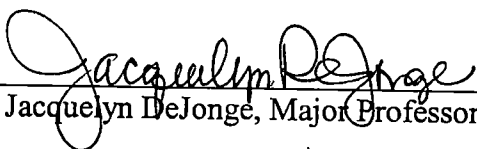
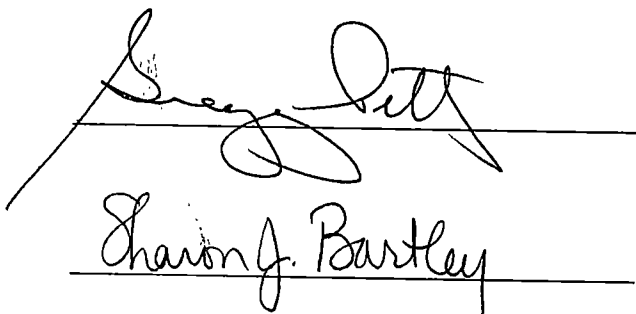


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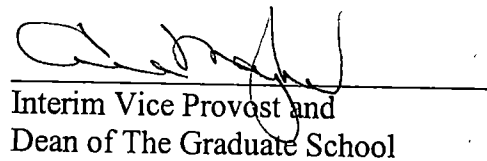
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Kay Ellen Hill entitled "Deterrents to Participation in Company Supported Tuition Reimbursement." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Human Resource Development.

  
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We have read this thesis  
And recommend its acceptance:

  
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**Deterrents to Participation in Company  
Supported Tuition Reimbursement**

**A Thesis  
Presented for the  
Master of Science Degree**

**The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Kay Ellen Hill  
May 2001**

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## **Abstract**

With today's labor crunch brought on by a prospering economy, companies are striving to offer creative benefits packages in order to recruit and retain the best employees. Tuition assistance is viewed as one such recruiting and retention tool. Forward thinking companies realize that an up to date and educated workforce is essential for continued success in a today's ever-changing global work community. The latest increases in technology and information require continued education to stay current.

The purpose of this study was to determine what factors deter employees from participating in a company supported tuition reimbursement program. A population of 105 retail specialty chain store employees yielded 74 responses. An existing instrument, Deterrents to Participation Scale-General, was modified to collect data in this study. Deterring factors measured were educational cost, lack of self-confidence, low personal priority, time constraints, lack of encouragement, lack of interest, lack of relevance, and personal problems. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze data obtained from the survey.

Results indicated that the eight factors under study did not deter employees in participating in educational activities. No relation was found between any demographic variable and the eight factors. However, the data revealed that the structure of the tuition reimbursement program might exclude some employees from participating. This exclusion may negatively affect employee retention, the purpose of the program's existence.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As business and government organizations strive to recruit the best employees as workers during a growth economy, creative benefit packages have become more of the norm, rather than the exception. Incentives such as sign-on bonuses, flex-time, job sharing, on-site child care, free gym memberships, superior working conditions, and performance bonuses over time are becoming viable additions to the standard health insurance, retirement benefits, and paid time off benefit packages of the past. According to Paul Lemberg, a consultant with Lemberg & Company in San Diego, competing with training benefits can lend itself to retaining better quality employees (Steen, 1998).

A 1998 survey by *InfoWorld* found that 75% of respondents reported their companies offer tuition reimbursement. Response to this type of program was mixed with only 41% of employees taking advantage of the tuition reimbursement (Steen, 1998). Additional research suggests that factors deterring participation in tuition reimbursement programs exist.

Forward thinking companies realize that an up to date and educated workforce is essential for continued success in a today's ever-changing global work community. The latest increases in technology and information require continuing education to stay current. Identifying deterrents related to participation in a company sponsored tuition reimbursement program is vital to any organization with such a program in place. The understanding of deterrents can lead to developing solutions to encourage employee participation in continuing education and tuition assistance programs. Martin Bell, Director of the University of California, Irvine, Graduate School of Management, is

concerned with fewer students being offered tuition reimbursement and company budget cuts eliminating programs all together. With these cuts, the best-trained workforce will not come to be (Sunoo, 1997). The knowledge of why professionals choose to participate or not to participate in additional learning programs can offer information that policy developers can use to make their programs cost effective and create interest in participation (Cookson 1989).

### **Problem**

Corporate America spends about \$11 billion per year on college education for employees (Ivery 1999). Education is one of the keys to advancement within an organization, but employers still ask why more employees do not take advantage of company sponsored tuition reimbursement programs. Many companies use tuition reimbursement programs as a tool for retaining current employees in their organizations. The employee has an opportunity to earn an additional degree, stay on top of changes with current skills, or develop entirely new skill sets. An improved chance for promotion and rounding out one's educational and life experiences would yield a more valued and satisfied employee.

The current tuition reimbursement program in place, within the company to be studied, requires the employee to apply for approval prior to registering for a course, and to pay for the course and required materials up front. Upon completing the course with a "C" or better, the employee must send in receipts and proof of grade for reimbursement. Current turn around time on receiving the reimbursement payment is approximately six to eight weeks. In order to be eligible, employees must have one full year of service with the



company. Annual reimbursement is up to \$2,000 for full-time employees and up to \$675 for part-time employees.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify deterrents for employees not participating in an employer offered tuition reimbursement program. The deterring factors measured were determined by use of the Deterrence to Participation Scale-General instrument developed by Gerald Darkenwald and Thomas Valentine at Rutgers University. This study also attempted to determine if the structure of the existing tuition reimbursement program deters employees from participating.

### **Definitions**

**Educational Activity**-any courses, workshops, seminars, training programs, offered by schools, colleges and other organizations or community groups (Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985 p 178).

**Deter**- to turn aside, discourage, or prevent from acting by fear or consideration of dangerous, difficult, or unpleasant attendant circumstances or consequences (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 1986, p. 616).

**District Leader (DL)**-full-time employee responsible for entire district

**Store Leader (SL)**-full-time employee responsible for a specific store

**Assistant Store Manager (AM I, and AM II)**-part-time or full-time store personnel

**Customer Service Representative (CSR)**-part-time, non-management store personnel

### **Research Questions**

1. Using the Deterrents to Participation Scale –General, how do respondents rank the following factors: educational cost, lack of self-confidence, low personal priority, time constraints, lack of encouragement, lack of interest, lack of relevance and personal problems?
2. Do any relationships exist between the eight factors and demographic variables?
3. What specific factors, if any, of the exiting tuition reimbursement program deter employee participation?

### **Assumptions**

1. The district staff was motivated to participate in the survey.
2. Survey respondents provided honest, accurate, and complete information.

### **Limitation**

1. Most employees at the store level do not have a year of service and are not eligible to take advantage of the company offered tuition reimbursement program.

### **Rationale of Study**

According to a Human Resource Representative for one of the Southern regions of the company under study, the purpose of the current tuition reimbursement program is to encourage employee retention. (Human Resource Representative, personal communication, August 17, 2000) In order for the program to serve its purpose, employees must take advantage of this benefit. This study deals specifically with potential adult learners working in a retail specialty store chain. This particular type is

business often employs workers that are transient in nature. Identifying reasons for non-participation can aid human resource professionals in developing programs proving beneficial to both the employees and the sponsoring organization. In turn, the probability of employee retention may rise.

