not easily be generalized into one large group, the ESLN student population fits this description.

Educational researchers began to formally study student attrition in the 1960s (Summers, 2003). Multiple theoretical frameworks emerged during this era of research. Rather than focusing on individual student attributes and skill sets, these studies analyzed the systemic relationship between students and educational institutions (Aljohani, 2016). According to Summers (2003), theories most applicable to adult attrition in community colleges include the undergraduate dropout process model developed by Spady (1970), Tinto's (1975) institutional departure model, and the nontraditional undergraduate student attrition model developed by Bean and Metzner (1985).

Spady's (1970) theoretical model states students' social interactions, specifically the fostered relationship between the student and the environments created by the postsecondary institution, determine their decisions to either progress in their education or withdraw (Aljohani, 2016; Spady, 1970). Spady developed his theory from Durkheim's (1951) theory of suicide which states individuals less socially integrated are more likely to commit suicide (Durkheim,

1951). Spady theorized factors that increased likelihood of suicide could also increase likelihood of student attrition. Multiple factors can contribute to persistence including grade performance, intellectual development, normative congruence, and social integration (Summers, 2003). A combination of these variables allows students to develop quality relationships with the institution. Student satisfaction with these relationships can impact persistence (Aljohani, 2016).

Tinto (1975) built upon Spady's (1970) idea of student relationships and interactions as a factor in student dropouts in the institutional departure model theory. Although Tinto agreed students' relationships with institutional services and environments was a deciding factor to attrition, Tinto asserted the breadth and depth of these relationships between students and institutional systems impacts an individual's decision to continue (Aljohani, 2016); students must feel integrated into both academic and social life of the institution over a long period of time (Summers, 2003).

Bean and Metzner (1985) built upon the theories of Spady (1970) and Tinto (1975) to develop the nontraditional undergraduate student attrition model. Bean and Metzner stated although there were well-documented theories explaining student attrition, there was limited research focused on older nontraditional commuter students. Bean and Metzner agreed social integration is a determining factor in student attrition for nontraditional students, but they also recognized nontraditional students do not have the same opportunities to socialize with the institution as a traditional student (Summers, 2003). Nontraditional students are those who do not live on campus and who commute, and experience what Bean and Metzner describe as environmental pressures that minimize social integration with institutional environments including, but not limited to: peers, faculty, extracurricular activities, and student support services. Nontraditional students can be part-time, full-time, or older students who have greater

interactions with their external or environmental pressures. These environmental factors include family obligations, commuting, work, and other factors not associated with the institution (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Therefore, Bean and Metzner concluded socialization was important but not at the depth Spady and Tinto determined it was. Through literature reviews, the researchers determined nontraditional student's decision to persist or withdraw is based on social integration and other factors including academic, psychological, environmental, and background factors (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Four Dimensions of Model

According to Grant and Osanloo (2014) the conceptual framework explains the relationship between different factors and outlines the specific direction the researcher will take in investigating the research questions. The four dimensions of Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model served as the lens for exploring the study's purpose, the data that was collected and analyzed, and the way findings were organized and presented.

The first dimension of Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition is academic. Bean and Metzner stated, "students with poor academic performance are expected to drop out at higher rates than students who perform well, and GPA is expected to be based on past academic performance" (p. 490). The academic factors, which include student study habits, skills, academic advising, course availability, absenteeism, and program of study uncertainty, have an indirect impact on grade point average. Grade point average has an indirect impact on psychological satisfaction and outcomes that ultimately lead to student persistence or attrition. Due to the limited interaction nontraditional students have with the institution, academic factors are the primary way students integrate into a postsecondary institution (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

The second dimension is described as psychological outcomes (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Psychological outcomes can include utility, satisfaction, stress, and goal commitment. Psychological outcomes have an indirect impact on a student's decision to leave and are a result of academic and environmental factors. Furthermore, these psychological outcomes may have an impact on the other sets of factors, including background and environmental factors. Stress can increase a student's desire to drop out and utility, satisfaction, and goal commitment can increase the probability a student will persist (Bean & Metzner, 1985). The authors explained a student's intent to leave is influenced by the student's psychological outcomes and academic factors.

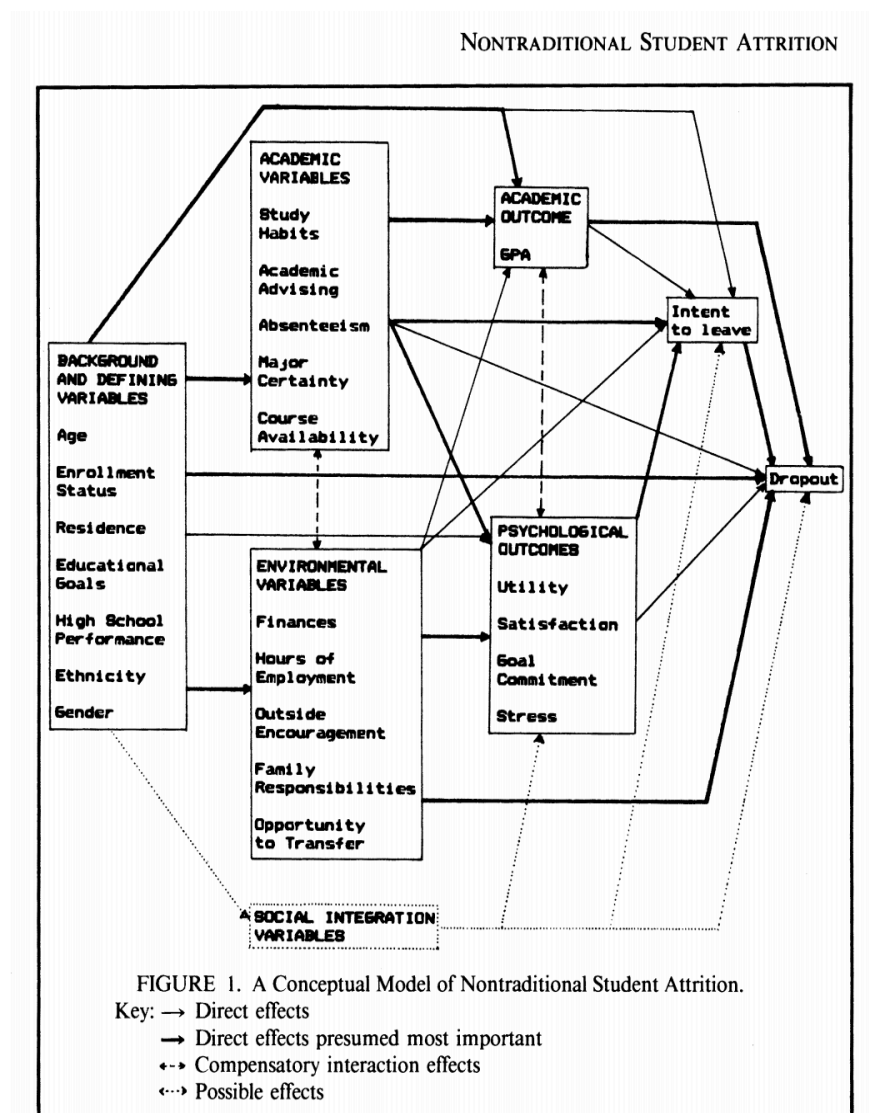
The third set of factors are described as background and defining factors. Defining factors are specifically identified as age, enrollment status, and residence (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Bean and Metzner stated age is not a direct or major factor itself, but some of the responsibilities correlated with age like familial responsibilities and employment can impact attrition (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Enrollment status is defined as the number of academic credits in which the student is enrolled. In their review of scholarship, Bean and Metzner found students who were enrolled part-time were more likely to withdraw from school when compared to full-time students. Because nontraditional students tend to be older and have responsibilities, they are more likely to be part-time (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

The fourth dimension of the model are environmental factors outside of a student's education over which the institution has little or no control. Bean and Metzner (1985) stated environmental factors are more important than academic variables and have greater impact on attrition. Environmental factors have a "substantial direct effect on dropout decisions" (p.490).

Environmental factors include finances, weekly work hours, family responsibilities, outside encouragement, and available transfer opportunities.

Figure 1

Bean and Metzner's (1985) Conceptual Model of Nontraditional Student



Note. Figure from A Conceptual Model of Nontraditional Undergraduate Student Attrition (p. 491), by J. P. Bean and B. Metzner, 1985, "Review of Educational Research", 55(4), 485–540. Copyright 1985 by SAGE Publications.

Nontraditional Student Attritional Model in Studies

According to a literature review on theoretical models applicable to community college students conducted by Summers (2003), Bean and Metzner's (1985) theoretical model was identified as one of the top theoretical models used to research student attrition in community colleges throughout the United States. The National Center for Educational Statistics (n.d.) has also used Bean and Metzner's definition of nontraditional students and factors created by authors to collect and study data on undergraduate attrition in the United States. Summers noted researchers can choose to incorporate all four sets of factors or can isolate their study to focus on only certain ones. Although the four sets of factors can impact one another, Bean and Metzner determined academic factors and environmental factors have stronger impact on one another and ultimately on a student's decision to withdraw from their education (Summers, 2003). If environmental factors have a positive influence on a student, they have the capacity to motivate a student to remain in school even if the grade point average is low. Oppositely, if environmental factors have a negative influence on the student, even if they have a high GPA and positive academic experiences, the student is likely to withdraw from coursework (Summers, 2003). Tinto (2016) explained *persistence* is students' ability to overcome challenges or barriers they encounter in pursuit of obtaining their degrees. Therefore, institutions must seek to understand students' experiences and develop actions that increase persistence and retention. Tinto argued institutions must take early action to understand challenges that arise academically and socially for students. Below are previous studies on college students that have utilized Bean and Metzner's model as a framework.

Barnhart (2011)

This quantitative study utilized secondary data analysis to investigate how academic and social integration impacts the persistence of military veterans at community colleges. The researcher used the beginning postsecondary student longitudinal survey from the National Center for Education Statistics (Barnhart, 2011). A follow-up beginning postsecondary student longitudinal survey was conducted to examine persistence 3 years later. Results from veterans and nonveterans were compared when addressing certain factors of the model.

The overall findings indicated there is not a strong relationship between academic integration, social integration, and persistence for veteran community college students (Barnhart, 2011). Other major findings of the study included: students who persisted were younger and enrolled as full-time students; and in comparison, to non-veterans, veteran students are more likely to withdraw due to family reasons and less likely to withdraw due to academic problems (Barnhart, 2011). The researcher also found family responsibilities had a similar impact on persistence for veterans and non-veterans (Barnhart, 2011). The study's findings also demonstrated lack of social integration did not have a strong impact on veteran persistence. (Barnhart, 2011).

The researcher also examined certain factors of Bean and Metzner's (1985) model and their impact on persistence. The researcher found the following factors impacted persistence: academic integration, employment, enrollment status, degree expectation, and race. (Barnhart, 2011). On the other hand, age, gender, major certainty, social integration, and veteran status, "were not significant factors" (Barnhart, 2011, p. 128).

Barnhart did not use all the factors described in Bean and Metzner's (1985) model. The researcher acknowledged this limited the study. Lastly, the researcher confirmed a study using

all factors of the model should be conducted to better understand persistence of veteran community college students. The researcher alluded to the difficulty of assessing each factor and dimension of each Bean and Metzner's model and calls for future in-depth analysis of the following factors: psychological outcomes, academic preparedness, major certainty and enrollment status.

James (2013)

The quantitative study used Bean and Metzner's (1985) model as a framework to investigate part-time students' perceptions of the factors most impactful on persistence. The researcher also investigated if there was any correlation between these perceptions and their age and gender. The study was conducted at a liberal arts college and undergraduate students served as participants. Convenience sampling was used to select 38 participants to complete an online Likert scale survey. The results of the study were used to develop and implement an orientation for adult evening learners at the institution. The study included nontraditional students enrolled in evening and off-site locations, which had a potential impact on responses (James, 2013).

The findings indicated participants thought institutional factors were more impactful in retaining students than environmental factors. Findings also revealed there was no correlation between age, gender, and the perceptions of institutional, situational, and dispositional factors (James, 2013). The researcher used these results to develop and implement an evening orientation for nontraditional students. The orientation material focused on institutional student support services that survey participants found most helpful and had a stronger, positive relationship with retention (James, 2013). One week after the orientation was completed, participants were going to complete an evaluation. The evaluations were not included in the published dissertation. This study could have been more informative if the findings of student

evaluations were included and if retention rates were examined after the orientation was completed.

Reed (2013)

The phenomenological study explored the perceptions of nontraditional community college students on their ability to persist in their coursework while overcoming multiple barriers at a Texas community college. In her dissertation, the researcher used the Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model as a theoretical framework to develop research questions and interpret data (Reed, 2013). The study also utilized Levin's (2007) *Nontraditional Students and Community Colleges: The Conflict of Justice and Neoliberalism* publication to categorize participants as either minimal, moderate, high, or ultra-high risk of dropping out of school. The researcher used semi-structured questions to interview 12 participants over a 3-week period (Reed, 2013). Participants identified positive and negative experiences that influenced persistence.

According to the researcher, some of the study's findings supported Bean and Metzner's (1985) theory, while others varied. Reed (2013) stated, "Bean and Metzner (1985) believed that environmental and academic factors possessed the ability to counteract the effects of background and social integration factors which was also found to be consistent with the results in the current study" (p. 108). Students were more impacted by environmental factors than by social integration. Reed also concluded social integration could influence psychological outcomes which consequently increased persistence. The results also indicated positive academic experiences could compensate for negative psychological or environmental experiences, which differs from Bean and Metzner's theory (Reed, 2013).

The study was conducted at a large community college and participants were recruited using purposeful sampling. It was not specified whether the study included credit or noncredit students, part-time, or full-time students. The study also incorporated a second theoretical framework which could have impacted the development of questions and interpretation of data.

