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THE IMPACT OF MOTIVATION ON PRE-COLLEGE LEVEL STUDENTS ENROLLED IN A
LEARNING COMMUNITY AT AN HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

It is believed that purposefully constructed learning communities can have academic, social, and motivational advantages for its participants. In an effort to improve graduation and retention of students, some HBCUs have sought new ways to construct learning environments that are conducive to the learning styles of students of color. This study sought to investigate the impact of a learning community on pre-college level students’ standardized test scores and final grades. The Repeated Measures One-Way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in COMPASS score change between groups with the comparison group demonstrating a greater change than did the learning community group. In addition, Analysis of Covariance test was used to answer the research question regarding differences in final grades between the two groups. After adjusting for the COMPASS pre-test, there was no difference in final grades between groups. Using the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), a Likert-type scale based on the Eccles et al. (1983) expectancy-value motivational model, three components of students’ motivation were investigated: task value, extrinsic value, and test anxiety. The Independent Samples t-Test was used to compare the means. There was a statistically significant mean difference in extrinsic value with the students enrolled in traditionally taught pre-college level English courses demonstrating more extrinsic motivation. There was a statistically significant mean difference in task value with students enrolled in the learning community demonstrating higher task value than the comparison group. Finally, there was a statistically significant mean difference in affect with students in the learning community group demonstrating more test anxiety. Conclusions and recommendations were presented for future research.
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CHAPTER 1
THE PROBLEM AND ITS CLARIFYING COMPONENTS

Introduction

Since the advent of open enrollment in the 1960s, colleges and universities have served students who vary academically, socially, and culturally. Large proportions of these students have been underprepared for the rigors of college level work and have not been able to meet their educational goals. Under-preparedness has resulted in many of these students leaving their institutions of higher learning before graduation. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), although retention has been the subject of over 40 years of study in higher education, the national rate of student persistence and graduation has shown little change over the past decade (NCES, 2005).

Over the years, there has been considerable public pressure on institutions of higher learning to reduce high attrition rates and to produce students of quality who can properly function within the workplace (Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004). Studies have called on higher education to become more accountable and place student learning at the forefront of curricula and policy. The most compelling study that called for greater accountability in higher education was A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of US Higher Education Report (2006), commissioned by Education Secretary Margaret Spellings. Additionally, studies have included Business Higher Education Forum (2004) which called for more transparency about student outcomes. The College Learning for the New Global Century Report (2007) called for the adoption of a set of educational outcomes that all students need to obtain from attending institutions of higher learning.
During a time of scarce resources, numerous government agencies, fact-finding commissions, public officials, and private citizens have been calling for institutions of higher education to reform their curriculum and pedagogy to engage students and to prepare them to enter the work world. These numerous agencies, commissions, public officials, and private citizens have maintained that there must be a paradigm shift in higher education, and that this shift can only be established by placing student learning at the forefront of education and refocusing policies and practices to incorporate student learning. Smith et al. (2004) stated:

We still operate with an infrastructure built for a more selective, homogeneous student body with generous financial resources. Furthermore, we know a great deal more about what promotes student learning. If widely adopted, these new practices could significantly raise levels of student achievement. (p. 24)

These reports confirmed that putting learning at the forefront of education would improve the quality of teaching and learning at institutions of higher learning.

Statement of the Problem

Historically, the achievement gap has been a persistent problem for students of color. Academic comparisons between African American children and their White classmates begin in preschool and continue to persist through higher education (Stiff-Williams, 2007, Kewal-Ramani, et al, 2007). As a result, under-preparedness of minorities has become a widespread concern among some colleges and universities. It has been most evident when comparing the high attrition rates of minority students to majority students. According to Carey (2004), of the 772 colleges and universities in the United States where at least 5% of the full time students were African American, (a) 299
had graduate rates for students of color under 30%, (b) 164 had graduate rates for students of color under 20%, and (c) 68% had graduate rates under 10%.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have created an environment rooted in practices beneficial to students of color. The primary institutional focus of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) has been reflected through their missions which have traditionally centered around student learning (Seifert, Drummond, & Pascarella, 2006). Seifert, et al. (2006) stated that HBCUs emphasize feelings of engagement, connection, acceptance, extensive support, and encouragement. Berger and Milem (2000) added their belief that HBCUs can be more effective at promoting academic achievement for students of color than can predominately White institutions.

However, the graduation rates at historically Black colleges and universities tended to be much lower than graduation rates at high ranked institutions. According to Williams (2006), although graduation rates for students of color at HBCUs was well above the national average, the graduation rate at HBCUs was only 43%. Poor academic achievement of college students, especially students of color of low socio-economic status, has been major concerns for colleges and universities (Williams).