This study also adds to the knowledge base for those academicians interested in pursuing the study of deterrents to participation in adult learning. A data set taken from a population consisting of adults ranging in age of 18 to 45 in various stages of educational experience may offer a broad overview of deterrents to participation.

### **Organization of the Study**

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 consists of the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives, research questions, assumptions, limitation, and rationale for the study. Chapter 2 provides a related review of literature to aid in study of the problem. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in the study, including data collections procedures. Chapter 4 presents the data, and contains a discussion on the findings. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations pertinent to the organization under study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In order to understand deterrents to participation in employee sponsored tuition reimbursement programs, this chapter is organized into three sections. The first section explores models used in explaining factors associated with adult nonparticipation in learning opportunities. The second section summarizes deterrents to adults participating in continuing education. The last section addresses adult participation in education by use of studies employing the Deterrence to Participation Survey instrument and subsequent variations of that instrument.

#### **Theoretical Models**

Knox and Videbeck (1963) looked at the relationship between personal orientation to participation and the combination of opportunities, current life role, and personal and environmental inhibitors. This approach suggested that an individual's willingness to participate could be altered depending on changes in one's current life situation.

Smorynski and Parochka (1979) focused on cost as part of the decision-making process when considering further education. Their model was developed from studying continuing education activities in healthcare workers. This model assessed a course's usefulness, convenience, relevance to the current work situation, and included a cost-benefit analysis of worth. Researchers discovered that cost of attending programs was a factor for respondents choosing not to participate. This finding became a basis for development of further models.

Cross (1981) continued in this vein when developing the Chain-of-Response model. The premise was that an individual went through a complex chain of responses when determining whether to participate in an activity. Each response was based on a self-evaluation of the individual's position within his or her environment, and was influenced by the individual's attitudes regarding education.

Cross' model contained a "barriers to participation" construct consisting of three categories. These were situational, institutional, and dispositional factors. Respondents reported situational factors, items that may exist in one's life at any given time, most frequently. This barrier was demonstrated in the form of time and cost deterrents to participation.

Institutional barriers, defined as practices or procedures that discourage or prevent individuals from participating, most often were reported as inconvenient locations, scheduling problems, or lack of relevant or interesting courses. This barrier was reported by approximately one-fourth of respondents.

The dispositional barriers were the least frequently reported. Approximately 2% of respondents reported factors including lack of ability, lack of interest, and learner self-concept. Individuals not participating in educational activities reported issues involving self-perception more often than learners.

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) expanded Cross' theory by developing a psychosocial model that emphasized socioeconomic status factors. This model attempted to determine to what extent the environment encouraged or required additional learning. The idea was that an individual would be more likely to participate if they felt additional

education would offer a true value. From this, Darkenwald and Merriam added a fourth category of barrier, informational barriers, to Cross' original three. This psychosocial barrier included possible negative attitudes regarding usefulness and appropriateness of learning activities.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) developed a model to explain how people decide to perform or not perform certain behaviors. According to the model, the performance of a behavior, such as registering for an educational activity, is caused by an intention to perform that behavior. This intention is caused by a positive attitude toward registering, or by a perception of social pressure to register. This model is concerned with how individual's feel toward a behavior. The researchers call the social pressure variable a "subjective norm" because it constitutes subjective perceptions of what the individual thinks other significant people want his or her specific behavior to be in a given situation. This model has been useful in increasing and enhancing participation of continuing professional education courses by addressing concerns of potential participants.

### **Adult Participation in Education**

Research concerned with adult participation in education often takes one of two approaches. Much of the literature on adult participation is either descriptive or explanatory. Descriptive studies rely on questions asking for such information as who participates, and how often do the individuals participate. Demographics are used to determine differences between participants and non-participants. These kinds of studies have produced an understanding of demographic information, such as level of formal education, which can predict characteristics closely associated with participation

(Cookson, 1989). Unfortunately, this kind of knowledge is only a sound basis for further research. Cross (1981) pointed out that descriptive research still does not explain why adults participate in continuing education, and provides a limited use for increasing participation.

Explanatory studies try to answer why adults participate in continued learning. One branch of researchers investigated factors that motivate participation. Houle (1961) found three motivational orientations for participation in continuing education. These findings prompted much study in the field of motivation and the use of factor analysis to determine the structure beneath reasons subjects offered (Cookson, 1989).

Johnstone and Rivera (1965) developed a descriptive profile of factors that deter adults from participating in educational activities. While their research encompassed a comprehensive overview of adult education in the United States, one section focused particularly on reasons offered by individuals for not participating in further education. The relationship between deterrents and demographic variables including age, gender, and socioeconomic status were examined in a sample of nonparticipants. Johnstone and Rivera employed an interview technique in which they exposed adults to a list of 10 statements and asked if the statements applied to them. The statements were divided into two categories: those based on influences external to the individual (environmental or situational) and those based on personal attitudes toward participation (internal or dispositional). The most frequently identified constraints to participation were cost, time, and stamina. Generally, external influences were more commonly named.

Carp, Peterson, and Roelfs (1974) studied 3,000 "would-be learners" by using a list of 24 reasons for nonparticipation. While investigating adults' learning activities, interests, and needs, they found cost, and time to be the most influential barriers to participation. Cost, identified by 53% of respondents, included tuition, books, childcare, and other like expenses. Time was chosen as a barrier by 46% of respondents. Another 32% of the sample indicated "home responsibilities" as a reason for nonparticipation.

Carp, Peterson, and Roelfs found significant differences in perceptions to barriers to participation among sample demographics including gender, age, and educational attainment. Nearly 10 times as many women as men reported "lack of child care as a barrier to participation. Twice as many men as women reported job responsibilities as a barrier. Regarding age, the most significant finding was that those under 35 years of age identified "cost" as a reason for nonparticipation more often than their older counterparts. Participants over age 25 were three times as likely to cite lacking confidence as a barrier. Individuals with higher levels of education were less likely to indicate dissatisfaction with educational programs, study skills, cost, and anxiety as reasons for nonparticipation. These individuals were more likely to cite "time constraints" as a barrier to participation.

Carp, Peterson, and Roelfs' study advanced research by including additional variables to offer a more detailed description of factors involved with deterrence. The sample consisted of both participants and nonparticipants in educational activities. This study offered evidence that even those choosing to participate face barriers in doing so.

Cross (1979, 1981) used a synthesis of data from 30 statewide and regional replications of the Education Testing Service surveys to develop a descriptive typology of



barriers to participation. In this typology, Cross included individuals who indicated they were not interested in educational activities. She believed this omission in previous studies lowered the frequency in which barriers to participation were observed. As stated earlier, the three classifications of deterrent factors emerging were situational, dispositional, and institutional.

As was consistent with the other studies, situational factors were the most frequently cited constraints, with time and cost being named by 20% to 50% of respondents in the 30 surveys. Cross found that individuals with time for education often lack financial resources, while those with money often lack time for educational pursuits. Inconvenient locations, scheduling problems, and lack of interesting or relevant courses were the most common institutional barriers, affecting approximately 25% of respondents. Less than 2% named dispositional barriers such as lack of ability or interest in responses.

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) expanded Cross' typology to include informational barriers as a fourth classification. Their reasoning was that these barriers did not derive from institutional failure to promote educational offerings, but came up due to communication problems between the student and educational institution, or from the potential student's lack of persistence in seeking information. Darkenwald and Merriam termed Cross' dispositional barriers as psychosocial in nature. They concluded that the many reasons adults give for not participating in educational activities should be broken down into four categories: situational, institutional, informational, and psychosocial.