Ydoyaga (2015)

The purpose of the quantitative study was to identify background and academic factors that indicate student persistence in credit coursework in health-related programs at a community college. The researcher used Bean and Metzner's (1985) model as a theoretical framework and descriptive statistics to review 512 transcripts of participants completing pre-requisite courses for health-related programs of study (Ydoyaga, 2015). The researcher utilized the following factors identified in Bean and Metzner's model: age, participation in advising, program completion, cumulative and program GPA, completed credit hours, financial aid, gender, and major (Ydoyaga, 2015). The researcher found multiple factors positively impacted student persistence including overall grade point average, program grade point average, and receiving financial aid. According to Ydoyaga (2015), grades were the strongest indicator of student persistence.

Hancock (2018)

The purpose of the quantitative, correlational study was to see if there was a relationship between students' perceptions of the quality of online instruction and persistence at a fully online institution. The researcher examined newly enrolled students' perceptions of instructor presence, involvement, and competencies in an online course (Hancock, 2018). The researcher used Tinto's (1975) institutional departure model, Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model, and Moore's (1997) transactional distance theory model as frameworks to develop research questions and collect data (Hancock, 2018).

The researcher used an electronic survey to ask participants questions on instructor presence, involvement, and competencies. The researcher found there was, “not enough variation in the responses to show a correlation or prediction between the variables, except between teaching presence and the students’ intent to persist” (Hancock, 2018, p. 180). The researcher concluded environmental factors had a greater impact on student persistence than academic variables. Although Bean and Metzner’s (1985) model is intended for nontraditional students, the researcher did not confirm if nontraditional students were included in the study. The researcher also only addressed components of the academic factors in the study survey and results.

Most of the studies reviewed used Bean and Metzner’s (1985) nontraditional student attrition model as a theoretical framework in quantitative studies (Barnhart, 2011; Bynum, 2000; Hancock, 2018; James, 2013; Ydoyaga, 2015). Nonetheless, it was an appropriate framework to utilize in a phenomenological study for multiple reasons. Using this theory as a framework was an effective way to identify barriers for participants to discuss. The theory takes into consideration multiples factors faced by ESLN students (Batalova & Zong, 2016; Bergey et al., 2018; Chisman & Crandall, 2007; Spurling et al., 2008; Vinogradov, 2016). By using this framework to establish interview questions, participants had the opportunity to individually discuss barriers. Findings from this study will contribute in more detail to the established research on barriers experienced by ESLN students.

Additionally, the clear identification of factors allowed for organization of themes and identification of codes. Although there was research on the barriers ESLN students face, there was need for a more detailed understanding of how the barriers impact students’ experiences in credit coursework and persistence. Presented next is a literature review of studies conducted on ESLN students.

ESLN Students

Janis (2012)

In this qualitative study, the researcher conducted interviews with community college administrators, faculty, and students enrolled in credit ESL coursework. Participants of the study were ESL credit students progressing through ESL coursework and were at least 30 years old. The researcher applied two theoretical frameworks to examine how students' past experiences helped them acclimate to the community college and if, in turn, the community college served as an aid or barrier in helping students meet their personal and academic goals and gain social and economic mobility. The first theory used was Lamphere's (1992) mediating institution's theory which stated institutions, like community colleges, exert their authorities on individuals differently (Janis, 2012; Lamphere, 1992). The second theory used was Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital theory which explains that students who have social resources like formal education, wealth, and skills are better able to attain social mobility.

Multiple themes emerged from the study. Participants identified the following barriers: responsibilities associated with older age, family responsibilities, lack of social interaction with the community college experience, and lack of knowledge of student support services (Janis, 2012). Helpful resources in meeting student goals were identified, including supportive family, positive experiences with instructors and staff, and established goals. The researcher ultimately could not determine if the community college was helpful or not in students in their search for social and academic mobility.

The study focused on students currently enrolled in ESL credit and other credit coursework. Additionally, participants varied in the amount of course completed; some just

started their degree while others were almost close to finishing. The study also focused exclusively on older immigrant students enrolled part-time.

Lansangan-Sabangan (2019)

The purpose of the mixed-methods study was to understand the goals, needs, and experiences of adult ELLs at a community college in New Jersey. The researcher also sought to understand if students felt the college was meeting their needs and the students' perceptions of the ESLN program. The researcher used a Likert scale survey and semi-structured interviews to collect data on intermediate and upper-level students enrolled in a 7-week summer semester. There were 20 student participants who were 18 years old or older. They were enrolled in a variety of academic programs including ESLN, ESL credit, and credit coursework focused on their specific major (Lansangan-Sabangan, 2019).

One of the major findings was students chose the ESLN program at the community college due to affordability, convenience, and family recommendations (Lansangan-Sabangan, 2019). Students reported positive experiences with the ESLN program including friendships developed with classmates and positive interactions with instructors. The researcher also stated the greatest need identified by students was increased courses in speaking and listening in English (Lansangan-Sabangan, 2019).

Findings also demonstrated most students enrolled in ESLN identified multiple barriers to persistence and completion including work schedules, transportation, finances, instructors, and health issues (Lansangan-Sabangan, 2019). The researcher found the most significant barriers students perceived to their persistence were issues with academics. Students felt lack of advising upon starting and continuing in the program, clear course pathways, and noncredit coursework alignment with credit coursework as major barriers (Lansangan-Sabangan, 2019). Students also

reported lack of clarity on assessment and placement as another barrier. This proposed study addresses certain barriers not addressed in other studies on ESLN students: first, student's health as a barrier, and second, student support services and academic pathways for ESLN courses.

Proulx (2018)

The phenomenological study examined the perceptions of adult immigrant students enrolled in a community on their experiences of adapting to U.S. society. The study consisted of two semi-structured interviews conducted with six participants. The first interview explored participants' experiences with adult basic education and immigration. The second interview focused on how participants' experiences in the adult basic education (ABE) program impacted, "self-identity, relations and future plans" (Proulx, 2018, p. 49).

Four themes emerged in the findings: English as a critical factor their success and acclimation in U.S. society, friendly experiences with people in the United States fostering a sense of acceptance and respect, the United States being viewed as an opportunity to improve quality of life, and the perceived importance of the ABE program in their success (Proulx, 2018). In the analysis of the findings, the researcher stated the varied experiences of participants allowed her to realize the broad span of the needs of adult immigrant students (Proulx, 2018). As an example, the researcher stated although some participants had work experience and college degrees from foreign countries, it was difficult for them to find employment in the United States (Proulx, 2018). The researcher did also state the importance of immigration and the impact it had on participants, and potentially, other adult ELL learners (Proulx, 2018).

ESLN Students Transitioning to Credit Courses

Becker (2011)

In 2011, a phenomenological study was conducted in a Southern California community college to understand the lived experiences of ESLN students transitioning to credit coursework (Becker, 2011). The researcher interviewed 17 participants from a bridge program that helped ESLN students transition into credit coursework. The two-semester summer bridge program provided students with institutional student services, including additional ESL curriculum, life and career planning advising, and computer literacy courses. With these institutional supports, 27% of participants successfully transitioned into credit coursework and completed a 1-credit course (Becker, 2011). The researcher concluded having access to services is not enough to help transition; adult immigrant learners have unique personal issues including financial hardships, immigration issues, and lack of understanding of the higher education system that prevent them from persisting. Becker (2011) stated barriers experienced by students must be better analyzed to help ESLN students succeed.

The study exclusively focused on the initial transition from ESLN to credit coursework. The study also did not indicate how many of the transitioned students completed their first semester of credit coursework. The study focused more on the student's sense of self-identification and its impact on persistence.

Csepelyi (2012)

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of ELL learners transitioning from an ABE program to a community college by specifically exploring how academic cultures differed between programs and which support and services were most helpful in their transition. The researcher first conducted focus groups with 10

students who had completed the ESLN along with a specialized course intended to help students transition to credit. Participants also completed one semester of credit coursework. The researcher then completed follow-up individual interviews with three of the focus group participants who had the longest academic goal and who had completed the most credit coursework (Csepelyi, 2012).

When exploring differences and similarities between ABE and ESLN, five themes emerged: location, funds, instructors, qualifications, and salaries (Csepelyi, 2012). Additionally, when addressing factors that contributed to their academic success, participants identified the transition class and instructor as helpful. The individual interviews provided detailed information on individual goals and financial aid.

This study specifically focused on the transition of ESLN students to credit coursework. Results confirmed the absence of student support services and counseling available to students in their transition to credit (Csepelyi, 2012). Completion of this individualized course could have an impact on the response's participants provided.

Institute of Education Sciences (2019)

Principal investigator Edgecombe, researcher with the Teachers College at Columbia University, is conducting a national mixed-methods study to better understand the barriers adult English learners face and how instructional and student support services assist this student population (Institute of Education Sciences, 2019). The study examines how community colleges policies and practices impact the academic outcomes of adult ELLs. Some of the institutional practices examined include student support services, enrollment procedures and other “program-level malleable factors” (Institute of Education Sciences, 2019, para. 1). The study began in 2019 will be finalized in 2023.

Beam et al. (2019)

In 2019, the Research and Planning Group, a nonprofit research organization focused on researching community college topics, conducted a mixed-methods study focused on the transition and persistence of noncredit English language learners to inform best practices on placement, curriculum, and student support services for California community colleges (Beam et al., 2019). Researchers used quantitative data from a placement test and interviews at 10 California community colleges with the highest transition rates of ESLN students. The study found quantitative data were not helpful in predicting the transition of ESLN students because so few students made the initial transition to credit coursework. Less than 1% of students starting in ESLN enrolled in a transfer-level English course in the span of 3 years (Beam et al., 2019) although ESLN students who enrolled in credit English or ESL courses did increase the probability of a student completing transfer-level English. Data demonstrated students who started in a higher level of ESLN instruction were more likely to enroll in ESL and transfer-level English (Beam et al., 2019).

The qualitative data revealed seven themes, five of them focused on best practices in bridging ESL and ESLN programs and ESL curriculum. Two themes focused on counseling and student support services to increase persistence and transition rates of ESL and ESLN students. The 10 community colleges with comprehensive student support services had higher transitions to credit rates. However, the study's focus was only on ESLN student transition to credit ESL and transfer-level English, and it excluded credit coursework of other subjects. This study excluded ESLN students who transitioned and persisted in vocationally focused credit coursework. Additionally, qualitative data were collected via interviews with administrators,

faculty, and support staff; students' input was not collected. Therefore, this study did not explore the lived experiences of the study's population.

Spurling et al. (2008)

In 2010, the City College of San Francisco conducted a longitudinal study that evaluated the progress of credit and noncredit ESL courses into credit course completion (Spurling et al., 2008). Newly enrolled students in the 1998, 1999, and 2000 academic years were evaluated for seven academic years. The study's focus was primarily on the initial transition of noncredit ESL students to credit coursework, educational gains, and their persistence in comparison to credit ESL learners (Spurling et al., 2008). The study found students who completed higher level noncredit classes were more likely to transition into credit classes. One of the major findings of the study was out of the three cohorts of noncredit students who transitioned to credit, only 8% earned a credit certificate or degree within 7 years (Spurling et al., 2008).

The researchers of this study primarily focused on the persistence rates of ESLN students in the ESLN program; the primary focus of the study was not on the transition and persistence of former ESLN students in credit courses. Additionally, the researchers did not explore why students did not persist in their noncredit courses nor why they did not transition into credit coursework. The researchers gathered and analyzed quantitative data from enrollment patterns and transcripts; they did not gather data from students.

Raufman et al. (2019)

In 2019, the Community College Research Center published an extensive literature review of 231 studies and articles conducted after 2001 on ELLs and ESL programs in community colleges (Raufman et al., 2019). The review included ESLN students and ESL learners. The researchers found many studies focused on data pertaining to K–12 and ESL

learners at 4-year universities; limited data were available on ESL and ESLN students enrolled in community college. Furthermore, federal and state policies do not distinguish between ESL and ESLN. Therefore, ESLN is often excluded from the policy review and funding. This research helps underscore the need for additional research specific to ESLN.

Conclusion

Data demonstrated adult ELL students are more likely to attend a community college over a 4-year institution due to its open access enrollment and low costs (Hodara, 2015), yet there is limited research on the adult language learner in higher education, including community colleges; most of the available research focused on instruction programming and teaching strategies for ESL learners who were children (Hodara, 2015). Additionally, ESLN students were often combined with other student populations. Furthermore, the limited studies that focused on ESLN did not explore nonacademic factors that impacted student persistence in higher education (Oropeza et al., 2010).

The American Institute of Research (2018) (Bergey et al., 2018) published a report, *Supporting English Learners in Higher Education*, which stated to increase retention and the academic outcomes of ELLs, their individual experiences can help develop resources and services (Bergey et al., 2018). In 2019, the Office of English Language Acquisition published a statement indicating more research must be conducted on English language learners between the ages of 24–30 to better understand students' characteristics, employment trajectories, and the collection of data. This research could help program development throughout all educational systems in the United States (Velez et al., 2016). This study sought to contribute to the limited body of research focused solely on ESLN students.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of former English as a second language noncredit (ESLN) students while they persist in credit coursework through the lens of Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model. The study specifically looked at the experiences related to academic, psychological, environmental, and background factors as identified in Bean and Metzner's model. In addition, the purpose of the study was to examine how student support services had an impact on students' experiences while they persist in credit coursework.

Research Questions

The overarching question that guided the study was: How do former ESLN students perceive the impact of academic, psychological, environmental, and background factors, as defined by Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model in their experiences while they persist in credit coursework?

The research questions guiding this study are:

- Research Question 1: How do academic factors impact former ESLN students' persistence in credit coursework?
- Research Question 2: How do psychological factors impact former ESLN students' persistence in credit coursework?
- Research Question 3: How do environmental factors impact former ESLN students' persistence in credit coursework?
- Research Question 4: How do background factors impact former ESLN students' persistence in credit coursework?

- Research Question 5: How do student support services impact former ESLN students' persistence in credit coursework?

Theoretical Framework

The nontraditional undergraduate student attrition model developed by Bean and Metzner (1985) was used as a theoretical framework for this study. The theory states a nontraditional student's decision to withdraw or continue with higher education is determined by their level of social integration and the institutional and environmental factors in their personal lives. According to this theory, there are four sets of factors that can impact a nontraditional student's persistence: academic, environmental, psychological, and background and environmental factors (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Research Design

This was a phenomenological study. The researcher sought to understand and describe the experiences of former ESLN students in their persistence of credit coursework. Qualitative data were collected via interviews with semi-structured, open-ended questions. The interviews provided insight into students' lived experiences and allowed students to describe experiences and factors they perceive most impactful to their persistence (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).