Most colleges and universities have sought to alleviate the problem of under-preparedness by offering pre-college level programs such as developmental studies courses (Boylan, Sutton, & Anderson, 2003). The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) found that all community colleges and many universities offer courses for the purpose of preparing students who would not be able to complete a higher education
program of study (NCES, 2003). At predominantly White institutions, 27% of the students reportedly enrolled in pre-college level courses as compared to 55% of the students enrolled at predominately minority student institutions. Even though colleges and universities have offered these courses, attrition has not improved). According to the National The National Center for Educational Statistics 2007 report, “Between 1976 and 2004, minority undergraduate enrollment increased as from 17 to 32 percent. Between 1990 and 2005, the percentage of adults who completed at least a bachelor's degree increased for all racial/ethnic groups” (NCES, 2007). However, the first year attrition rates at two year colleges has remained at about 45%, and the four-year attrition rate remained at approximately 26%(NCES, 2003). “National statistics have shown that an average of 25% to 30% of students have not returned to their first college for their sophomore year” (Mortenson, 2003, p. 12). Furthermore, it has been projected that less than 50% of college-bound students will have graduated six years later (Ashby, 2003; Astin & Oseguera, 2000; Branch, 2001;Carey 2004). Additionally, the national average retention rate of African-American students has been cited as 45% within 5 years as compared to 57% for White students (Rowser, 2001). Under-preparedness, students who exhibit a lack of college readiness, for college can prevent students from reaching their ultimate goal of obtaining a college degree.

Pre-college level courses have been aimed at giving students the necessary skills to be successful in college; however, many researchers of pre-college level education programs dispute the effectiveness of these courses (Bettinger & Long, 2004; Deil-Amen & Rosebaum, 2002; McCabe, 2002). Deil-Amen and Rosebaum argued that developmental education is a “hoax perpetuated upon academically weak students who will be unlikely to graduate” (p.
Pre-college level programs alone have not been sufficient to meet the needs of minority students who are underprepared for college work, especially at historically Black colleges and universities. HBCUs must explore effective intervention strategies for reducing attrition and improving retention rates. There has been considerable research that suggests that learning communities which integrate learning both socially and academically are believed to improve achievement and retention (Hotchkiss, Moore, & Pitts, 2003) and enhance student motivation (Stefanou & Salsbury-Gleenon, 2001). HBCUs must work towards providing students with meaningful learning environments, such as learning communities, which empower students to become connected to the institution by developing a sense of belonging with the student body (Kritsonis, 2006; Hardiman, 2001).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was: (a) to compare students in pre-college level courses within a learning community with similar students in traditional courses, and (b) to investigate students’ motivation towards learning. This study included two steps. The first was (a) to assess the academic performance of pre-college level English courses on standardized exams and final grades, and (b) to assess students’ motivation towards learning. The study was undertaken only after the approval of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Central Florida (Appendix A) and the participating institution (Appendixes B).

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This study addressed the following specific questions and hypotheses:
1. Is there a difference on COMPASS, a standardized assessment, in pre-college English courses for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities versus those in the comparison group?

2. Is there a difference in students’ final grades in pre-college level English courses for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities versus those in the comparison group after controlling for pre-COMPASS grades?

3. Is there a difference in students’ motivation in pre-college level English courses for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities versus those in the comparison group?

Three specific hypotheses were used to address Research Question 3 as to the impact of the learning community on students’ motivation in English courses for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities. They are:

- $H_{a3a}$ The mean for the learning community group will differ significantly from the mean of the control group on the construct, task value.

- $H_{a3b}$ The mean for the learning community group will differ significantly from the mean of the control group on the construct, extrinsic motivation.

- $H_{a3c}$ The mean for the learning community group will differ significantly from the mean of the control group on the construct, affect (test anxiety).
Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was soundly grounded in the literature. Primary topics addressed in the literature review were (a) learning communities and the many benefits they provide for students of color (b) the social construction of knowledge, and (c) motivation theory, specifically an adaptation of the expectancy-value model of motivation comprised of three constructs of self-regulated learning.

There have been several studies that recognize that higher education must restructure the form and the content of the college curricula in order to meet the challenges facing higher education in the 21st century. The College Learning for the New Global Century Report (2007) called for adoption of a set of educational outcomes that all students need to obtain from attending institutions of higher learning. A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of US Higher Education Report (2006), commissioned by Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, addressed the need for greater accountability measures within higher education. The Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College Report (2002) made a case for active inquiry based approaches to learning through the development of learning communities. The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in Research Universities (1998) recommended the reinvention of undergraduate education in the areas of collaborative learning, inquiry-based teaching, integrated first-year programs, and faculty development. As a result of the demands on them, colleges and universities have continued to seek new methods for improving student outcomes. In an effort to reform undergraduate education, many colleges and universities have incorporated the use of learning communities in their freshmen curriculum (James, et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2004; Stewart, 2009).
Social Construction of Knowledge