Shipp and McKenzie (1980) used a 31-item instrument to survey 678 adults from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in the Ohio Valley. The study was to determine why reasons for nonparticipation in church sponsored adult education programs. Over a two-week test-retest period, researchers reported an instrument reliability coefficient of .92. Factor analysis was employed to reduce the data to seven factors: resistance to change and education, alienation, marginality, social nonaffiliation, perplexity/confusion, program nonrelevance, and activity incompatibility. Two patterns of nonparticipation emerged: reasons for nonparticipation are complex given the heterogeneity of the sample, and some aversion to program offerings existed. Shipp and McKenzie also reported an association between demographic variables and deterrent factors.

Shipp and McKenzie found that “certain patterns of nonparticipation exist in the adult nonparticipant population. The reasons for any individual not participating are complex, given the wide heterogeneity of the adult population” (p. 191). They also stated “unidimensional strategies that omit the nonparticipation segment are seldom acceptable to the professional adult educator” (p. 192). The researchers recommended including development of marketing strategies that address the patterns established and that administration understand client motivation.

### **Deterrents To Participation Scale**

Scanlan and Darkenwald (1984) along with Darkenwald and Valentine (1985, 1990) employed factor analysis to explore the structure beneath perceived barriers to participation. These studies indicated barriers, or deterrents to participation, existed and should be included in theories regarding participation in continuing education.

Scanlan and Darkenwald (1984) developed the Deterrents to Participation Scale, or DPS, to determine what variables keep adults from participating in continuing education, and to determine if the deterrents combine to form an underlying pattern. The study also questioned to what extent these factors could predict future participation in continuing education. A survey sample of 686 New Jersey physical therapists, medical technologist, and respiratory therapists used the DPS to find six factors of deterrence to participating in continuing education. These were disengagement, lack of quality, cost, family constraints, lack of benefit and work constraints. All of these factors except work constraints showed predictive power to participation or nonparticipation. The significances of this study included demonstrating deterrent factors could be identified, that the construct is multidimensional, and those factors can predict participation.

Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) “sought to identify the factors that deter the general public from participating in organized adult education” (p. 177). These researchers modeled their instrument, Deterrents to Participation Scale General (DPS-G) by using Scanlan and Darkenwald’s earlier DPS instrument. With the intention of reaching a more general adult population, the survey was mailed to randomly selected households in the United States. The study identified six factors: “Lack of Confidence, Lack of Course Relevance, Time Constraints, Low Personal Priority, Cost, and Personal Problems” (p. 177). The authors concluded that these six factors held promise for theory building and developing strategies to increase adult participation in organized learning (Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985).

In 1989, Martindale and Drake used the DPS-G to validate the instrument with yet another population, and to “investigate the reasons Air Force enlisted personnel at two bases did not participate in voluntary, off-duty education” (p. 63). Like Darkenwald and Valentine’s 1985 study, the DPS-G achieved an alpha reliability coefficient of .86. This study identified eight factors: Lack of Confidence, Lack of Course Relevance, Time Constraints, Cost, Lack of Interest, Lack of Convenience, Lack of Encouragement, and Family Problems. The consistency of factors indicated to these researchers that the DPS-G could be used with different populations. Using this study, Martindale and Drake (1989) also concluded that demographic variables related with the factors similarly to the original study. For instance, “lack of course relevance and lack of confidence were found to increase with age and decrease with education” (p. 73).

Interestingly, while the entire population of this study was eligible for tuition assistance due to military status, respondents continued to express cost as a deterrent. “Because I couldn’t afford miscellaneous expenses” was the highest ranking factor given by respondents. The researchers suggested the differences in income between those respondents in the Somerset County, New Jersey sample and the military personnel surveyed in this study could be the defining reason.

In a new construction based on the DPS instrument, Hayes (1988) created a typology of low-literate adults in adult basic education programs using the DPS-LL. To aid in recruitment efforts, a random sample of 160 adult basic education students in two New Jersey adult basic education programs were surveyed to aid in developing a typology of the low-literate population. A typology of six types of low-literate adults was

identified using a 32-item Likert-scale instrument. The six types of low-literate adults include those with little support from others, childcare problems, little need for education, negative prior educational experiences, lack of time, and those with few deterrents. Examination of such variables as age, gender employment status, number of children, and education level were used to contrast the six types of low-literate adults.

Primarily young women made up the second largest group. They were deterred by situational barriers and circumstances associated with low self-confidence. A group including a large proportion of older males (mean age of 38.3 years) was deterred by fear of failure and previous educational difficulties. A group consisting an employment rate of 84% indicated fear of negative response from others as a primary deterrent to participation. The smallest group scored lowest on situation barriers with prior educational difficulties and peer group pressures representing the most significant barriers. The group scoring high on personal priority consisted primarily of females who found responsibilities and need for employment as deterrents. The least deterred group was made up of those individuals who were higher educated and freer from responsibilities than other groups.

Blais, Duquette, and Pinchaud (1989) studied the issue of deterrence to women's participation in work-related activities. A modified 50-item Deterrents to Participation Scale (DPS) was used to illicit responses from 909 "francophone diploma nurses" for an 80% return rate (p. 226). The researchers found time constraints to have a deeper meaning for their subjects. Low energy level, the refusal to reallocate time, feeling of being overwhelmed, conflicting role demands, length of time to obtain credentials, and

difficult working conditions were also identified by respondents. Findings suggest that the wish to preserve personal space and an unwillingness to sacrifice more time and energy were the major concerns to women participating in this study. Blais, Duquette, and Pinchaud also found cost to be a concern to working mothers and a poor work environment to be partly responsible for women's negative attitudes toward work-related educational learning.

In 1990, Darkenwald and Valentine teamed up again and sought to understand the importance of characteristics of non-participants. The study represented an "attempt to understand, not the basic forces that hinder participation, but the extent to which different types of potential learners experience these forces" (Darkenwald & Valentine, 1990, p. 30). The objectives were: "(a) to divide the research population into distinct subgroups, or clusters, of adults based on observed patterns of perceived deterrents to participation and (b) to describe the identified subgroups in terms of available socio-economic variables" (Darkenwald & Valentine, 1990, p. 31). The DPS-G instrument was used to survey 215 randomly selected individuals from relatively affluent Somerset County, New Jersey. The self-reported deterrents garnered from responses yielded the following five typologies:

Type One: People deterred by personal problems. Profile of Type One is women who tend not to work outside the home and who are deterred primarily by family considerations.

Type Two: People deterred by lack of confidence. A profile of Type Two adults is that of a mature person who lacks the confidence to participate in adult education but who is otherwise in a position to attend – particularly in terms of personal resources and life circumstances.

Type Three: People deterred by educational costs. The profile of Type Three adults is quite clear: young women of moderate education and moderate means who have the confidence to participate in adult education but cannot afford the direct and indirect cost.

Type Four: People not interested in organized education. A Type Four adult can be characterized as a well-educated, affluent, working individual (more likely to be male than female) who places relatively low value on participation in organized adult education.