This study is best described as qualitative because the researcher served as the primary research instrument. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews to record, gather, and interpret data (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Additionally, the researcher was in the natural setting where participants experience phenomenon (Creswell, 2020). Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, students were required to use Zoom, an electronic video platform, to participate in lectures and additional coursework. The researcher used this platform to conduct the interviews. Furthermore, the researcher engaged in what Lochmiller and Lester (2017) describe as

naturalistic inquiry, which is investigation that is naturally forming. Although there were established interview questions, the researcher allowed the discussion to move in a natural direction (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).

A qualitative approach was the best fit for this study because it did not seek to establish generalizability, but rather provide specific and rich descriptions (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017) of ESLN students' persistence into credit coursework. A *phenomenological study* is described as a line of inquiry in which the researcher, “describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2020, p. 31). The researcher reported data on lived experiences of this student population. According to Lochmiller and Lester (2017), when a study has a narrow focus, a qualitative approach is favorable. This study specifically focused on former ESLN students enrolled in credit coursework due to the limited available research on this student population.

Study Setting

This study was conducted at a Southern California community college, a midsized institution that serves an average of 9,000 students each academic year. The community college offers associate degrees for transfer students, associate degrees for vocational preparation, and credit certificates. Courses are offered at the main campus and multiple satellite locations throughout the service area in the morning, afternoon, and evening.

The community college also offers noncredit courses and certificates of completion. Because the study specifically focused on ESLN students, a description of the ESLN program is provided. The noncredit ESLN program is comprised of six levels of comprehension pronunciation, conversation, and vocational English courses. Comprehensive courses focus on reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Pronunciation courses focus on specific sounds.

Conversation courses focus on speaking and listening skills. Meanwhile, vocational English courses focus on speaking, reading, and writing which a person needs to enter the workforce. Courses are open enrollment and free.

The community college also has a variety of student support services that focus on academic and non-academic student needs. At the community college academic student support services include library, student resource center and a tutoring center. Student support services that focus on non-academic needs include orientation, admissions and records, outreach programs, financial aid, mental health, and counseling. The counseling department has 13 distinct counseling programs that focus on various student populations (e.g., disabled, international students, low-income and first-generation, veteran, foster youth, and undocumented students).

The researcher conducted interviews via Zoom, an electronic video platform from a small office in her home. This electronic modality was chosen because the community college campus closed due to the COVID-19 global pandemic in March 2020 and remained closed for the 2020-2021 academic year. The campus was scheduled to open in Spring 2022. The small office space was selected because it allows for privacy, strong internet reception, and quiet space. Students were asked to also select a quiet, isolated space for the interview.

Study Participants

Study participants were selected using criterion-based purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling requires the researcher to select participants who will best help the researcher answer research questions (Creswell, 2020). Participants needed to meet two criteria to be eligible for the study. First, participants must have completed the 5th level of the ESLN program. Second, participants must have completed at least two semesters of credit courses with a letter grade of

“C” or better in coursework. Both criteria are informed by the literature review. Researchers have demonstrated ESLN students transition into credit coursework at low numbers (Beam et al., 2019; Spurling et al., 2008), and students who complete upper level ESLN courses are more likely to transition and persist into credit coursework (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; Spurling et al., 2008). To expand the pool of eligible participants, students who completed the 5th level of ESLN were eligible to participate in the study. Creswell (2020) further noted phenomenological studies have three to 10 participants; the researcher interviewed 8 participants.

Instrumentation

The researcher served as the instrument for data collection. The researcher reviewed student transcripts to ensure eligibility for the study, conducted interviews, recorded the interviews, transcribed dialogue of interviews, organized the data, and interpreted the data. According to Creswell (2020), when the researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection a variety of issues may be introduced into the research process. Creswell further noted “identification of personal values, assumptions and biases must be identified at the onset of the study” (p. 227). A reflexivity statement, a brief report describing the researcher’s past and current experiences that can impact the study, should be included (Creswell, 2020). A reflexivity statement is included under ethical considerations section of this chapter.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews permit the facilitator to guide the discussion while also allowing opportunity for in-depth discussion on specific themes that arise (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The interviews focused on students’ lived experiences by investigating factors that impact their persistence in credit coursework. Research questions were developed to address the four dimensions of Bean and Metzner’s (1985) framework.

The interviews were conducted electronically via Zoom and were recorded for transcription. The researcher used the interview protocol sample outlined by Creswell (2020) to record and annotate data. The protocol is outlined in detail in the next section of this chapter.

Data Collection and Data Sources

First, the researcher collected data to confirm participants are eligible for the study. To begin, the researcher identified the number of adult learners formerly enrolled in ESLN who completed a minimum of two semesters of credit coursework with a passing grade of “C” or higher. The researcher printed rosters for each section of the fifth ESLN level. Rosters for the spring and fall semesters of two academic years were reviewed: 2018–2019 and 2019–2020. The 5th levels are only offered during the spring and fall semesters; summer semesters were not reviewed for ESLN coursework. The researcher reviewed the transcript of each student and confirmed completion of at least two semesters of credit courses with a letter grade of “C” or higher. Summer, spring, fall, and winter intersessions were considered in credit coursework.

The researcher reviewed course rosters to confirm enrollment of ESLN courses first because noncredit coursework is not listed on the official and unofficial student transcripts at the community college. The process of reviewing each transcript individually is the most appropriate procedure to collect data because this process is the most direct and accurate manner to confirm registration of credit coursework. Upon receiving permission from the appropriate administrator at the community college and the Institutional Review Board of Kansas State University, the researcher requested and received permission from the community college to conduct the study. The institutional research office of the community college serving as the site provided the contact information for eligible participants. To ensure all eligible participants were identified, the researcher contacted the institutional research office for a report of ESLN students enrolled in

level five that completed two semesters of credit coursework. The researcher cross-referenced eligible participants.

ESLN students who met the criteria were invited to participate in the study via student email (see Appendix A). Eight participants responded to the invitation to participate in the study. Participants confirmed their interest in the study and the researcher responded via email with a proposed date and time. Upon confirming date and time, the researcher emailed the consent form, along with the Zoom link for the meeting. Participants were required to complete consent form (see Appendix B) prior to the interview. Eight interviews were conducted.

Prior to starting the interviews, the researcher undertook certain procedures to ensure organization and transparency. Please see the interview protocol and list of interview questions under Appendix C. Before inviting the participant into the Zoom room, the researcher recorded basic information about the interview including the date, time, location, along with participant name, fictitious name, and the name of the digital file (Creswell, 2020). These were handwritten notes. The process of labeling and initiating note taking allowed for initial development and organization of data (Creswell, 2020). All data was stored on a USB drive that was kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office.

Next, the researcher allowed the participant into the Zoom room. The researcher provided an introduction. In the introduction portion of the interview, the researcher introduced themselves, read aloud the purpose of the study and briefly reviewed consent. Next, the researcher explained the process of member checking. The researcher ended the introduction by asking if the participant has any additional questions. These procedures were done to create clarity and comfort for participants (Creswell, 2020). Upon receiving permission to record, the

researcher began recording. Recording was done to transcribe the conversation. The introduction is included under the interview procedures, see Appendix C.

Next, the researcher began asking content questions. The researcher began by asking questions addressing the four dimensions of Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student model (see Appendix D). The researcher first asked questions regarding the academic, background, and defining factors. More personal questions based on the environmental and psychological outcomes content questions were asked toward the end of the interview. By organizing questions in this order, the researcher intended to make participants feel more comfortable (Creswell, 2020).

Along with asking established questions, probing was used to gather more detailed information when appropriate. Probing questions included, "Can you please tell me more?" "Can you please clarify/provide more information?" and "Can you please explain what this phrase means?" (Creswell, 2020, p. 215). The researcher asked all participants a last follow-up probing question listed by Creswell (2020), "Is there any information you would like to share with me that was not covered?" (p. 215).

The interview concluded with a closing statement. Participants were thanked for their time and mailed a gift card. The researcher explained to participants a draft of the final study with their responses will be provided (Creswell, 2020). The researcher contacted each participant via email to ensure transcription of interview was accurate. Confirmation from participants of accuracy of collected data was done as part of the member checking process. Upon completing interviews, the researcher began organizing and analyzing data. This process is described in the following section.

Data Analysis

Creswell's (2020) five steps for analyzing data were used to evaluate the data of this study. The first step was to organize the data for analysis. After conducting each interview, the researcher downloaded saved the interview file with the date of interview and fictitious name of participant in a single folder. After the interviews were stored in a folder, the researcher then saved them on a USB. All videos of participants were stored in a single folder to ensure organization. Upon completing the interviews, the researcher began transcription.

The researcher utilized the Zoom transcription feature to conduct the initial and partial transcription. Verbiage of each interview was individually downloaded as a Microsoft word document. The researcher listened to each interview while reading and editing transcription twice. The researcher listened to each interview and read along with transcript a third time to ensure accuracy. The researcher contacted each participant via email to ensure transcription of interview was accurate. Confirmation from participants of accuracy of collected data was done as part of the member checking process.

The second step is to review the collected data and begin preliminary organization. Creswell (2020) explains the researcher must begin to contemplate the credibility and depth of data collection. The researcher does this by reviewing transcripts and writing broad notes on possible overarching themes. The researcher began to reread notes and identify possible themes and repeated patterns in participants' responses. These possible themes are identified in more detail in chapter four. In order to ensure transparency, the researcher developed a table presenting codes that were grouped together to develop themes. Please reference table 1.3 in the fourth chapter.

The third step is to start coding the data. Coding “is the process of organizing data by bracketing chunks and writing a word representing a category” (Creswell, 2020, p. 217). Once the data was completely transcribed, the researcher imported the data into NVivo, a computer software that allows for qualitative data analysis. The researcher read transcripts and began organizing and labeling data into categories. Language used by participants served as labels. In the fourth step, Creswell (2020) indicated researchers provide five to seven categories that emerge from the data. Themes will “demonstrate the multiple perspectives from individuals and be supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence” (Creswell, 2020, p. 217). Themes are presented in chapter four.

The final step is to present findings. The researcher provided a detailed report of themes and possible subthemes in the fourth chapter. The narrative includes direct quotes and multiple perspectives from participants (Creswell, 2020). The report also presents contradictory information provided via participant responses.

Data Quality: Validity

To ensure the study and its findings were valid, the researcher used multiple validity procedures (Creswell, 2020). In qualitative research, validity is the accurateness of findings “from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants and the readers of the account” (Creswell, 2020, p. 222). According to Carlson (2010), researchers can use multiple strategies to ensure validity. The researcher used four strategies to ensure validity.

One of the strategies used was member checking. Member checking is the process of taking descriptions or themes described in the final report and presenting them to participants to ensure accuracy (Creswell, 2020). According to Carlson (2010), the researcher can engage in member checking that creates trustworthiness in the study and makes participants more

comfortable by using the following strategies: (a) explain the process of member checking to participant, (b) engage in member checking throughout the study, and (c) provide participants with expectations of the member checking process.

The researcher explained to each participant what “member checking” is, and the purpose of member checking before the interview questions were asked. This explanation is outlined in under Appendix C, Interview Protocol. In addition, throughout the interviews, the researcher asked clarifying questions to confirm responses were understood. After each interview transcript was revised for accuracy, a copy of the interview was emailed to each participant for their review. Only two responses were received from participants.

Another strategy used to ensure validity was to write with thick, rich descriptions throughout the development of the study and the final report (Creswell, 2020). Thick descriptions are not just the descriptions of participants experiences but also contexts of experiences to create meaning (Korstjens & Mosen, 2018). Detailed descriptions of the site, data collection process, and findings also allow readers to better understand and examine the findings (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The researcher created and recorded these descriptions throughout the study and in reporting the findings. Documenting thick descriptions also allows for transferability (Creswell, 2020; Korstjens & Mosen, 2018). According to researchers Korstjens and Mosen (2018) transferability is, “the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents” (Korstjens & Mosen, 2018, p. 121).

The third strategy used to create validity was to identify and clarify biases. Providing an honest self-reflection about the researcher’s background, experiences, and how these elements

can impact the interpretation of findings create authenticity (Creswell, 2020). The researcher has provided a reflexivity statement under Ethical Considerations.

The final strategy used was transparency in presenting contradicting findings. According to Creswell (2020), along with presenting emerging themes, a researcher creates validity by also describing information that contradicts the themes. The researcher has presented evidence of emerging themes, please reference the table 1.3 in the fourth chapter. The researcher has also presented discrepancies in the fourth chapter. In order to see contradictory data please reference table 1.3 in the fourth chapter.

Data Quality: Reliability

According to Creswell (2020), qualitative reliability is “to ensure the researcher has documented procedures and protocols” (p. 223). The researcher provided interview protocols under appendix C. The researcher used the Zoom audio captioning feature to ensure accurate transcriptions. The researcher checked and corrected any mistakes made in the transcription process multiple times (Creswell, 2020). The researcher ensured all codes are defined with uniformity by constantly comparing data, writing memos and utilizing the word frequency tool in NVivo qualitative data analysis software. Lastly, interview questions were aligned with Bean and Metzner’s (1985) nontraditional student attrition model.

Ethical Considerations

To protect participants in the study, multiple undertakings were included in the study. Prior to conducting the study, appropriate approvals were received from the Institutional Review Board of Kansas State University, appropriate site administrators, and the participants (Creswell, 2020). When the study began, the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study with participants and did not pressure participants to sign consent forms to create trust and respect students’

environments (Creswell, 2020). During the phase of data collection, the researcher explained how the data would be used and refrained from using leading questions to deceive participants or navigate the discussion in a particular direction (Creswell, 2020). Participants were given equal treatment and a gift card at the end for their participation. While analyzing data, the researcher reported all participant perspectives and contradictory findings. Fictitious identities were assigned to protect the privacy of participants (Creswell, 2020).