Type Five: People not interested in available courses, The profile for Type Five adults is that of highly educated, middle-income, working individual (again, more likely to be male than female) who places considerable value on continued education but finds existing programming irrelevant to his or her own needs. (p. 36-37)

Hayes and Darkenwald (1990) found that people with a higher level of initial education and especially women, show a more positive attitude toward adult education than do the less formally educated men. In considering this finding, it is important to keep in mind that many less traditionally educated adults may be marginalized learners due to race, ethnicity, or social economics. These people may distrust traditional education due to previous negative experiences. This attitude may exist due to lack of attention to the individual's cultural history, or interests (Wlodkowski 1999).

All studies using the DPS versions as survey instruments noted high reliability and validity, ranging from a .40 in the original DPS to a .87 in the DPS-G. This indicates that the DPS instruments are an effective way of assessing deterrents to participation. Inclusion of further demographic data can only expand our understanding of deterrents to participation in educational programs. Generally, women most often cite home responsibilities, cost of tuition, childcare, and time as deterrents. Men most often cite low previous grades, low confidence, and lack of interesting offers as deterrents. Younger

adults often cite children, job responsibilities, and being tired of school as reasons for nonparticipation. Older adults tend to be concerned with education meeting personal goals, rather than occupational needs. Generally, the more educated an individual is, the less likely they are to cite personal inadequacies as a reason for nonparticipation.

Each study included in this literature review offered additional demographic information to aid researchers in further understanding why adults choose not to participate in additional education. This information may be used to eliminate perceived problems with various formal educational and educational assistance programs.

### **Summary**

This chronology of pertinent research and theoretical models indicates a tendency toward creating the ability to predict participation in adult education. Knowledge of this caliber has the potential to lead educators, program developers, and businesses to insight on what workers require to participate in ongoing adult education. Offering tuition assistance alone may not be enough to encourage participation in further education. Reducing deterrence will eventually lead to a more educated, well-rounded workforce. With further replication studies involving different populations, demographic correlations may be expanded to offer more practical information for program developers in both education and those working with companies or agencies attempting to increase educational participation. This study attempts to gather and analyze such data from a large, retail specialty chain.



## **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

### **The Company Under Study**

The company under study is an international video rental and retail chain traded publicly on the New York Stock Exchange. This company has approximately 5,000 brick and mortar stores, a centralized distribution center, and a retail presence on the World Wide Web. Currently, approximately 72,000 employees are working within this organization.

The study focused on a population including all employees working in a company created geographic district consisting of 12 retail store outlets in a Southeastern city. One hundred five full-time and part-time employees with positions ranging in position from District Leader to part-time Customer Service Representative were asked to participate in the study. No specific sampling method was needed, as the entire population of the district was surveyed.

At the time of data collection, the researcher had been an employee with the company under study for approximately six years. The researcher's familiarity and tenure with the organization facilitated access to all management and customer service employees involved in the study.

### **Survey Instrument**

A search of related works revealed an existing questionnaire suitable for this study. Scanlan and Darkenwald (1984) created the Deterrence to Participation Scale (DPS) to assess the factors underlying nonparticipation. That original questionnaire was developed as follows:

The first step in the construction of the DPS was the development of an interview schedule to obtain information on deterrents to participation from a volunteer sample of 21 allied health professionals. Next, a prototype DPS was constructed by assembling, in random order, a list of the deterrents to participation identified through the interviews and an exhaustive literature search. After elimination of equivalent statements, 60 items were retained for pre-testing. Item clarity was assessed by soliciting comments from 72 allied health professionals, who in addition completed the prototype DPS. The prototype was subjected to standard item-analysis procedures, including an overall measure of internal consistency. Although overall reliability was high ( $\alpha = .94$ ), analysis of respondent comments and item statistics indicated that the scale could be both improved and shortened by revising or deleting certain items. Consequently, several items were revised and 20 of the original 60 were deleted. The alpha reliability coefficient for the shortened, final version of DPS was .91. The descriptors for the responses were "Not influential," "Slightly," "Somewhat," "Moderately," "Considerably," "Greatly" and "Very greatly influential" (p.158).

Upon completion of this study, Scanlan and Darkenwald concluded, "the construct of deterrent is one of the few identified that contributes meaningfully to explaining variance in participation behavior." (p.164).

Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) later revised the DPS to be used in a more general application. These researchers used a large, heterogeneous sample of the general adult population in creating the Deterrence to Participation-General (DPS-G). Use of a

commercial mailing firm's computer to randomly select a sample of 2,000 households in Somerset County, New Jersey aided in this study. Unfortunately, the researchers received a low return rate of 215, or 10.7%, but felt that this "was of little import to the purposes of this study" (p.179). Only a true random national sample would be useful when inferring to the total national general adult population. Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) concluded that the DPS-G identifies "factors that deter the general public from participating in organized adult education" (p. 178).

The final version of the DPS-G consists of 34 items rated on a 5-point Likert Scale. Respondents rate each deterrent on how much effect it has on their decision not to participate in an educational activity. The 1985 study reported an alpha reliability coefficient of .86. Factor analysis indicated six factors of deterrence to adult education participation. These were "lack of confidence", "lack of course relevance", "time constraints", "low personal priority", "cost", and "personal problems."

As reported in Chapter 2, Martindale and Drake (1989) used the DPS-G in a related study to validate the instrument with a population of 966 Air Force enlisted personnel. The researchers hoped to determine why enlisted personnel did not participate in voluntary, off-duty education. The researchers found that "the instrument, used on a different population, measured the same deterrents previously found..." (p. 63). Martindale and Drake reported eight factors, including "lack of course relevance", "lack of confidence", "cost" "time constraints," "lack of convenience", "lack of interest", "family problems", and "lack of encouragement." These eight factors were examined in this research project.

Dr. Darkenwald granted permission to use the DPS-G and alter it in any way required to complete this study. (G. G. Darkenwald, personal communication, August 22, 2000) Several questions designed to elicit responses regarding the current tuition reimbursement program in place with the company under study have been added to the DPS-G. These questions addressed items including the program structure and employee eligibility to take advantage of this benefit. Questions 1-3 were added to determine if the participants were aware of the tuition reimbursement program and if they had taken advantage of the program. Questions 41, 43-45 were added to gain specific demographic information about managers and customer service representatives length of employment with the company and to determine what changes in the existing program would improve participation. The question regarding safety was deleted from the survey because the geographical area under study is considered relatively safe. The income question was deleted from the survey to encourage a larger return rate from individuals uncomfortable disclosing financial information. The final survey change was the category labels on five-point scale were altered from "1-Not Important, 2-Slightly Important, 3-Somewhat Important, 4-Quite Important, and 5-Very Important" to read "1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-No Opinion, 4-Agree, and 5-Stronly Agree".

### **Survey Implementation**

The questionnaire used to conduct this study was hand delivered to the Store Leaders at their individual home stores in the form of a packet. A cover letter was included with the survey packet to explain the purpose of the study, ensure anonymity,

and request a one-week response time. A separate letter from the District Leader demonstrating approval of the project and support to participate was also included. To ensure every employee had an opportunity to participate, Store Leaders were asked to distribute the questionnaires to each employee with their paycheck. An individual envelope was provided for participants to enclose their completed survey. A large collection envelope was posted in the manager area for depositing completed surveys. Postage paid, pre-addressed envelopes were provided to each Store Leader for ease in returning the surveys in one week. After 10 days, non-responding stores were encouraged to comply by use of the company voice mail system, and personal phone calls. A letter thanking participants was mailed to each store via the United States Postal Service. A copy of the cover letters and survey distributed are included in Appendices A and B.

Data from the survey were coded and analyzed using SPSS 10.0 for Windows.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

The purpose of this study was to identify deterrents for employees not participating in an employer offered tuition reimbursement program. This chapter presents the results of data analyzed from 74 respondents surveyed with the Deterrents to Participation Scale-General.

#### **Profile of the Population**

The population consisted of 105 retail store employees working in a company created geographic district in the Southeastern portion of the United States. All levels of store management and customer service representatives were represented in the 74 responses. The study considered the following characteristics of the population: age, gender, employment level, educational level completed, length of service with the company, and employment status of full-time versus part-time.

Managers ranged in age from 18 to 48, while customer service representatives ranged from 17 to 32. The mean age was 28.18 years for managers and 20.68 years for customer service representatives.

Two-thirds (66.2%) of respondents were male while 33.8% were female. In much of the research discussed above, females generally outnumbered males. Speculation from upper management regarding the higher percentage of males working in the stores is due

their interest in movies and video games, and the resistance of females working the late hours of operation required in the stores. See Table 1.

Of respondents, 54.1% were at some level of store management, while 45.9% were customer service representatives. See Table 2.

Respondents educational level broke down into the following percentages, with three people not indicating their educational level: high school diploma or equivalent 73.2%, Associate's degree 11.3%, and Bachelor's degree 14.9%. See Table 3.

Of the 40 managers responding, the length of service ranged from one month to 11 years and eight months with a mean of two years and four months. The 34 customer service representatives length of service ranged from less than one month to three years and four months with a mean of 7.44 months.

The employment status of the survey respondents consisted of both full-time and part-time workers. Full-time employees comprised 37.8% of respondents, leaving 62.2% of employees as part-time workers. See Table 4.

### **Deterrents to Participation**

As discussed earlier, Darkenwald and Valentine developed the DPS-G in 1985 to identify factors that "deter the general public from participating in organized adult education" (p. 178). While the instrument builds on the 1984 work of Scanlan and Darkenwald, it was constructed "de novo" (p. 179) with the intent of contributing to the general theory of participation behavior. Martindale and Drake (1989) used the DPS-G to extract eight factors including: "lack of course relevance", "lack of confidence", "cost",

**Table 1: Gender**

|       |        | Frequency | Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|
| Valid | Male   | 49        | 66.2    |
|       | Female | 25        | 33.8    |
|       | Total  | 74        | 100.0   |

**Table 2: Employment Level**

|       |                                 | Frequency | Percent |
|-------|---------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Valid | Manager                         | 40        | 54.1    |
|       | Customer Service Representative | 34        | 45.9    |
|       | Total                           | 74        | 100.0   |

**Table 3: Education Level Completed**

|         |                     | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---------|---------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Valid   | High school diploma | 52        | 70.3    | 73.2          |
|         | Associate's degree  | 8         | 10.8    | 11.3          |
|         | Bachelor's degree   | 11        | 14.9    | 15.5          |
|         | Total               | 71        | 95.9    | 100.0         |
| Missing | System              | 3         | 4.1     |               |
| Total   |                     | 74        | 100.0   |               |

**Table 4: Employment Status: Part-time versus Full-time**

|       |           | Frequency | Percent |
|-------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Valid | Full-time | 28        | 37.8    |
|       | Part-time | 46        | 62.2    |
|       | Total     | 74        | 100.0   |



“time constraints”, “lack of convenience”, “lack of interest”, “family problems”, and “lack of encouragement”.

Table 5 represents the mean, standard deviation, and range for each of the eight factors of the DPS-G from the current study. While none of the factors were viewed as statistically significant deterrents to participation, “time constraints” was considered the most powerful deterrent at 2.29, and “personal problems” appears to have the least impact on deterrence at 1.69.

### **Demographic Variables Related to Deterrents**

#### **Gender**

Forty-nine males and 25 females responded to the survey. A multivariate test, specifically Wilks' Lamda, was employed to determine if a significant statistical difference related to gender existed in each of the eight factors. No significant difference was found.  $F(8,65)=.898$ ,  $p=.524$  See Table 6.

#### **Employment Level**

Forty managers and 34 customer service representatives were compared using a multivariate test, the Wilks' Lamda, to determine if any significant statistical difference existed between the two groups and the eight factors. No significant difference was found.  $F(8,65)=1.306$ ,  $p=.256$  See Table 7.

**Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and Range for the Eight Factors**

|                          | Minimum | Maximum | Mean   | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| Time constraints         | 1.00    | 4.60    | 2.2865 | .9270          |
| Lack of interest         | 1.00    | 4.00    | 2.2252 | .7844          |
| Cost                     | 1.00    | 4.25    | 2.2196 | .9544          |
| Low personal priority    | 1.00    | 4.67    | 2.1712 | .9448          |
| Lack of course relevance | 1.00    | 4.40    | 2.0162 | .8726          |
| Lack of confidence       | 1.00    | 3.40    | 1.7698 | .7107          |
| Lack of encouragement    | 1.00    | 3.50    | 1.7568 | .8490          |
| Personal problems        | 1.00    | 3.67    | 1.6892 | .7809          |

**Table 6: Difference by Gender**

| Effect    | Wilks' Lambda | F                   | Hypothesis df | Error df | Sig.  |
|-----------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|----------|-------|
| Intercept | .091          | 81.480 <sup>a</sup> | 8             | 65       | <.001 |
| Gender    | .901          | .898 <sup>a</sup>   | 8             | 65       | .524  |

a. Exact statistic

**Table 7: Differences in Employment Level**

| Effect           | Wilks' Lambda | F                   | Hypothesis df | Error df | Sig.  |
|------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|----------|-------|
| Intercept        | .082          | 90.386 <sup>a</sup> | 8             | 65       | <.001 |
| Employment Level | .861          | 1.306 <sup>a</sup>  | 8             | 65       | .256  |

a. Exact statistic

### **Education Level**

The 74 respondents were evaluated on educational level and the eight factors. The levels used and the corresponding numbers of employees at each of these levels were: no credential listed - 3, high school diploma - 52, associate's degree - 8, and bachelor's degree - 11. The Wilks' Lambda was employed again with no statistically significant result.  $F(16, 122) = .536, p = .923$  See Table 8.

### **Age**

A Pearson Correlation was used to test if there is a relationship between age and the eight factors. There is no relationship between age and the factors since none of the correlations are significant. (lack of confidence  $p = .556$ , lack of course relevance  $p = .811$ , time constraints  $p = .185$ , low personal priority  $p = .084$ , cost  $p = .436$ , personal problems  $p = .133$ , and lack of encouragement  $p = .666$ , lack of interest  $p = .800$ ) See Table 9.

### **Length of Employment**

A non-parametric statistic, Spearman's rho correlation, was used to test for a relationship between the eight factors and length of employment. This test was used because length of employment was not evenly distributed. There is no relationship between length of employment and the eight factors. (lack of confidence  $p = .949$ , lack of course relevance  $p = .629$ , time constraints  $p = .231$ , low personal priority  $p = .478$ , cost  $p = .675$ , personal problems  $p = .948$ , lack of encouragement  $p = .466$ , lack of interest  $p = .876$ ) See Table 10.