Researcher biases may have impacted the findings of the study, specifically data that pertained to Research Question 5: What are the student support services former ESLN students found most helpful in persisting in credit coursework? The researcher is a community college graduate. The researcher has worked more than 9 years in student support service programs at the community college that serves as the site. The researcher has held the following positions: student worker, staff, and counseling faculty. The researcher served as the counseling faculty at the site who primarily works with ESLN students. It is possible the researcher looked for evidence that created favorable conclusions about student support services (Creswell, 2020).

Limitations

The study was conducted at one community college. The community college has served on average 1,000 to 1,800 students each semester in the ESLN program. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, ESLN instruction has been provided completely online, and enrollment for the 2020 academic year lowered to 500–600 students per semester. It should also be noted there are limitations to using qualitative methods. According to Creswell (2020), there are limitations to using interviews as a data collection tool; interviews collect information influenced by the participant's perception.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of former ESLN students while they persist in credit coursework through the lens of Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model. This chapter provided a review of the purpose of the study, the research questions, and theoretical and conceptual lenses. The research design, study participants, and instrumentation were described in detail with supporting data from other researchers and data found in the literature review. The process for data collection, analysis, limitations, and ethical considerations were presented in detail.

Chapter 4 - Findings

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of former English as a second language noncredit (ESLN) students while they persisted in credit coursework through the lens of Bean and Metzner's nontraditional student attrition model. The study specifically looked at experiences related to academic, psychological, environmental, and background factors as identified in Bean and Metzner's model. In addition, the purpose of the study was to examine how student support services impacted students' experiences while they persisted in credit coursework.

To address this, one overarching research question was developed to guide the study: How do former ESLN students perceive the impact of academic, psychological, environmental, and background factors, as defined by Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model in their experiences while they persist in credit coursework? Additionally, five specified research questions were addressed in this study:

- Research Question 1: How do academic factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?
- Research Question 2: How do psychological factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?
- Research Question 3: How do environmental factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?
- Research Question 4: How do background factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?
- Research Question 5: How do student support services impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?

Data in this study were collected from eight adult learners enrolled in credit courses at a community college who previously completed the 5th level of the ESLN program. Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted online via the Zoom platform. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to a Microsoft word document. Videos, transcripts and notes were stored in a single folder on a USB. The USB was stored in a locked cabinet.

Participants

The researcher sent the email invitation five times to 32 eligible participants. Eight participants responded to the invitation to participate in the study. There were 24 eligible participants that did not respond. Participants who did not respond were individuals of varying ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, majors and career goals. It is possible that responses of this study might have been different if other participants were included in the study.

Participants who were interested confirmed their interest in the study via email and the researcher responded with a proposed date and time. Upon confirming a date and time, participants were emailed the consent form to be completed before the study, along with the Zoom link for the meeting. While conducting interviews, it became evident participants knew each other. Therefore, to protect participants identities, a decision was made to exclude brief narratives about each participant. In addition, the specific programs of study (majors) and ages of each participant are excluded to protect participants' privacy. Names of faculty and staff identified by participants have also been changed to protect privacy. Table 1.1 below presents participant information including: number of participants, gender, educational goals and employment status. Table 1.2 identifies participant pseudonym, gender, employment status, enrollment status, education goal and ethnicity.

Table 1.1*Participant Characteristics*

Number of participants	Female	Male	Employed	Unemployed	Educational goal: Certificate	Educational goal: Associate
8	7	1	3	5	2	6

Table 1.2*Participant Characteristics*

Pseudonym	Gender	Employed	Enrollment	Educational goal	Ethnicity
Ava	Female	No	Part-time	Associate Degree	Hispanic
Bella	Female	No	Part-time	Associate Degree	Hispanic
Carol	Female	Yes	Part-time	Associate Degree	Hispanic
Denise	Female	No	Part-time	Certificate	Hispanic
Eliana	Female	No	Full-time	Associate Degree	Hispanic
Fatima	Female	Yes	Full-Time	Associate Degree	Hispanic
Joseph	Male	Yes	Part-time	Certificate	Hispanic
Jessica	Female	No	Part-time	Associate Degree	Non-Hispanic

Data Analysis

Creswell's (2020) five steps for analyzing qualitative data were used to evaluate data. The first step was to organize the data for analysis. After conducting each interview, interview data was downloaded and saved as a file that noted the interview date and pseudonym of each participant. Data files of interview data were stored in a folder and the folder was saved on a USB. The USB is stored in a locked cabinet for security of participant information. All videos of participants were stored in a single folder to support organization. Transcription began after completing the interviews.

The Zoom transcription feature was used to conduct initial and partial transcription. Text of each interview was individually downloaded as a Microsoft word document. The researcher

listened to each interview while reading its transcription; transcriptions were edited multiple times. The researcher listened to each interview and read along with transcript a third time to ensure accuracy. To ensure security, all transcripts were stored in a single file and stored on a USB. The USB is stored in a locked cabinet.

The second step identified by Creswell (2020) is to review the collected data and begin preliminary organization. Creswell explained the researcher must begin to contemplate the credibility and depth of data collection. This was achieved by reviewing transcripts and writing broad notes on possible overarching themes. The researcher began to reread notes and identify possible themes and patterns in participants responses.

The third step was to start coding the data. Coding “is the process of organizing data by bracketing chunks and writing a word representing a category” (Creswell, 2020, p. 217). Once the data was completely transcribed, data was imported into NVivo, which is computer software for qualitative data analysis. Each file was labeled with the participants’ pseudonym. Once organized and labeled in NVivo, the researcher began rereading and organizing data into categories. Language used by participants was used as category labels.

In the fourth step, Creswell (2020) indicated researchers identify five to seven categories that emerge from the data. Themes “demonstrate the multiple perspectives from individuals and are supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence” (Creswell, 2020, p. 217). After developing initial codes, the researcher reread transcripts. This resulted in development of the final six themes. The clusters of codes and themes are presented in Table 1.3

Table 1.3

Data Analysis: Code Clusters Used to Develop Themes

Theme	Clusters of codes	Number of participants who discussed topic
Theme 1: Experiences as a credit student impacted by need to increase time dedicated to academics	More reading	8
	More time studying	8
	Understanding material	8
	Tutoring or library	8
	More homework	7
	Writing	6
	Must re-read	7
	Online	8
	Zoom	5
	Re-watch videos	4
Theme 2: Strong attendance and major certainty helpful in academic success in classes	No absences	3
	Attendance is important	7
	Missing class negatively impacts learning	7
	Cannot make up learning when class missed	7
	Rarely miss class	8
	Knowing major is helpful	6
	Knew major when starting credit	6
	Discrepant data – Not knowing major was helpful	1
Theme 3: Self-perceived English language abilities create stressful experiences in academic settings	More stress	8
	English language	8
	Instructor speaking English	5
	Students speaking English	7
	ESL	8
	Work harder	5
	Non-native to U.S.	4
Theme 4: Faculty and family provide encouragement	Instructors motivate	8
	Spouse support	7
	Children encourage	5
	Learning of another student's success	3
	Discrepant data–classmates encourage	1
Theme 5: Family responsibilities, associated	Limited time for class because of family	5

Theme	Clusters of codes	Number of participants who discussed topic
with age limit the time available to engage in academics	Must care for children	5
	Household responsibilities	6
	Family first	5
	Discrepant data—family responsibilities do not impact academic experiences	3
Theme 6: Student support services provide resources that contribute to academic success	Tutoring center/library	8
	Counseling	7
	Financial aid	6
	Tuition fees	5
	Classroom counseling visits	4
	Emergency funds	2
	Textbook loan	3

The final step in Creswell’s (2020) model is to present findings. Table 1.4 details each theme that emerged from the data alongside the research question it addressed. Below Table 1.4 is a detailed narrative of the themes. The narrative includes direct quotes from participants as evidence (Creswell, 2020). The presentation of findings also includes discrepant data, when applicable.

Table 2.4

Data Analysis: Theoretical Model Dimensions, Research Questions, and Themes

Dimension of Bean and Metzner’s Nontraditional Student Attrition Model	Research question	Themes addressing research question
Academic dimension: study habits/skills, academic advising, course availability, major uncertainty, and absenteeism.	Research Question 1: How do academic factors impact former ESLN students’ experiences while persisting in credit coursework?	Theme 1: Experiences as a credit student impacted by need to increase time dedicated to academics
		Theme 2: Strong attendance and major certainty helpful in

		academic success in classes
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Psychological dimension: utility, satisfaction, stress, and social commitment.	Research Question 2: How do psychological factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?	Theme 3: Self-perceived English language abilities create stressful experiences in academic settings
Environmental factors included: finances, weekly work hours, family responsibilities, outside encouragement, and available transfer opportunities.	Research Question 3: How do environmental factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?	Theme 4: Faculty and family provide encouragement that create positive experiences
background and defining factors: age, enrollment status, residence, educational goals, high school performance, ethnicity, and gender.	Research Question 4: How do background factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while they persist in credit coursework?	Theme 5: Family responsibilities associated with age limit the time available to engage in academics
Not Applicable	Research Question 5: How do student support services impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?	Theme 6: Student support services provide resources that contribute to academic success

Presentation of Findings

Findings are organized by research questions. Under the heading for each research question, themes that addressed each research question are presented. Direct quotes from

participants serve as evidence to support themes. Direct quotes are attributed to participants using the pseudonyms assigned to maintain confidentiality of their identities.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked how academic factors impacted former ESLN students' experiences while they persisted in credit coursework? Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model identifies the following factors as contributing to the academic dimensions of the model: study habits/skills, academic advising, course availability, major uncertainty, and absenteeism. Two themes answered this question: Theme 1: Experiences as a credit student was impacted by need to increase time dedicated to academics, and Theme 2: Strong attendance and major were impactful in academic experience

Theme 1: Experiences as a Credit Student Impacted by the Need to Increase Time Dedicated to Academics

Participants detailed how their experiences as a credit student were impacted by having to significantly increase the amount of time dedicated to their academics, outside of class time. All participants shared a need to increase study time as they progressed in credit courses, regardless of the program of study, previous academic experiences, and academic goals. When describing experiences as credit students, participants spoke in depth about how much more time they studied and about the activities or exercises they did while studying. Bella, Denise and Carol stated they, at minimum, doubled the amount of time needed to study for credit courses in comparison to ESLN courses. The most frequently cited reasons for adjusting the time dedicated to studying were increased quantity of content in credit coursework and their English language skills.

Participants reported they needed to increase study time for various reasons including more content in their credit courses, more homework, and more reading material. Denise shared, “The way of studying is also very, very different, because right now I have to read a lot more. I can tell the difference between ESLN classes to credit classes, a much higher academic level.” Participants also shared they often need to re-read course material to ensure comprehension. Participants stated they often sought additional resources and engaged in activities to support learning. Some of these resources and activities included watching videos, reading articles related to modules, additional research on the web, and summarizing content.

Bella provided details on her study routine:

Sometimes I can say that I spend up to 4 or 5 hours during the day reading. And I read again and look for information outside of the books, or I review the modules sometimes up to two times to understand, and I summarize what I learned in the unit or chapter. I never stay with the first read; I always have to give it another [read] and take notes. I always have to take notes; use marker. Either I have notes on my computer, and I say “oh this article is related to this and it can serve me later in some other job,” or when I have to do a lesson, or plan a lesson in my classes during the week. So, I spend around 3 or 4, hours up to 5, [hours studying a day].

Joseph corroborated Bella’s experience of increased quantity of study material and Denise’s statements about increased learning content:

The career I'm following, more than anything, it is a huge book. The teacher gives you the theory, and the truth is that they also send me, for now, online homework. I have noticed many pages of study material; it really gives us a lot of information. Or, sometimes, for example, I watch videos. The truth is that because of my type of career

that I am following, we have to focus a lot on videos or try to read as much as possible, because now that there is too much information to digest very quickly. So, I have to use various methods, videos, or look for information on the internet or other books that have helped me as well.

Notably, participants reported needing to increase time studying because of their English language skills. Although students completed the ESLN program, all participants reported their English levels had an impact on their experience as a credit student. To ensure they understood content, participants shared they had to re-read course material, watch videos, or conduct additional research. Eliana explained:

They [ESLN and credit courses] have almost the same resemblance, because when I was in ESLN I practiced the same things; they left homework and I did it, and I do almost the same thing here. However, in credit classes I put in from 1 hour to 2 hours. It depends on the class to be able to study and to understand a little more, because of the language.

Because many times it is not the same to be in the comfort zone of Spanish when compared to a different zone, English.

Denise, who has a foreign degree from another country, was earning a certificate in an area of study related to her earned degree. Although her knowledge in her content area was helpful, she explained she still had to dedicate more time because of her English language skills:

I feel that these classes that I have taken a lot, a lot, a lot of material in a very short time. So, it takes a lot of time, especially for me. I'm from ESL. Many times, I have to read this chapter more than once. When they are recorded classes, I have to listen to them, sometimes even more than twice, because the technical terms of the career.

Theme 2: Strong Attendance and Knowing Major are Impactful in Experiences as Credit Students

Participants stated strong attendance and knowing their major were impactful to their experiences as credit students. Multiple participants explained that strong attendance helped them academically succeed. Participants said knowing the program of study, or their major, was also positively impactful because it increased their motivation to continue in their academic journey. Discrepant data also emerged. One participant said not knowing her major was helpful and positively impacted her experience.

All participants said attendance was important to their learning experiences in credit courses. Participants Ava, Bella and Joseph reported having perfect attendance during their time as a credit student, while Eliana, Denise, Jessica and Fatima stated they rarely missed class. Carol was taking an asynchronous online course and entered modules in Canvas every day, multiple times a day. A primary reason why attendance was important was difficulty recuperating information from absent days. Missing information made their experiences more stressful and challenging.

Ava explained attendance helped her keep up with the progression of learning material in courses, and, consequently, helped her persist in credit courses: “For me, attendance is very important, and it has helped me to progress, because I do not miss any topic or any important point that the teacher said.” In addition to helping with comprehension of content, participants described how attendance helped supplement their performance in class and motivated them to seek additional resources, like office hours. Fatima explained, “Ah impacted [positively] because thanks ah I have all good grades. It is not missing, so that helps me not to miss the points that may be missing in an exam, or quiz, or a job.” In addition, having strong attendance also

encouraged students to attend office hours. Bella explained, “I have not missed any in my credit classes. I always try to attend office hours to clarify doubts, to ask questions, and also to listen to questions from my colleagues, which sometimes are doubts that I also have.”

Seven participants detailed perceived potential negative consequences of missing class. When discussing attendance participants often described concern for “falling behind” or feeling “lost” from being absent. Furthermore, Ava explained, “I have always believed that the day you miss is like a day lost, as you cannot make it up, even if you ask for notes, that will not give you 100% of what the teacher said, nor will you learn that day.”

Denise also expressed concern of missing perceived valuable content:

For me, from the ESL [English as second language] classes, I did not like to be absent. I tried to be absent as little as possible because when I am absent, I feel like I lose. Like I get lost if I go back to class, I don't like it. What did I miss? I feel like I am losing track of what I am understanding in class. If I do not go in long enough, I do not understand the class well, or I am late in reading a chapter; I am also late in doing the work exercises.

Joseph corroborated statements by Denise and Ava’s about the difficulty of being absent:

Until today, I have not missed a day. I think that losing a day of class is, the truth, that it would affect you because you lose a lot and to catch up really is almost impossible because you would lose 4.5 hours of class. But I didn't have the experience of that. I have been in my attendance until now. . . it is perfect.

Along with having strong attendance, knowing the program of study, or knowing the major, was identified as having a positive impact on participants’ experiences in credit classes.

Seven participants stated knowing their major in credit courses was helpful. According the

multiple viewpoints of participants, knowing their major helped with completion of the ESLN program, transition into credit coursework, and persistence in credit courses.

Ava detailed her experience in choosing her major. She began thinking about what she wanted to study during the beginning levels of the ESLN program. She chose her major in the 3rd level. When she decided, Ava said her ESLN classes helped better prepare her for her career. In addition, Ava said it increased her focus:

Knowing [major], I made the decision in the 3rd level. Fourth level helped me prepare.

To focus on like what classes to take and not be like investigating, “I will try this, try the other” it helps me focus. Because I am a mother and I am already at an age . . . not an [older] adult, but since I cannot be wasting time, you can say, and that [knowing major] helps me to concentrate well, well in myself, in my career and in taking the class that I need to complete.

Various participants conveyed knowing their major increased motivation and confidence in credit courses. Bella described being more comfortable and prepared to start credit coursework. Denise and Eliana also shared knowing her major helped her feel “oriented.” In addition, Eliana stated knowing her major helped her inquire about appropriate student support services, “Well, I feel more oriented to what classes I should be taking. For the certificate or career, you want. It is easier to know what you want to do to ask for help, just as the counselors know how to guide you through the process and know exactly what classes you could choose.”

Bella explained knowing her major eased concerns she had about her English language skills as she finished ESLN and prepared for credit coursework. Joseph detailed a similar sentiment, “Oh it [knowing major] impacted immensely, because I think that. Just my language, English, is not the main one [language]. When you are in the course, I think that it gives you the

courage to lose the fear that one feels. And the truth is that I am excited, and I have been studying [credit classes] for 2 years.”

Discrepant data also emerged. Carol found not knowing her major was helpful because it allowed her to take more credit courses than she initially anticipated. She explained, “It [not knowing major] has impacted in a way that I have continued beyond the perspectives I had.” Not knowing her major allowed her to explore her options and find her major. In addition, Fatima stated she did not initially know her major when she began credit classes. She selected her major shortly after beginning credit classes. Once she knew her major, she found it helpful to her experience.

In summary, the first research question asking about the ways academic factors impacted former ESLN students’ experiences while they persisted in credit coursework was answered via two themes: Theme 1: Experiences as a credit student impacted by the need to increase time dedicated to academics, and Theme 2: Strong attendance and knowing major are impactful in experiences as credit student. Participants detailed how their experiences as credit students were impacted by having to significantly increase the amount of time dedicated to their academics, outside of class time. All participants shared needing to increase study time as they progressed in credit courses, regardless of the program of study, previous academic experiences, and academic goals. The most frequently cited reasons for adjusting time dedicated to studying were increased quantity of content in credit coursework and their English language skills. Participants detailed their experiences in their study routines and increased time to complete assignments, prepare for lectures, in-class activities, and ensure content comprehension.

Participants also explained how attendance was impactful to their experiences as credit students. Multiple participants explained efforts were made to have strong attendance because

absences made it difficult to recuperate information. Participants reported attendance helped them succeed academically and persist in their education. In addition, participants stated knowing their program of study was also impactful because it increased motivation to complete the ESLN program, transition to credit courses, and persist in credit courses.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked how psychological factors impacted former ESLN students' experiences while they persisted in credit coursework? Theme 3 addressed this research question: Self-perceived English language abilities create stressful experiences in academic settings.

Theme 3: Self-Perceived English Language Abilities Create Stressful Experiences in Academic Settings

Participants spoke in-depth about stress experienced from their self-perceived English language abilities in academic settings. Specifically, participants detailed being stressed about speaking and listening in English. In addition, multiple participants paired stress about their English language skills with their self-perceived identity of not being a U.S.-born student.

Most notably, participants described concerns about communicating in English in academic settings. Participants discussed experiencing stress about saying things incorrectly or not communicating adequately with instructors and classmates during lectures, classroom activities, and office hours. This stress made their educational experiences in credit classes challenging at times. Participants used words like “fear,” “doubt,” “concern,” and “stress” to describe sentiments when speaking English. Eliana explained, “many times it is difficult because of certain words that you may not know or how you could develop [your English] a little more in credit classes. That has been quite difficult, and I have tried to find a way to find the right words

to communicate and not say something bad.” When asked about the most difficult part of her academic journey, Fatima also noted challenges in learning English, “It has been difficult to continue learning English, because to read it, to write it, I can say that I get it more or less, I understand it, but the difficult thing is to speak it. I don't know, my mind goes blank, and it is something that I have to work on more.”

Joseph addressed concerns about the English language in his experiences as a credit student. He described his educational experiences as meaningful, and, when asked to specify his concerns over the English language, he identified speaking and pronouncing words correctly as his greatest fear:

The fear of English . . . is to speak freely, do you understand me? Because the truth is that it is a little complicated when it comes to academic classes, because in English it is a little more. How can I explain . . . the correct way to say [words]? Pronunciation in everything.

Bella also detailed her experience of not feeling comfortable with speaking. Bella has lived in the United States for more than 8 years. She began the ESLN program from the beginning level (foundations) even though the entry placement exam allowed her to start in level 3. To depict her nervousness in speaking English, Bella spoke about conversations she and other adult English language learners (ELLs) in the college had about their capabilities in speaking English in an academic setting:

We [adult ELLs] come to learn the language, we need to loosen up because we can have the grammar all together. But when it comes to talking about it, we lack that . . . we forget some, some little letter, some word, some adjective, something. It leaves us because, I do not know if we do not acquire the language as we would like, or we want to

speak it quickly because we need to. And sometimes I feel I did I say it correctly, but I have that doubt when I should not have a doubt. Personally, it happens to me, and I say perhaps I failed and “I did not say this or do it,” “I failed, I did not say what I had to say correctly.” But if you understood me, then. These are things that English learners have to work a lot on, practice more, speaking.

Along with verbally communicating in English, participants also expressed experiencing stress regarding their self-perceived abilities to understand English in credit courses. Denise explained that as a credit student she experiences nervousness in anticipating her ability to understand lectures. Each semester Denise is more concerned with understanding the instructor, rather than the content of each course, “I am always nervous about whether I will be able to understand what the teacher is talking about. If I am . . . sometimes, as I say, English. There are times that . . . my nerves are always more if I am going to be able to understand the teacher when he speaks, what he is explaining. This is my biggest stress.”

Fatima substantiated this sentiment and detailed her levels of stress in credit classes when compared to ESLN. Fatima stated that because credit courses are credit-bearing, the pressure and stress to understand the English language is increased:

When I was taking ESL [ESLN] classes I wasn't as stressed out because I knew if I didn't feel like . . . secure . . . If I didn't feel confident about passing the semester, I could say “Ok, I don't feel safe jumping into the next semester, I'll stay in this one.” It was not stressful for me, because . . . apart from that, it was only 4 hours [of daily instruction]. And you see, well now I have a little more stress, because I know I have to get a good grade, I have to turn in homework, I have to . . . I have certain limit for assignments, and I have to try harder to finish them.

Multiple participants paired their stress about their English language skills with the self-perceived identity of not being a U.S.-born student. Bella explained that, unlike U.S. born English language students, foreign-born adult ELLs have the task of learning English at an older age, and this comes with challenges. Bella shared:

We as [adult] language learners have to work extra. A regular student, born here [U.S.] although his parents are Latino, but born here, they go to schools where they acquire the language from a young age. Cognitively it is easier to learn and acquire the language when one enters younger. You have like a little bit of . . . I can't say barriers, but it costs you like a little bit of more work.

Ava explained upon entering credit courses, she could not help but compare her readiness in English to English language skills of U.S.-born classmates:

And you imagine that they all speak English very well and that they were born here or studied [here]. What you have is a certain fear that, “I am not prepared” because you do not feel 100% qualified to take English classes and already being in credit classes with the other students, you realize that even sometimes you as an ESL student, you are more responsible in your writing or in your assignments. For the same reason, because you have that pressure that you are not a native speaker of the language. You have to be more perfectionist with your work.

Two students spoke about self-identifying as a previous ESLN student as a strategy to ease their stress and seek support from instructors. Denise explained she and another ESLN student approached their instructor about their self-perceived limited English language skills, “In the first class I took in credit I realized that we were several ESL students who had doubts when

the teacher began to give the content. [I asked myself] ‘Will we be able to do it? Will we understand all this material?’ Because as I said, it is substantial.”

Eliana explained when possible, she self-identifies as an ESLN student to her instructors: Because when I start a new credit course, they [instructors] almost always ask you for an introduction. So, I try to say that my second language is English and that I have little time doing credit classes and there they understand why maybe I can't grasp all the questions and can't answer like a native of the United States.

In summary, the second research question asked how psychological factors impact former ESLN students’ experiences while persisting in credit coursework? This question was answered by Theme 3: Self-perceived English language abilities create stressful experiences in academic settings. Participants experienced stress from their English language skills. Most notably, participants described concerns about communicating in English in academic settings. Participants also shared experiences of feeling stress about their self-perceived abilities to understand English in credit courses. Two students spoke about self-identifying as a previous ESLN student as a strategy to ease stress and seek support from instructors. Stress over language skills made participants experiences feel pressured and difficult.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked how environmental factors impacted former ESLN students’ experiences while they persisted in credit coursework? Bean and Metzner’s (1985) nontraditional student attrition model identifies the following factors as being part of the environmental dimension: finances, weekly work hours, family responsibilities, outside encouragement, and transfer opportunities. Theme 4 addressed this question: Instructors and family provide encouragement that create positive experiences.

Theme 4: Instructors and Family Provide Encouragement That Create Positive Experiences

Participants received encouragement from family and faculty while enrolled in credit coursework, which created positive experiences. Seven participants detailed examples of encouragement received from instructors. All participants received support from at least one family member.

Participants stated support provided by faculty positively impacted their experiences by encouraging them to persist in their courses. Some ways students reported feeling supported by faculty were faculty explicitly encouraging students to continue enrolling credit coursework, easing student concerns about English language skills, sharing success stories of other ESLN students as assurance of potential success, and providing positive feedback on assignments.

Ava, Bella, Denise and Fatima specified they were motivated to continue in credit classes because of the academic rigor in ESLN classes and positive feedback received from instructors. According to participants, academic rigor set a precedent for future credit coursework, which they found helpful. For example, Denise detailed her experiences in the 5th level of the ESLN program:

Ah, I really liked that in ESL classes they are always encouraging you to study. In the vocational ones and in the regular ones too. Because as the teacher I had, she always made you read. You don't waste time. At least that is the experience I had in the classroom. You are going to learn; you are not going to talk about things about your life or about other things. It [the class] was very focused on learning.

Ava received positive feedback in her assignments throughout her ESLN and credit courses. Instructors often positively commented on academic performance and language

acquisition. By receiving positive comments, she felt capable of becoming a credit student. Ava explained:

In the 3rd level, it was the teacher Miss Cassie who taught me writing. Who also says, “she is very good at writing, you have very good grammar, your level is advanced” and the 5th level [instructor] told me, “You should take English classes because your grammar is very good.” I think that those comments towards you make you believe that yes, you can already take those more advanced classes.

Most notably, participants described experiences of being positively impacted when instructors shared words of encouragement. Ava explained that her motivation to succeed in credit courses began in ESLN. ESLN instructors often motivated her to envision goals beyond English language skills and focus on credit-bearing, career-oriented coursework. When asked what type of impact her interactions with ESLN instructors had on her experiences as a credit student Ava responded:

I believe that ESLN teachers are a fundamental part of our progress, because most of them motivate us. Like they don't tell you “I don't know, well, you've finished English I hope everything goes well for you” no. They encourage you; they push you and [ask] “what comes next?” and . . . or they give you encouragement that you are doing well.

Bella described words of encouragement from faculty as a positive and motivating experience as a credit student. During her first semester of credit coursework, Bella enrolled in a fast-track program in which students complete 3-unit courses in 1 month over the span of a 16-week semester. After completing the first course, students continued to the next course. By the end of the semester, students completed a total of four classes and 12 units. Bella only intended to complete a one credit course in her first semester of credit classes. After her experience in the

first course, she decided to enroll in a second course. During her second course, instructors commented on her work ethic and motivation. This encouraged her to enroll in the third course; she then enrolled in a fourth. Eventually, she earned a certificate. At the time of the study, she was working on an associate degree and had earned 27 credits. Bella described her decision making related to continuing:

I liked it [credit class]. I started with a lot of desire, and I said why not the second one? And being in the second I was going to finish and one of the teachers told me “Why don't you continue? You can, I have seen how you work very hard and how dedicated you are, you have to continue.” And I started with the third, and so on, until I did the first four classes.