**Table 8: Differences in Educational Level**

| Effect          | Wilks' Lambda | F                   | Hypothesis df | Error df | Sig.  |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|----------|-------|
| Intercept       | .145          | 44.878 <sup>a</sup> | 8             | 61       | <.001 |
| Education Level | .873          | .536 <sup>a</sup>   | 16            | 122      | .923  |

a. Exact statistic

**Table 9: Age and the Eight Factors**

|                          | Age                 |                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
|                          | Pearson Correlation | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Lack of confidence       | .070                | .556            |
| Lack of course relevance | -.028               | .811            |
| Time constraints         | .156                | .185            |
| Low personal priority    | .202                | .084            |
| Cost                     | .092                | .436            |
| Personal problems        | .176                | .133            |
| Lack of encouragement    | .051                | .666            |
| Lack of interest         | .030                | .800            |

**Table 10: Length of Employment and the Eight Factors**

|                          | Length of employment |                 |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
|                          | Spearman Correlation | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Lack of confidence       | -.008                | .949            |
| Lack of course relevance | -.057                | .629            |
| Time constraints         | .141                 | .231            |
| Low personal priority    | .084                 | .478            |
| Cost                     | -.050                | .675            |
| Personal problems        | -.008                | .948            |
| Lack of encouragement    | -.086                | .466            |
| Lack of interest         | .019                 | .876            |

### **Full-time Versus Part-time Employment Status**

Twenty-eight full-time and 46 part-time employees responded to the survey. A multivariate test, specifically Wilks' Lambda, was employed to determine if a significant statistical difference related to full-time and part-time employees and the eight factors. No significant difference was found.  $F(8,65)=1.598, p=.143$  See Table 11.

### **Specific Factors of the Existing Program**

As demonstrated in Table 12, 31 (43.1%) of the 74 employees responding to the survey were not eligible to participate in the tuition reimbursement program. Ten respondents (13.9%) could not wait for the reimbursement. Only two employees (2.8%) stated that management would not work with scheduling needs.

Table 13 shows how many respondents at both employment levels are eligible to participate in the tuition reimbursement program currently. With one year of service, only 27 (36.5%) of the 74 respondents may participate in the program. Of the 40 managers responding, 23 (57.5%) have one year of service. Of the 34 customer service representatives responding, only 4 (11.8%) are currently eligible to take advantage of the tuition reimbursement program.

**Table 11: Full-time Versus Part-Time Employment Status**

| Effect            | Wilks' Lambda | F                   | Hypothesis df | Error df | Sig.  |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|----------|-------|
| Intercept         | .085          | 87.612 <sup>a</sup> | 8             | 65       | <.001 |
| Employment Status | .836          | 1.598 <sup>a</sup>  | 8             | 65       | .143  |

a. Exact statistic

**Table 12: Specific Factors of the Existing Program**

|                                                       | Yes   |         |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|
|                                                       | Count | %       |
| Not employed with company long enough for eligibility | 31    | (43.1%) |
| Could not wait for reimbursement                      | 10    | (13.9%) |
| Management would not work with scheduling needs       | 2     | (2.8%)  |
| No time                                               | 7     | (9.5%)  |
| No need                                               | 10    | (13.5%) |
| Didn't know of reimbursement program                  | 11    | (14.9%) |

**Table 13: Level of Employment and Eligibility**

|                    |     | Employment level                | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------|-----|---------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Currently Eligible | No  | Manager                         | 17        | 42.5    |
|                    |     | Customer Service Representative | 30        | 88.2    |
|                    | Yes | Manager                         | 23        | 57.5    |
|                    |     | Customer Service Representative | 4         | 11.8    |

Table 14 shows how many respondents at both employment levels would be eligible to participate if the program were changed to a six month service requirement for eligibility. Of the 74 respondents, 42 (56.8%) would be eligible to participate. Thirty-two managers (80%) would be eligible. Ten (29.4%) customer service representatives would be eligible to participate in the program at six months of service.

Table 15 shows how many respondents at both employment levels would be eligible to participate in the tuition reimbursement program if the service requirement were changed to three months of service. With 3 months service, 58 (78.4%) of the 74 respondents would be eligible. Of the 40 managers responding to the survey, 37 (92.5%) would be eligible to participate. Of the 34 customer service representatives, 21 (61.8%) would be eligible to participate.

Table 16 addresses the following questions: Did you know about the tuition reimbursement program, have you used the tuition reimbursement program, and have you considered using the tuition reimbursement program. Of the 74 respondents, 53 (74.6%) knew about the program, 6 (8.5%) have used the program, and 27 (38.0%) have considered using the program.

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 provided an analysis of the data obtained from 74 retail managers and customer service representatives responding to a modified Deterrence to Participation-General survey. Data in the study have been analyzed using descriptive statistical procedures such as raw number reporting, means, standard deviations, percentages, a multivariate analysis of variance, Spearman's rho, Pearson's Correlation and frequencies.

**Table 14: Eligibility at Six Months Service**

|                        |     | Employment level                | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Eligible at Six Months | No  | Manager                         | 8         | 20.0    |
|                        |     | Customer Service Representative | 24        | 70.6    |
|                        | Yes | Manager                         | 32        | 80.0    |
|                        |     | Customer Service Representative | 10        | 29.4    |

**Table 15: Eligibility at Three Months Service**

|                          |     | Employment level                | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Eligible at Three Months | No  | Manager                         | 3         | 7.5     |
|                          |     | Customer Service Representative | 13        | 38.2    |
|                          | Yes | Manager                         | 37        | 92.5    |
|                          |     | Customer Service Representative | 21        | 61.8    |

**Table 16: Existing Tuition Reimbursement Program**

|                                                        | No    |         | Yes   |         |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|
|                                                        | Count | %       | Count | %       |
| Know about tuition reimbursement program?              | 18    | (25.4%) | 53    | (74.6%) |
| Used tuition reimbursement program?                    | 65    | (91.5%) | 6     | (8.5%)  |
| Have you consider using tuition reimbursement program? | 44    | (62.0%) | 27    | (38.0%) |



## **CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and present conclusions drawn from the study, discuss managerial implications, and provide recommendations for further research. The first section concentrates on the purpose of the study. The second section discusses major findings of the study. In the third section, implications for management are explored. The final section provides recommendations for additional research.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study was designed to examine deterrents to participating in a company sponsored tuition reimbursement program. It is expected that this study will; 1) contribute to the growing body of research and theory related to deterrents to participation; 2) provide additional information about the Deterrents to Participation Survey-General; 3) provide additional demographic information related to deterrents to participation; and 4) contribute to efforts of those individuals involved in educational assistance programs for adult learners. Results from this study could be particularly applicable to the organization under study by offering suggestions to enhance their existing tuition reimbursement program. To support the overall need and rationale for this study, a review of literature consisting of relevant research and theoretical models related to participation and was included.

A population of 105 full-time and part-time employees was surveyed using a modified DPS-G. From this number, 74 employees responded. Subjects ranged in age from 17 to 32 with a mean age of 28 years. Male respondents outnumbered female respondents by a ratio of two to one.