Bella described her experience in credit classes—overall—as a positive. Multiple times throughout her interview she credited her instructors as a strong source of motivation. By receiving affirmations and positive comments, she was encouraged to persist in credit courses. Bella continued:

Yes, I think that has been a factor and the impetus that the teachers have given me to continue forward. You are doing well; you can do this and you are on the right track. I have received this guidance and I believe that this guidance has influenced me to continue. And of course, I have my goal and I know that with work and dedication I will achieve it. I have learned a lot from all the teachers and now with my credit teachers as well. I receive much motivation. And at the same time, I say I feel proud because as an ESLN student I feel that I have achieved a lot that other people may not have due to lack of time, or dedication. But in my particular case, I am very grateful to my teachers, both

non-credit ESL and the ones I have now in my credit classes. So yes, I have received support.

Along with providing encouragement to continue their education, participants spoke about feeling less stressed about English language skills after receiving encouragement from instructors. Ava, Denise, Eliana and Joseph detailed how instructors eased concerns about their English language skills, which encouraged them to continue with credit courses and made their experiences more comfortable. Joseph said instructors in his credit classes were willing to explain course content differently to ensure he understood content. When Joseph was asked how interactions with instructors impacted his experience as a credit student, he responded:

Yes, because the truth that they [instructors] motivate you and the truth that teachers are there for you, to help you. And I tell you from my experience, sometimes I do not understand something, and I am trying to explain myself and the truth is that it [instructor support] keeps one motivated. The truth is that teachers encourage you to ask questions, because the truth is that many of us do not ask for fear sometimes not or because of the language or we are ashamed, but the truth is that they will adapt if you ask, because really if you don't ask, you don't learn.

Eliana substantiated Joseph's statements of feeling supported by instructors. At the time of the interview, she was enrolled in a health science program. Like other participants, she experienced stress about being in a credit class taught in English, but instructors' support contributed to positive experiences in credit classes. She said: "They [instructors] know how to help you and they know how to understand that your first language is not Spanish, sorry English, but it is Spanish. So, they have a lot of patience, and they know how to help you, they know how to guide you."

When Fatima was asked to describe ways instructors supported her she explained instructors offered multiple resources to assist students, including office hours, videos, and zoom meetings:

They focus on the point in which you have doubts or have ah . . . for example, if you read the assignment and you did not understand, and you take the office hours, and you did not understand, then they say ok they can give you like, “watch this video”, they give you more, watch this video, read this article. For me they have been positive because the times I have needed ah, extra help, they are always available. Or he tells you that he can't today, but they are looking for the best time to do a zoom meeting.

While describing pressure she felt from being a non-native English speaker, Ava said positive feedback from instructors helped reduced this sentiment. Feedback also encouraged her to continue doing well in her courses:

Because you have that pressure that you are not a native speaker of the language. You have to be more perfectionist with your work and the teachers . . . how do you say it, like they realize your work and your comments feedbacks, they tell you that your work is professional, your work is very good and well that encourages you to continue having this as it is the discipline of doing the jobs well.

Three participants stated they experienced encouragement when instructors shared success of other ESLN students. Fatima, Denise and Ava were motivated when instructors shared experiences and positive outcomes of other adult learners who completed ESLN courses and credit courses. Ava explained in more detail:

And the opinions of others count a lot because you told me their opinions. Anecdotal. . . .you told me several ESLN students say that it is easy. To listen to the experiences of

other students that have already passed. Or sometimes the same teachers told you that certain students already were, were already nurses, were already teachers. And be there with learning English and give you those examples of improvement if they encourage you to continue.

When asked how interactions with instructors impacted her experiences, Denise said all her instructors—to date—had been “good.” Her instructors showed patience, understanding and made time to assist students. She shared a positive experience in her credit class:

In fact, in the first class I took as credit was accounting. I realized that there were several ESL [ESLN] students who had doubts when the teacher began to give the content, and “Will we be able to do it?” or “Will we understand all this material?” Because, as I said, it is a lot. And the teacher mentioned to us that he had already had many ESL students and that none of them had any problems. It wasn't an impossible class. But, if we had doubts, then of course let him know. So, the ones [instructors] I have had until now are super good teachers who are available in time.

When Fatima was asked to describe the way instructors positively impacted experiences, she recalled instances in which instructors shared other former ESLN student's success paired with words of encouragement. Fatima shared:

For example, when I corrected my essays or when I handed in the assignments or when I spoke, he [instructor] told me that, he told us many experiences of students who had already completed the five levels and that they had already taken classes and returned already with a profession or with the desire to get a better job. And they also encouraged us not to say “Oh, no, that's very difficult.” Not to drop out of school, not to stop taking classes, no matter how difficult they were.

Along with crediting instructors for creating positive experiences, participants also said their families provided encouragement that positively impacted their experiences in credit courses. When participants were asked what or who motivated them to continue with their education, seven participants named at least one family member, including spouses, children and grandparents.

Bella stated her spouse and children motivated her to continue with credit classes and supported her academic experiences. While completing credit courses online, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, her family identified a room in her home as an office space. In this room, she took asynchronous courses, attended zoom meetings, and completed her studying. In addition, Bella stated her family gave her time and space when she needed to focus on academic matters related to classes or committees: “I have support from my husband and my kids, too. Because if I tell them, ‘I need time to do this,’ they give it to me.”

Jessica had an accident that required her to stop working. She also needed to reduce enrollment from full time to part time. She considered withdrawing from school, but continued enrollment because of the support and motivation from her husband. Her husband arranged to work from home to support her while she took courses online: “My family always encouraged me. My husband, always like, encouraged me to continue my study. He works from home for me to study. ‘Don't worry about anything, just study,’ he said.”

Along with providing motivation, family encouragement made the academic journey more meaningful to participants. Ava, Bella, Joseph, Denise stated their children were a source of motivation and support. All three aimed to be positive role models for their children. When asked how having his children impacted his experience as a credit student, Joseph said they impacted his mentality and sense of perseverance: “I think that it encourages a lot; it is an impact

that the mind of the one who does not live it cannot say it. Many talk about school and say ‘No, when will I ever get to college?’ But it is possible; it is simply to propose it and fight.”

Ava also identified her children as making her academic journey more meaningful. Ava married and had children at 18 years old and had only recently returned to school. She had attended college in another country. She explained that earning a degree provided her children an example of determination: “And that's more than just satisfying a personal achievement. It's like showing my kids that it doesn't matter, because sometimes you do make life-changing decisions, whether you get married or have children. There will always be some way, a way for you to continue forward.”

Eliana also said family members made her academic journey more meaningful. She was raised by her grandmother and was motivated to pursue her college education by her grandmother’s experiences:

Almost 7 years ago, I suffered the loss of my grandmother. I grew up with her. And sadly, she died of ovarian cancer, and this cancer was not detected early. So, my goal or because I am studying health and science, to be a registered nurse, is for her. Because I want to perhaps help other people who have not been detected with certain diseases.

Discrepant data also emerged. One participant did not identify family as a form of encouragement. Carol said her classmates provide encouragement, which created motivation and positive experiences: “They [friends] say, “You can do this! Do you need anything?” We can explain it [assignment] to one another, or if you do not understand. . . .we are both cheering each other on.”

In summary, the third research question asked how environmental factors impacted former ESLN students’ experiences while persisting in credit coursework, which was answered

by Theme 4. Theme 4 is: Instructors and family provide encouragement that create positive experiences.

Participants said support and encouragement by faculty positively impacted their experiences by encouraging them to persist in their courses. Faculty supported participants by encouraging students to continue credit coursework, easing student concerns about English language skills, sharing success stories of other ESLN students as assurance of capable success, and providing positive feedback on assignments. Family provided encouragement by motivating students to continue, making experiences more meaningful, and providing time and space to allow participants to engage in academics. Discrepant data was also identified. One participant did not identify her family as a source of encouragement.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked how background factors impacted former ESLN students' experiences while they persisted in credit coursework? Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model identifies the following factors are background factors: Age, enrollment status, and residence. Bean and Metzner noted it is the responsibilities associated with age that can impact a student's ability to persist in credit courses (Bean & Metzner, 1985). This question was addressed by Theme 5: Family responsibilities, associated with age, limit the time available to engage in academics.

Theme 5: Family Responsibilities, Associated With Age, Limit the Time Available to Engage in Academics

Most participants explained that responsibilities as a caretaker impacted their experiences as a credit student because they limited time available to engage in academics. Caretaker responsibilities included preparing meals for family members, cleaning the household, caring for

children, and carpooling. Most notably, four participants stated responsibilities associated with children and maintaining their home impacted their experiences. Participants needed to thoughtfully balance school life and home life. Discrepant data also emerged; three participants did not identify family responsibilities as impactful to their experience.

Ava, Carol and Denise said family responsibilities limited time available to engage in academics, and, ultimately, determined the number of courses they enrolled in each semester. AVA explained that because of her family responsibilities she enrolled part time for most of her academic journey in credit. Ava is a wife and mother of three children. Each semester, she had to choose courses around the schedule of her family, including caring for her children, maintaining her home, and preparing meals. Although being enrolled part time allowed her to have a better balance between home life and her education, she was unable to progress her preferred pace:

Well, right now I'm a mother of three children, two almost-teenagers and a baby. And my responsibilities as a mother are to get up early, make them breakfast, and take them to school. Housework, making food, helping them with their homework . . . because of the pandemic, sometimes they need more support with their classes. That's why, as always, I choose classes that fit my life, and, right now, I chose two classes. My schedule is no longer organized as it was before. When I have free time, I take the opportunity to study, to do the quizzes.

Carol was enrolled in online courses and worked part time. She is a wife and a mother to two children. In the past, she enrolled as a full-time student. During the semester of the interview, she was initially enrolled in multiple classes but reduced her load to one course. She did this because of responsibilities outside of school associated with being a mother and contributor to family income. When asked how family responsibilities impacted her experiences,

she detailed her daily routine in managing work, college courses, and maintain the home. The following was her routine from Monday through Friday:

From 7:45 a.m. to 12:30 a.m., I'm working. After this, I come home, make lunch. After lunch, I go back to work [at school]. After school, I go for my daughter, I go for one of my daughters, I go home with her, she eats. I review what homework I have. At 5:40 p.m., I go for my other two daughters. We go home, they eat, and then we go to practice at 6 o'clock and get here until 9:30 at night. Starting at 10, I have free time to study. And wake up the next day, at 6 in the morning.

Bella, like other participants, is a wife and mother and had multiple responsibilities in her home, including taking care of children, preparing meals, cleaning, and carpooling. She had to be thoughtful about the number of courses she is enrolled in each semester. Bella was enrolled part time. In addition to responsibilities associated with the home, she was involved in committee work with her children's school district:

I had to organize my time in order not to feel stressed or effected between my classes, family, children, chores, and things. I have to get up early to have breakfast ready, and for the children to be in classes, and then I take my class. And yes, having a good management of my time, has helped me a lot to continue, besides studying, I am also a member of committees, so I have to divide my time. When I have to do committee work, I have to organize myself and sometimes I am, like 5 hours of Zoom . . . but if I organize myself, I finish, I survive the day and I say "ah, I did it one more day". That is the key, knowing how to manage your time.

Joseph also has children and described his responsibilities outside of school as providing for his home, wife, and children. To give each entity appropriate time, he had to organize his

time, and, up to that point, he had been able to “do a good job” maintaining balance. When asked how these responsibilities impacted his experience as a credit student, he said attending school reduced the time he spent with his children: “Well, many times it does affect, because the truth is that I have to go [to school] and sometimes my children ask [where I am going].”

Discrepant data also emerged. Three participants said family responsibilities did not impact their experiences as a credit student. Eliana explained, “While I'm at home, I can just help out with the housework, cooking, washing, ironing, and so on. But I cannot say that they affect me a lot because it is not an obligation. Let's say, I do these things because I offer to help, it is my will, but I also make time to study.” Another participant detailed her responsibilities outside of the home but said they do not have a major impact on her experiences as a student. Fatima explained she did have responsibilities as a spouse, including, working, cleaning the home, ironing, and other chores around the home; but if she was busy with school, she was able to prioritize schoolwork: “It does not impact in truth, they do not impact because they are . . . I put them last.” Jessica's child is an adult and no longer lived at home and, thus, did not feel family responsibilities impacted her experiences in credit classes.

In summary, the fourth research question asked how background factors impacted former ESLN students' experiences while they persisted in credit coursework and was answered with Theme 5: Family responsibilities, associated with age, limit the time available to engage in academics. Most participants explained family responsibilities limited time available to engage in academics. Family responsibilities determined the number of classes participants took each semester and time available to study. Discrepant data also emerged; three participants did not feel family responsibilities impacted their experiences.

Research Question 5

Research Question 5 asked how student support services impacted former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework? Theme 6 addressed this question: Student support services provide additional resources that contribute to academic success.

Theme 6: Student Support Services Provide Resources That Contribute to Participants' Academic Success.

All participants reported using at least one student support service offered by the community college, although seven participants reported using at least two separate services each semester. Regardless of frequency of service use, all participants reported experiencing positive interactions with various student support services offered at the community college. These interactions positively impacted their experiences as credit students. Three services most noted as having positive impacts on participants' experiences as credit students were financial aid, tutoring center and library, and counseling. Although the tutoring center and library are two separate resources, participants often spoke about them together. Therefore, these two resources are reported in findings as one entity. Financial aid positively impacted experiences and contributed to academic success by reducing or eliminating stress about economic hardship and allowing for increased focus on academics. Tutoring center and library positively impacted experiences and contributed to academic success by helping students feel more confident and providing additional learning resources. Counseling, or academic advising, impacted participants experiences by providing structure to academic plans. Although participants spoke about specific student support services that positively impacted their experiences, participants notably spoke about student support services as a whole and explained how they contributed to their success and created positive experiences.