## Summary and Conclusions

This section represents a summary of the study's findings. Three research questions were proposed for this study: 1) in what order do employee responses to the DPS-G survey rank in the categories of educational cost, lack of self-confidence, low personal priority, time constraints, lack of encouragement, lack of interest, lack of relevance and personal problems, 2) are there any relationships between the eight factors and demographic variables, and 3) are there specific factors in the existing tuition reimbursement program that deter participation?

In analyzing the eight factor scores related to deterrents to participation, it was determined that none of the eight factors were statistically significant in relation to this population. The eight mean factor scores were established for the DPS-G by using a five-point Likert scale with 1 indicating "strongly disagree," 3 indicating "no opinion," and 5 indicating "strongly agree." The scores for each factor were as follows:

- |                              |           |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1) Time constraints:         | 2.29;     |
| 2. Lack of interest:         | 2.23;     |
| 3. Cost:                     | 2.22;     |
| 4. Low personal priority:    | 2.17;     |
| 5. Lack of course relevance: | 2.02;     |
| 6. Lack of confidence:       | 1.77;     |
| 7. Lack of encouragement:    | 1.77; and |
| 8. Personal problems:        | 1.69.     |

The top three deterrents indicated were "time constraints," "lack of interest," and "cost" respectively. As indicated, "time constraints" was the most frequently identified deterrent factor. The 2.29 rating places it between "disagree" and "have no opinion" on the 5-point Likert scale used in the survey. Several studies from the past, including Carp, Peterson, and Roelfs (1974), Cross (1979, 1981), and Blais, Duquette, and Pinchaund (1989) listed "time constraints" as a primary deterrent for nonparticipation in respondents.

"Lack of interest" was rated as the second highest deterrent with a 2.23 score. Cross (1979, 1981) included individuals that were not interested in furthering education in her studies of the Education Testing Service surveys because she believed not including them lowered the frequency in which barriers to participation were observed.

"Cost" was the third highest deterrent factor reported by this population with a rating of 2.22 on the scale. "Cost" was a deterrent found by Cross (1979, 1981), Darkenwald and Valentine (1985), Martindale and Drake (1989), and Blais, Duquette, and Pinchaund (1989). Martindale and Drake (1989) studied enlisted Air Force personnel where everyone was eligible for tuition assistance due to military status. Even with this assistance, cost was expressed as a deterrent due to miscellaneous expenses associated with taking classes. According to Cross' model these are situational deterrents, and considered outside one's control. Cross (1979, 1981) reported that situational factors, including cost and time, were the most frequently named deterrents in her studies. This finding may be significant to the population under review in this study. While participants are eligible for tuition reimbursement, they must pay for the course and

miscellaneous expenses before taking the course, and are not reimbursed until six to eight weeks after completing the course.

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) expanded on Cross' model by emphasizing socioeconomic status factors. Smorynski and Parochka (1979) also focused on cost and relevance to the current working situation, but included a cost-benefit analysis in their model. Work in retail, particularly at the store level, is typically low paying. Individuals in this type of position may find it difficult to pay for coursework up front and wait for reimbursement beyond course completion. Darkenwald and Merriam's (1982) model included a psychosocial barrier regarding usefulness and appropriateness of learning activities. Store employees in this organization are all trained for their positions with a comprehensive structured program. Additional education is not needed to successfully perform their jobs. In this case, it is unlikely that average store employees would see a usefulness or appropriateness for additional outside education. Those employees taking advantage of the program are likely doing so in order to move up within the company, or to work in a profession outside the organization.

Knox and Videbeck (1963) suggested that an individual's willingness to participate could be altered depending on current life situations. Generally, the store employees working for the company under study are fairly young and have recently completed some sort of schooling. Many have not worked for the company for an extended period of time and do not see an advantage to furthering educational pursuits at this point. If a worker stays with the company for an extended period of time, and views lack of education as a stumbling block for promotion, then perhaps he or she would

become more interested in taking advantage of the tuition reimbursement program. It may require an individual to have a change in situation in order to look at the program as a viable opportunity.

There were no significant statistical findings between the eight factors and demographic variables.

### **Managerial Implications**

Specific findings related to the existing tuition reimbursement program are examined here with the hopes of providing answers to aid in decreasing the program's limitations. The managerial implications of this study primarily relate to communication of the tuition reimbursement program and the possibility of modifying the program to include more employees earlier in their tenure with the organization. Eighteen respondents, or 25.4%, reported that they were not aware of the tuition reimbursement program. If the program is to work as a retaining measure for employees, management must ensure the specifics of the program and encouragement to use it are communicated down through the ranks of store personnel.

Employees (13.9%) considering taking part in the program were also concerned with waiting for the reimbursement. The average wait after completion of a course for reimbursement is six to eight weeks. While the program is set up as a retention tool by using the reimbursement format, a timelier return on the employee's financial investment may be enough of an incentive to increase participation. This would be beneficial to employees wishing to take another course. For example, the time between terms in a formal education setting often is shorter than two months. Generally, the company

surveyed requires more than one semester to process tuition reimbursement requests. Therefore, employees are often required to pay for two semesters of classes before receiving their first reimbursement. This situation may be particularly difficult for a store level employee.

An additional concern in providing a tuition reimbursement program that is useful in retention is that most store level employees are not eligible to take advantage of the program. Respondents reported that due to the current program's one year service requirement, 42.5% of store management employees and 88.2% of customer service representatives are not eligible to participate. If the service requirement were cut in half to six months, 80.0% of managers and 29.4% of customer service representatives would be eligible for the program. Hidden costs related to employee turnover include low morale and lower customer service levels leading to customer frustration and loss. When asked about turnover rates, the Human Resource Area Director reported that the only figures available were for the Store Leader position. As of October 2000, domestic Store Leaders were trending at a 43% turnover rate. No studies had been completed regarding turnover rates for other store positions or the cost of replacing any store positions. (Human Resource Area Director, personal communication, November 28, 2000) When adding in the costs of recruiting, interviewing, hiring and training new managers and customer service representatives, it is obvious that retaining even one or two employees per district in each of these positions would provide a significant cost benefit to the organization. Currently only six (8.5%) respondents indicated they had taken advantage of the program, while 27 (38.0%) indicated they had considered using the program. The

key to using this program as part of employee retention is to find out what it would take to encourage those 21 employees to pursue and an educational activity.

To increase the success of the tuition reimbursement program, managers and company leaders must consider implementing the following three strategies. First, the existence and merits of the program must be effectively communicated to all store personnel. Second, a system should be devised to ensure reimbursement is made in a timelier manner. Finally, the eligibility to participate in the program should be reduced from one year of service to six months of service.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This study was limited to a small company created geographic district in a worldwide organization. For this reason, generalizations of these results may only be applied to other college towns in the Southeastern United States. The following are suggested recommendations for further research based upon this study.

1. Further research is needed in other geographical areas to determine if the same level of deterrents exists in other portions of the country. This information could help determine if the tuition reimbursement program itself is a limiting factor to additional education for employees, or if the eight factors examined in this study are reported differently in other areas. With this data, the company under study could determine if it would be beneficial to change the current tuition reimbursement program to encourage additional participation.
2. In regard to the company studied, employees at the corporate level, those not working in stores, could be surveyed to determine if any differences exist between these

two types of employees. While adding demographic data, this step would offer a more well rounded picture of employees working for this organization and define their needs to participate in further education

3. This study could be used with various other types of retail employees to determine if retail employees in general have the same attitudes toward further education. It may be determined that retail employees in general do not have interest in continuing educational pursuits, no matter what type of educational assistance program is in place for them. This information could also be vital in maintaining industry standards for educational assistance.

4. The DPS-G should be used in further adult education studies to continuing expanding demographic information available, and to further validate the instrument.



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## Appendices

## Appendix A:

### Cover Letters Accompanying Questionnaire

Kay Hill  
952 Oglewood Avenue  
Knoxville, TN 37917

District 521 Store Employees

Dear Fellow [REDACTED] Employee:

I currently work at [REDACTED], store number 47026, while pursuing a Master of Science in Human Resource Development at the University of Tennessee. I am using the enclosed survey as a research tool for my thesis entitled Deterrents To Participation In Company Supported Tuition Reimbursement. This project is concerned specifically with examining factors that inhibit district 521 employees from participating in our company tuition reimbursement program. I am requesting your voluntary participation to successfully complete this project.

A letter from District Leader [REDACTED], supporting the project, is provided for your inspection. Surveys, a blank envelope in which to seal your completed survey, and a large collection envelope have been provided to your Store Leader. The collection envelope will be placed in the manager's area for easy of access. The Store Leader will mail the sealed, completed surveys back to me in a large, pre-posted envelope by September 30, 2000. Your responses will be held in the strictest confidence.

I will be pleased to send a summary of the results to anyone interested. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact me at 865-540-1669, or khill15@utk.edu. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely Yours,

Kay Hill

[REDACTED]  
District Leader  
[REDACTED]

District 521 Store Personnel

Dear Store Employees of District 521,

The enclosed survey concerns the tuition reimbursement program in place with [REDACTED]. Kay Hill, a graduate student at the University of Tennessee and employee in our district, is using this survey to collect data for use in a thesis research project. Her project explores why [REDACTED] employees in this district do not take advantage of the tuition reimbursement program. The study is a partial requirement for a Master of Science degree in Human Resource Development.

The intent of this letter is to express my permission and full encouragement for each employee in this district to complete and return this survey in a timely manner.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this letter, please contact me through regular communication channels. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. It is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

[REDACTED]  
District Leader



## Appendix B:

### Adult Learning Questionnaire

## ADULT LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE

Your answers are strictly confidential.  
Federal law forbids revealing your identity.

*Directions:* Every year, more and more adults participate in some kind of educational activity. [REDACTED] offers tuition reimbursement to all employees with one year of service. Examples of educational pursuits covered include courses, workshops, seminars, and training programs offered by schools, colleges, and other organizations or community groups. However, adults sometimes find it hard to participate in these activities, even when they want to. Try to think of something - *anything at all* - that you wanted to learn in the past year or two, but never did. Then look at the reasons below and decide *how important each one was* in your decision not to participate in an educational activity. (please note: in the questions below, the work "course" refers to *any* type of educational activity, including courses, workshops, seminars, etc.)

PLEASE CIRCLE ONLY ONE RESPONSE UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED.  
CIRCLE 1 IF YOU STRONGLY DISAGREE, 2 IF YOU DISAGREE, 3 IF YOU HAVE NO OPINION, 4 IF YOU AGREE, AND 5 IF YOU STRONGLY AGREE.

- |                                                                          |     |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1. Prior to today, did you know about the tuition reimbursement program? | yes | no |
| 2. Have you taken advantage of the tuition reimbursement program?        | yes | no |
| 3. Have you considered taking advantage of the program but did not?      | yes | no |

- |                                                                                       | Strongly<br>Disagree |   |   |   | Strongly<br>Agree |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---|---|---|-------------------|
| 4. I felt I could not compete with younger students                                   | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 5. I don't enjoy studying                                                             | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 6. A personal health problem or handicap                                              | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 7. I didn't think I would be able to finish the course                                | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 8. I didn't have time for the studying required                                       | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 9. I wanted to learn something specific, but the course was too general               | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 10. I didn't meet the requirements for the course                                     | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 11. The courses available did not seem interesting                                    | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 12. the course was offered at an inconvenient location                                | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |
| 13. I couldn't afford the registration or course fees/couldn't wait for reimbursement | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                 |

|                                                                                   | Strongly<br>Disagree |   |   | Strongly<br>Agree |   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---|---|-------------------|---|
| 14. I felt I was too old to take the course                                       | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 15. I didn't know about courses<br>available for adults                           | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 16. Amount of time required to<br>finish the course                               | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 17. Course was scheduled at an<br>inconvenient time                               | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 18. My family did not encourage<br>participation                                  | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 19. Transportation problems                                                       | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 20. Courses available were of<br>poor quality                                     | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 21. I was not confident of my learning<br>ability                                 | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 22. Family problems                                                               | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 23. I'm not that interested in taking courses                                     | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 24. Participation would take away from time<br>with my family                     | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 25. I had trouble arranging for childcare                                         | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 26. Available courses did not seem<br>useful or practical                         | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 27. I wasn't willing to give up my leisure<br>time                                | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 28. My education would not help me in<br>my job                                   | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 29. I felt unprepared for the course                                              | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 30. I couldn't afford miscellaneous expenses<br>like travel, books, and parking   | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 31. The course was not on the right level<br>for me                               | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 32. I didn't think I could attend regularly                                       | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 33. My employer would not provide enough<br>financial assistance or reimbursement | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 34. I didn't think the course would meet<br>my needs                              | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 35. I prefer to learn on my own                                                   | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |
| 36. My friends did not encourage my<br>participation                              | 1                    | 2 | 3 | 4                 | 5 |

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF.  
REMEMBER THAT YOUR ANSWERS ARE COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL.

37. What is your gender? (circle one number)

- 1 Female
- 2 Male

38. What is your age? (write in number of years) \_\_\_\_\_

39. What is your *highest* educational level completed? (circle *one* number)

- 1 High school diploma
- 2 Associate's degree
- 3 Bachelor's degree
- 4 Graduate degree

40. What is your current employment status? (circle *one* number)

- 1 Employed full-time
- 2 Employed part-time

41. What is your employment level? (circle *one* number)

- 1 Manager
- 2 Customer Service Representative

42. How long have you worked for [REDACTED]? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

43. Circle any reason listed as to why you have not taken advantage of the tuition reimbursement program:

Not employed with the company long enough for eligibility  
Could not wait for reimbursement, needed funds up front to participate

Management would not work with scheduling needs

Other \_\_\_\_\_

44. In the future, might you take advantage of the tuition reimbursement program if:

|                                                           |     |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| length of service requirement changed to six months?      | yes | no |
| length of service requirement changed to three months?    | yes | no |
| reimbursement covered entire amount of any single course? | yes | no |
| reimbursement were closer to course completion            | yes | no |

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

## **Vita**

Kay Ellen Hill was born in Bristol, Tennessee on August 5, 1964. She grew up in Bristol where she attended elementary school and graduated from Bristol Tennessee High School in 1982. She graduated from Tennessee Technological University in 1987, where she received the degree of Bachelor of Science in Home Economics with a concentration in fashion merchandising. In 1993, she received an Associate in Applied Science degree from Pellissippi State Technical Community College in Legal Assistant Technology.

With ten years experience in retail store management, Kay returned to graduate school at the University of Tennessee to obtain a Master of Science degree in Human Resource Development. That degree was conferred in May 2001.