Various participants shared counseling services positively impacted their experience. Joseph, Bella and Ava became aware of resources available to them through counselors and counseling presentations. Bella said counseling services, including orientation presentations and appointments, gave her educational path “more structure.” Eliana echoed the idea of counseling providing more “structure” to her academic path and career. When Carol was asked how counseling impacted her experiences in credit classes, she explained counseling helped her make decisions that positioned her to have success. When discussing course selection with her counselor, the counselor stressed the importance of having a balance between work, family, and school. Carol detailed a conversation with her counselor during a past semester: “It will affect your health, she told me that you are getting so many things, so much. . . .so much work for you, for your mind; she told me something like that. It does impact my decisions as well, as in the decision of whether or not to take the class.”

Along with providing structure, participants stated counseling helped them understand services available. Although the term counseling is utilized throughout the study, academic advising from non-instructional faculty is what participants are referencing. While enrolled in ESLN classes, Joseph was strongly interested in credit courses but was nervous to begin. After attending a counseling presentation, he learned about support services available and then became motivated to start the matriculation process for credit coursework. Joseph reported seeking counseling services each semester as a credit student:

As an ESL[N] [student], I really think that the starting point for a student to be motivated is when, for example, counseling arrives . . . so that you take the step you have to take, not to be afraid, that is what you [counseling services] are for, to help. So, I think that many people stop out of fear or think that they are not there to help, that they are going to

be left alone. That is not the truth. The college is there for us, and I say it from experience. If you go looking for information, ask. And the truth is that if they do not have the answer, they send you with the right person that can help you.

Participants also reported experiencing academic success because of financial aid. Seven participants reported receiving some sort of financial aid, including, but not limited to, emergency aid administered by the college, grants from federal and state financial aid, and scholarships provided by county programs and specialized counseling programs. When asked if financial hardships impacted experiences as credit students, six participants did not believe they experienced financial stress because of economic support received from financial aid. Furthermore, participants explained financial aid reduced or eliminated potential stress from economic hardships, which allowed them to focus on academics. Ava stated financial aid helped her “economically” and she was better able to focus on her courses. Carol substantiated this idea and, up to that point, had not experienced economic stress. She received federal and state aid. Eliana said by receiving financial aid, and not having to worry about tuition, she was motivated her to continue doing well in her classes: “It [financial aid] is a great support for me.” Joseph also expressed that financial aid provided him the ability to focus on his academics and was “a big help.” Lastly, Fatima stated financial aid helped create a positive experience because she was able to pay for her courses and textbooks.

While financial aid eliminated barriers or challenges and allowed participants to engage in academics, the tutoring center and library provided resources and support that positively impacted student experiences. All participants reported using the tutoring center or library throughout their academic journey. Multiple participants said tutoring services provided supplemental learning. For example, Jessica said, with help from library staff, she learned how to

conduct academic research: “Yes. Library was very good because last semester I didn't know how to research. And Mary [library staff] taught me how to do that.” Ava also said the tutoring center and library helped her to understand the process of academic research, and she often used online resources and “guides” available to assist with academic writing. Furthermore, she credited these services with helping her receive good grades in classes. Denise reported using the tutoring center and language lab as an ESLN and credit student. Her experience was better because of these supports; she felt “more secure” about her credit courses. Fatima credited tutoring services with helping her finish assignments “of any type.”

Carol described positive interactions with a specific tutor. Carol began working with an English tutor for assistance with her writing. The tutor would clarify instructions on assignments and review the grammar and content of Carol’s written assignments. The tutor frequently checked in on the progress of assignments. As time progressed, Carol began talking to a tutor about stress she experienced from balancing family responsibilities and credit classes: “I was also commenting on her about the classes, that I felt like very pressured and when I was left with two, I told her, ‘you know what . . . I feel like that.’ She said, ‘Carol, if you think I can help you, support you, if you don't understand something, tell me.’ Carol concluded: “I do not think I would be able to get good grades without tutoring.”

Although participants identified specific student support services that positively impacted their experiences, participants also spoke generally about student support services. When Ava was asked how student support services impacted her experiences, she identified specific resources and their individual impact, but also clarified it was a combination of all student support services that contributed to her academic success: “I believe that it is a fundamental part in making it easier for you to fulfill responsibilities of your classes.” When asked what

contributed to her success as a credit student, Fatima had been able to continue enrollment and finish her degree quickly because of student support services offered by the college. Fatima was working toward completing an associate degree with the possibility of transferring in the future:

For me, there are many supports that the [college] gives in one way or another.

Depending on the needs of each student. And now yes, if we don't take advantage of all those opportunities, well now I don't know, I don't know what else it can give. Therefore, to be honest, I come from Mexico and sometimes we wish that all those opportunities were also given there.

When asked about her experiences as a credit student, Bella discussed multiple topics, such as course availability, tutoring, and motivation received from instructors. She concluded by talking about the variety of resources and services provided by the college for students:

The tools are [here]. It is a matter of you making the decision to study and move forward. We have it [tools] available. And we can do it, it is only a matter of wanting to do it. The school has that availability for us students. And if we want to, we can. I feel like we have everything. There are a lot of resources. The school gives you everything on a silver platter, as they say. And if we want to, we can. I feel we [students] have everything [student support services].

Multiple times throughout the interview Joseph expressed his multiple fears and concerns were eased by his experiences with student support services:

I think that many people stop because out of fear or think that they are not there to help, that they are going to be left alone. That is not the truth. The college is, there for us and I say it from experience, if you go looking for information, ask, and the truth that if you [staff] do not have the answer, they send you with the right person that they can help you.

When asked about her academic experience, Carol said it was “lovely” and was pleased overall. When asked if there was anything she wanted to share that was not covered by the interview questions, she expressed gratitude for services for students and their families:

The other thing that gratifies me as a student is that in addition to the fact that they have financed my classes, they also have other aids for people during this time of the pandemic. There were many aids, I did not have all of them, I did not apply to all, but I was pleased that they [college] are also attentive not only when they [students] study, but [attentive to] the [student’s] family, because I remember they said, “if you need food or something like that,” and they sent it.

In summary, the final research question asked how student support services impacted former ESLN students’ experiences while they persisted in credit coursework. This was addressed by Theme 6: Student support services provide resources that contribute to participants’ academic success. Financial aid impacted participants experience by reducing or eliminating economic hardships, eliminating stress, and increasing ability to focus on academics. Tutoring center and the library positively impacted experiences and helped create academic success by helping students feel more secure about their abilities to complete assignments and providing academic support outside of the classroom. In addition to naming specific student support services that positively impacted their experiences, participants spoke about the positive impact of the entirety of student support services.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the findings presented in chapter 4. The chapter begins with an overview of the problem and the purpose of the study. Then, it reviews the methodology and data analysis process. Next, interpretations of findings are shared. Lastly, recommendations are provided for future research, followed by concluding comments.

Overview of the Problem

Findings from previous studies demonstrated adult students formerly enrolled in ESLN have lower transfer and graduation rates and are less likely to enter credit coursework (Hodara, 2015). In addition, adult students formerly in ESLN also persist in credit courses at lower rates than adult learners not previously enrolled ESLN (Raufman et al., 2019).

In addition, there is limited research available on adult English language learners enrolled in higher education, and more specifically, in community colleges (Raufman et al., 2019). Although researchers identified barriers experienced by ESLN students, thorough examination of these barriers has not been robustly analyzed to assist students in academic success (Becker, 2011). To understand how community college institutions can better develop processes and procedures to better assist this population, this study described experiences of former ESLN students who persisted in credit coursework at a community college. The study also explored the ways student support services impacted the experiences of former ESLN students while they persisted in credit coursework.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of former ESLN students while they persisted in credit coursework through the lens of Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model. Specifically, Bean and Metzner's model was used

to explore experiences related to academic, psychological, environmental, and background factors. In addition, the purpose of the study was to examine how student support services impacted students' experiences while they persisted in credit coursework.

Review of the Methodology and Data Analysis

A qualitative phenomenological methodology was selected for this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect detailed, in-depth data from students (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). A qualitative approach was selected for this study because the researcher sought to present specific and rich descriptions (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017) of adult English language learners previously enrolled in ESLN courses who had persisted in credit coursework. According to Lochmiller and Lester (2017), when a study has a narrow focus, a qualitative approach is best. This study specifically focused on former ESLN students enrolled in credit coursework due to the limited available research on this student population.

To address this, one overarching research question guided the study: How do former ESLN students perceive the impact of academic, psychological, environmental, and background factors—as defined by Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model—on their experiences while they persisted in credit coursework? Additionally, five research questions were addressed:

- Research Question 1: How do academic factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?
- Research Question 2: How do psychological factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?
- Research Question 3: How do environmental factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?

- Research Question 4: How do background factors impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?
- Research Question 5: How do student support services impact former ESLN students' experiences while persisting in credit coursework?

Data were collected from eight adult learners enrolled in credit courses at a community college who previously completed the 5th level of the ESLN program. Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted online via Zoom. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to a Microsoft word document. Upon ensuring accurate transcription of data, transcripts were imported into NVivo software for organization and analysis. Creswell's (2020) five steps for data analysis were used to conduct analysis. Codes were identified and grouped into clusters; these clusters were developed into themes.

Discussion and Interpretation of Study Findings

The purpose of the study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of former ESLN students while they persisted in credit coursework through the lens of Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model. In addition, the purpose of the study was to examine how student support services impacted students' experiences while they persisted in credit coursework. Six themes emerged from data analysis. Discussion of findings is organized by research question and accompanying theme. Interpretation of findings are discussed in relationship to literature.

The first research question was answered via two themes: Theme 1: experiences as a credit student impacted by the need to increase time dedicated to academics, and Theme 2: attendance and major certainty were helpful to success.

Theme 1: Experiences as a Credit Student Impacted by Need to Increase Time Dedicated to Academics

Participants detailed how their experiences as a credit student were impacted by having to significantly increase the amount of time dedicated to their academics, outside of class time. All participants had to increase study time as they progressed in credit courses, regardless of their program of study, previous academic experiences, and academic goals. The most frequently cited reasons for needing to adjust time dedicated to studying were increased quantity of content in credit coursework and their English language skills.

Participants made comparisons to their past ESLN experiences while describing their experiences as credit students. It became evident that participants highly valued their experiences as ESLN students and found those experiences beneficial to their academic journeys as credit students. When asked to describe study habits, all participants described needing to significantly increase study time. Based on the study findings, participants were greatly impacted by the difference in academic course demands. Participants specifically identified the amount of work required outside of lecture, including increased interactions with technology and reading textbooks. They described differences between studying for ESLN courses in comparison to credit courses. Study findings suggest participants felt a great sense of responsibility for their academic success and needed to make significant changes to their course preparation.

In addition, participants spent significant time detailing thoughts about their English skills in relation to the academic demands of credit coursework. Participants spoke about the challenges of learning discipline-specific content in English because they were still enhancing their language skills. This study finding will be discussed in more detail under Theme 3.

Findings corroborate findings of other researchers noted in the literature review. For example, in Lansangan-Sabangan' (2019) qualitative study, participants noted increase in study time as a barrier to their success. In addition, Becker's (2011) study indicated ESLN programs can better support students learning and academic skills with a robust instructional support programs focused on language skills acquisition and content learning.

Theme 2: Strong Attendance and Major Certainty Helpful in Academic Success in Classes

Participants detailed attendance as impactful to their experiences and the ways it helped them succeed academically. In addition, participants felt knowing their program of study was impactful because it increased motivation to complete the ESLN program, transition into credit, and persist into credit courses. All participants had perfect or near-perfect attendance and found it incredibly important to their academic success. It was evident that students were concerned about missing classes due to the amount of content covered by each lecture. Furthermore, because English language skills require more time to process information, participants thought missing class could be detrimental to their learning.

When discussing major certainty, most participants found it helpful. Essentially, having a defined goal helped students define academic pathways. Knowing their major provided participants structure in course-taking patterns and in inquiring about student support services. Participants responded similarly to participant's in Janis's (2012) phenomenological study. Participants in that study shared having a defined major and goal allowed for a clearer path and better utilization of time. Multiple studies (see Rodriguez, et. al, 2019; Beam et. al, 2019; Bergey et al., 2018) indicated defined goals and majors can help students progress. In addition, being

knowledgeable about their major provides students with opportunities to explore careers and better prepare for more advanced discipline-related coursework.

Theme 3: Self-Perceived English Language Abilities Create Stressful Experiences in Academic Settings

Participants experienced stress from their English language skills. Most notably, participants described concerns about communicating in English in academic settings. Participants shared experiences of feeling stress about their self-perceived abilities to understand English in credit courses. Two students spoke about self-identifying as a previous ESLN student as a strategy to ease stress and seek support from instructors. Stress over language skills made participants' experiences feel pressured and, at times, challenging.

All participants discussed feeling nervousness or stress about their English language skills, specifically in academic settings. Participants identified their English language skills as the area of most concern. It was evident verbal communication in English was a potential barrier and cause of self-doubt. English language skills greatly impacted all aspects of their experiences as credit students because it was the way students processed information and communicated with multiple entities of the institution, including faculty, classmates, staff and others.

Findings of this study corroborate findings from Proulx's (2018) phenomenological study on ESLN students. The idea of English being a critical factor for success and acclimation in U.S. society emerged as a theme in the findings (Proulx, 2018). Participants viewed lack of language skills as one of the greatest barriers to their success. Lansangan-Sabangan's (2019) study also included participants who identified English language skills, specifically speaking, as a critical skill to their academic success. Becker's (2011) phenomenological study revealed participants

who were most successful in transitions from ESLN to credit were students who had strong language skills in English.

Theme 4: Faculty and Family Provide Encouragement

Participants spoke in detail about receiving encouragement from family and faculty while enrolled in credit coursework; this encouragement created positive experiences. Seven participants detailed examples of encouragement received from instructors. All participants shared receiving support from at least one family member. Participants stated support provided by faculty positively impacted their experiences by encouraging them to persist in their courses. Some ways students reported feeling supported by faculty included: faculty explicitly encouraging students to continue enrolling credit coursework, easing student concerns about English language skills, sharing success stories of other ESLN students as assurance of potential success, and providing positive feedback on assignments.

Study findings suggest instructor feedback greatly impacted participants. Instructors were critical to student success and learning because they not only delivered content but they supplemented learning with additional support, resources, and compassion. Participant responses suggest their experiences were heavily impacted by positive learning environments created by their instructors inside and outside of the classroom. Based on study findings, faculty encouragement was most impactful. Additionally, family helped supplement encouragement and positive learning experiences. Findings also suggest families made participants' learning experiences incredibly meaningful.

These findings are like those of other studies. Participants in Proulx's (2018) study identified faculty and family support as critical to their success. Janis' (2012) also found having a supportive family and positive interactions with faculty were positive to learning experiences.

Theme 5: Family Responsibilities Associated With Age Limit the Time Available to Engage in Academics

Most participants explained family responsibilities limited time available to engage in academics. Family responsibilities determined the number of classes participants could take each semester and time available to study. Discrepant data also emerged; Three participants did not feel family responsibilities impacted their experiences.

Participants' progress was significantly impacted by responsibilities outside of school and related to families and work. Seven participants reported being enrolled part time because of responsibilities outside of work. Participants detailed how these responsibilities prevented them from either enrolling full time or fully engaging in their academics.

Findings of this study align with findings of the Janis (2012) study conducted with older ESLN students. Participants identified multiple barriers to their academic journey, including family responsibilities (Janis, 2012). These findings also corroborate statements by Bergey (2018) in the publication *Serving English Language Learners in Higher Education*, which states adult English language learners (ELLs) often have multiple responsibilities outside of school that prevent them from persisting, maintaining motivation, and reaching more advanced credit coursework (Bergey et. al, 2018).

Theme 6: Student Support Services Provide Resources That Contribute to Academic Success

All participants reported using at least one student support service offered by the community college, and seven participants reported using at least two separate services each semester. Regardless of frequency of use, all participants reported interactions with various student support services that positively impacted their experiences as credit students. Three

services with the most positive impact on participants were financial aid, tutoring center and library, and counseling. Financial aid positively impacted experiences and contributed to academic success by reducing or eliminating stress about economic hardship and allowing increased focus on academics. Tutoring center and library positively impacted experiences and contributed to academic success by helping students feel more confident and providing additional learning resources. Counseling impacted participants experiences by providing structure to academic plans. Although participants spoke about specific student support services, they also, notably, identified student support services, as a whole, as contributing to their success and creating positive experiences.

Findings suggest participants were aware of student support services, which is further evidence of their value to participants. Findings also suggest comprehensive student support services provided spaces to supplement learning. The tutoring center and library provided supplemental instruction, reducing potential disadvantages in study skills and English language skills. Participants spoke with immense gratitude about student support services used and other available services. The theme indicates participants felt part of a caring learning environment outside of the classroom.

Findings support research findings by the Public Policy Institute of California that stated non-credit students benefit from student support services: “Stronger student supports, including advising, placement, and information about degree and certificates available at the college, might help more underrepresented students advance toward college degrees” (Rodriguez, et. al, 2019). This study’s findings also support findings of Guthrie-Clarkson’s (2018) phenomenological study, which presented student support services as critical to participants’ progress to degree completion.

Implications for Practice

Findings of this study can be used to inform the practice, processes, and procedures of professionals working with adult English language learners in community colleges and adult basic education. Lived experiences of the sample group provide insight into how participants experienced higher education. Several recommendations emerged from the findings.

It is recommended that institutions introduce student support services and instructional support services early in adult English language learners' educational experiences. Allowing students to become familiar with services may help students supplement their learning. Multiple participants of this study stated they decided to transition into credit because of early exposure to student support services, including counseling and tutoring. Furthermore, they attributed their persistence and academic success to these services. In addition, because participants were introduced to services earlier in academic journey, they were better able to navigate how to request and inquire any additional student support services needed. This corroborates findings of Rodriguez et al. (2019) who recommended access to stronger student support services as a way to help noncredit English as second language (ESL) students in California community colleges complete credit programs.

Additionally, it is recommended that higher education institutions integrate English language acquisition coursework with career-related content. Integrating ESLN education with vocation and career-related content may better prepare students for transitions to credit courses and the workforce. This recommendation is supported by multiple participants who said taking vocational ESLN courses, and bilingual credit courses increased learning and encouraged persistence. This is also corroborated with findings of Bergey et al. (2018), who stated, "Students' language development must be connected to and carefully interwoven with

disciplinary language development as well as connect to their academic and career goals” (Bergey et al., 2018, p.14).

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher has multiple recommendations for future research to expand data available about adult English language learners. The first recommendation is to conduct more qualitative research focused on understanding experiences of ELLs in community college beyond their first year of credit coursework. Scholars must continue to develop rich data and deeper insights on student experiences. Furthermore, qualitative data will help scholars understand how adult ELLs make meaning of their experiences. Consequently, this will allow institutions to develop effective processes and procedures to increase academic outcomes.

Due to the nature of the qualitative methodology of the study, quantitative studies are recommended to establish a broader understanding of the experiences and needs of adult ELLs. Quantitative methods, including surveys and questionnaires, may also provide practical and quantifiable data while maintaining participant anonymity. Maintaining anonymity may elicit different data.

Participant diversity is recommended for future studies. The participants included in this study were primarily female Hispanic students. It is recommended in the future that male Hispanic students be included in the study. Furthermore, it is recommended that studies included participant of various cultural backgrounds and varying majors. By have a diverse sample group with different academic goals, scholars can develop deeper understanding of adult English language learners in higher education and how to best support them. In addition, participants of different cultural backgrounds can provide different responses.

Lastly, the researcher recommends that studies be conducted about characteristics of eligible ESLN students, for example, a study about former ESLN students who have foreign degrees and experiences with higher education institutions outside of the United States. In addition, studies with larger sample sizes conducted at multiple colleges.

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of the study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of former ESLN students while they persisted in credit coursework through the lens of Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional student attrition model. In addition, the purpose of the study was to examine how student support services impacted students' experiences while they persisted in credit coursework. The study findings demonstrate adult English language learners face barriers that can be overcome with multiple supports. Additionally, English language learners have meaningful goals that contribute to society. Given the study findings it can be concluded students are more successful when supported within and outside of the institution of attendance. Community colleges should consider to continue to develop and offer supports for adult English language learners. One support that can be offered on behalf of community colleges is accessible academic tutoring, with special regard to English language acquisition. Participants reported needing support in this area. In addition, access to financial aid, and guidance on completing applications can create more successful academic outcomes for adult English language learners. Participants stated receiving local, federal and state aid were meaningful and helpful. Lastly, faculty and staff can provide compassionate response when interacting with adult English language learners. All participants reported more meaningful experiences when encouragement was received from faculty and staff.

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Appendix A – Study Email Invitation

Hello Student,

My name is Mariana Zepeda, I am a graduate student from Kansas State University. I am doing a research study as part of my doctoral degree requirements. My study's title is: **Experiences of Former English as a Second Language Noncredit (ESLN) students in Credit Courses at a California Community College**. So, I think you might be the perfect fit to help me with this research. If you participate in the study you will receive a \$30 Amazon gift card.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of former English as a Second Language (ESLN) students currently enrolled in credit coursework so that colleges can better help students. Participation consists of a 1-hour interview via zoom and reviewing the transcribed interview to ensure accuracy. Before beginning the interview, participants will also be asked to sign an informed consent form.

Your participation is strictly voluntary, and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences. You will be able to withdraw from interview at any time and responses will be deleted, including the informed consent agreement.

There will be no individually identifiable information, remarks, comments or other identification of you as an individual participant. All results will be presented as a collective summary. If you wish, you may request a copy of the results of this research study by emailing me at: xxx@ksu.edu. The results of this research project will be published in a dissertation, but your identity will remain anonymous and confidential.

If you agree to the study, please respond to this email with dates and times that best work with your schedule. Once the interview dates and times are scheduled, you will receive an email with a consent form and a meeting invitation with the Zoom link. With your permission, the session will be recorded and transcribed, but, these data will be available only to you and me. The results of this research project will be published in a dissertation, but your identity will stay confidential. Again, your participation is voluntary.

I personally want to thank you for helping me with my research.

Mariana Zepeda

Questions and comments about this study may be directed to any of the following:

- Mariana Zepeda, xxx@ksu.edu
- KSU Dissertation Chair George Boggs, xxx@ksu.edu
- Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, xxx-xxx-xxxx
- Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Appendix B – Consent Form

Consent Form

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Please review and sign the project consent form.

Project title: Experiences of Former ESLN Students as they Persist in Credit Coursework at a California Community College

Purpose/Benefit: To gather data and analyze your experience at College of the Desert so community colleges may understand how they can better help former ESLN students meet their educational goals. Your participation will contribute to the current literature on the subject of how community college can better serve former ESLN students' progress toward their educational goals, including what barriers to success might be preventing a smooth progression toward their educational goals and what support and services former ESLN students need that will help them on their educational paths.

Project approval date: 09/16/2021

Project expiration date:

Consent:

This research project is being conducted independently by Mariana Zepeda, who is a doctoral student utilizing this information to complete a degree at Kansas State University. Your participation in this research project is greatly appreciated and will consist of participating in a Zoom interview and reviewing responses to ensure accuracy. The interview is designed to take 1 hour, and there are no foreseeable risks to you or your relationship with College of the Desert. The results of this research project will be published in a dissertation, but your identity will remain confidential.

By agreeing to participate in the study, you will be giving your consent for the researcher or principal investigator to include your responses in her data analysis. Your participation in this research study is strictly voluntary, and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences. You do not have to answer all of the questions and your information is confidential. By completing this interview, you will receive a \$30 Amazon gift card at your preferred address.

If you have any questions about this study, you may email me:

Mariana Zepeda at xxx@ksu.edu or the committee chair: George Boggs at xxx@ksu.edu. You may also contact Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, xxx-xxx-xxxx or Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, xxx-xxx-xxxx.

By checking the boxes below, you are consenting to participate in the Zoom interview. With your permission, the session will be recorded and transcribed. Again, your participation is voluntary.

I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

[I agree]

[I do not agree]

I verify that by checking the box below I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described.

[I agree]

[I do not agree]

Appendix C – Interview Protocol and Interview Questions

The following steps outline the proposed process the researcher will follow to conduct the participant semi-structured interviews.

First, an email will be sent inviting individuals to participate in study. In the initial email, participants will be provided with the study topic and a request to participate in the study. The researcher will provide at least two options of dates to meet for the Zoom interview, sending the link to the participant's preferred email address once the day and time are scheduled. Consent form will be emailed to participant to be completed before the interview starts. The anticipated interview length is approximately 1 hour.

The interviews will be video, and audio recorded. Immediately upon joining the Zoom meeting, the researcher will remind the participants of the recording and the study's voluntary nature (see script).

Hello My name is Mariana Zepeda I am a doctoral student at Kansas State University. Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study, which looks at the experiences of former ESLN students currently enrolled in credit coursework. This interview should only take about one hour and there are no foreseeable risks to you. Your identity will be kept confidential and your answers and participation in this interview will not affect your relationship with the college.

With your permission, I will record and take notes during the interview, and both will be used for transcription purposes only. Once transcribed, the recording will be deleted. If you agree to being recorded but feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview and don't wish to continue, you can exit at any time. Also, if you wish to not be seen during the interview, you are welcome to keep your Zoom cameras off.

Throughout the interview I will be doing what is called member checking, confirming with you that I fully understand your response. This is done to ensure accuracy and trustworthiness. When the interviews are transcribed I will contact you to review the transcript and ensure responses are accurate.

When the research is completed, I will save the transcriptions and other study data for up to 5 years after the study is over. The same measures described above will be taken to protect confidentiality of the study data. Information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent.

By completing this interview, you will receive a \$30 Amazon gift card.

Are there any questions for me before we get started? I will begin recording now.

Interview Questions

1. Did you know your major when you first enrolled in credit classes and finished ESLN?
How has knowing/not knowing your major impacted your experiences as a student in credit classes?
2. Can you describe your study habits in ESLN and credit courses? How do your study habits impact your experiences as a student enrolled in credit classes?
3. What are your experiences with instructors in ESLN and credit courses? Describe the impact their advisement has had on your experiences as a student enrolled in credit classes?
4. How would you describe your attendance in credit classes? Does your attendance have an impact on your experience as a student?
5. Can you describe your experiences with registering for classes each semester in ESLN and credit classes? Are you able to get the courses you need? How does course availability impact your experiences as a student enrolled in credit classes?
6. How do your finances impact your experiences as a student enrolled in credit classes?
7. Are you employed? How many hours a week do you work? Do your work hours impact your experiences as a student in credit classes?
8. Please describe who or what encourages you to continue with your education. How does outside encouragement impact your experiences as a student enrolled in credit classes?
9. Please describe family responsibilities. How do your family responsibilities impact your experiences as a student in credit classes?

10. Do you plan to transfer? Have the available transfer opportunities had an impact on your decision to continue in credit classes? How do you think your experiences as an ESLN student impact your decision to transfer?
11. Describe how useful your educational experiences as an ESLN and credit student are for future employment. What are your educational and career goals? How Has your experience as an ESLN student impacted your goals?
12. How do you think your age and enrollment status impact your experiences as a credit student? Does where you live have an impact on your experience as a student?
13. How would you describe your stress? Describe how your stress impacted your experiences as an ESLN student and now your credit coursework?
14. Student support services are services that help you succeed in your education. Some student support services include: library, tutoring center, orientation, admissions and records, outreach programs, financial aid, mental health, and counseling. Which student support services do you use each semester? Describe the impact these services have on your experience as a student in credit coursework.
15. What do you think contributes to your success as a credit course student? How has your academic experience been? What was easy, what was challenging?
16. Is there any information you would like to share with me that was not covered?

Debrief

Thank you for participating in this study. All the information collected in today's interview will be confidential, and there will be no way of identifying your responses in the data archive. When the interviews are transcribed I will contact you to ensure accuracy. If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me via email at xxx@ksu.edu