Learning communities are effective in reforming education because they build upon the social construction of knowledge. This suggests that learning is naturally tied to authentic activity, context, and culture (Brown, Collins, & Drigid, 1989; Dewey, 1938). Learning communities provide cognitive apprenticeships which serve as a means of enculturation for students and as a means of authentic practice in the discipline (Brown, et al., 1989; Lave, 1988). Furthermore, learning communities have expanded on the situated cognition theory of instruction, which suggests that learning is naturally tied to authentic activity, context, and culture (Brown et al., 1989). Wenger (1998) summarized the basic premises of situated cognition theory: (a) People are social beings which is a central aspect of learning, (b) knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises, and (c) meaning is what learning is intended to produce. Therefore, when the situative concept of communities of practice are applied to a classroom context, the culture of the classroom changes from the traditional structure in which the teacher dispenses knowledge into one in which the teacher and the learner work together collaboratively (Driscoll, 2000). Therefore, activities within the community become authentic and socially constructed. Additionally, there is a growing body of research that the social and academic integration of learning results in greater achievement and retention. (Taylor, Moore, MacGregor & Limblad, 2004; Tinto, 1997; Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Learning Communities and Their Effect on Minority Students

Learning communities have been especially beneficial for minority students who disproportionately comprise pre-college level courses (Hardiman, 2001). Learning
communities have also been beneficial to minority students, who have markedly different cultural identities from the mainstream academic communities, because they provide a nurturing environment as well as an interesting and motivating curriculum which is centered on the cultural needs of the students (Hardiman; Tierney, Colynar, & Corwin, 2003). In addition, researchers have found that minority students benefit from communities that purposefully include students’ culture within them (Green, 2000). Incorporating students’ culture within the overall theme of the community and within the interdisciplinary activities of the learning community has been important to its success. Harris (1992) stated that incorporating students’ culture within the curriculum of the community can drastically effect the students’ motivation.

Self-Regulation and Motivation

Self regulation is an important aspect of student learning and academic performance. Pintrich and De Groot (1990) identify three components which comprise the definition of self regulation: students’ metacognitive strategies, students’ management and control of their classroom effort, and students’ cognitive strategies used to learn. However understanding these three components of self regulation is not enough to clearly understand what influences academic achievement. In addition, it is important to have a clear understanding of what motivates students.

In the present study, Eccles (1983) motivational model provided the theoretical framework for investigating the self-regulated learning of pre-college level students attending HBCUs. Eccles’ model defines motivation in three components: (a) an expectancy component, (b) a value component, and (c) an affective component. According to Eccles
motivational model the expectancy component explores students’ beliefs about their ability, the value component which includes students’ goals and beliefs about the importance and interest of the task, and an affective component, or students’ emotional reactions to the task. Pintrich & De Groot (1990) explored the interaction between these three motivational components on self–regulated learning to determine if motivation and self regulated learning components may influence academic performance. Using the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire, Pintrich & De Groot found that motivation were linked to student cognitive engagement and academic performance in the classroom. Therefore, it is worth exploring the impact the learning community has on students’ motivation and academic performance.

Significance of the Study

Obtaining the skills necessary for gainful employment and becoming a useful contributor to society is an important outcome of a college education. However, underpreparedness has been an ongoing and well documented problem for many years at all institutions of higher learning. Persistent academic achievement gaps that plague minority students have been determined as being one of the factors that lead to high attrition rates of minorities at institutions of higher education. This problem has been especially troubling to historically Black colleges and universities who have had over 50% of their students enrolled in pre-college level courses, and have had only a 43% graduation rate (Williams, 2006). Therefore, due to a lack of academic preparedness a large number of minority students are exiting without achieving their ultimate goal of
obtaining a college degree. The problem of retaining minority students, therefore, has not been solely isolated to predominately White institutions. It has become a large problem at historically Black universities and colleges.

The mission of most HBCUs has been to educate the underprepared; however, most historically Black colleges and universities have had dismal graduation rates which have persuaded some to conclude that HBCUs have outlived their purpose (Redding, 2007). With a large number of people in society calling for change in educational policy and curriculum as witnessed by several reports, such as the Spellings report, it is imperative that universities and colleges find a way to assist students in learning. HBCUs must find meaningful learning environments which empower students to become connected to the institution by developing a sense of belonging with the student body (Kritsonis, 2006).

One possible solution to the retention problem of HBCUs could be changing the learning environment. It has been suggested that learning communities have the potential to assist with college retention and attrition because of their social context (Hardiman, 2001; Ladner, 2003). There is a growing body of research that suggests that minority students benefit and prefer learning environments situated within a social context (Cox, Goodenough, Moore, & Witkins 1977; Gay, 2000; Stiff-Williams, 2007). However, there has been little research conducted on how learning communities might benefit pre-college level students at HBCUs. This study was intended to expand the body of research on learning communities and to examine the extent to which one Black institution with a learning community was successful in assisting pre-college level students when compared to students in a traditional environment. With a greater understanding of the social
component of learning especially among minority students, HBCUs can begin to develop programs that will assist students and help them become successful and reach their goals.

**Definition of Terms**

**Academic success**--A student completing an attempted pre-college level English courses with a grade of Satisfactory(S).

**Academic failure**--A student who withdraws (W), receives a needs to repeat (NR), or receives a failing grade (F).

**Affect**--The social cognitive construct where students demonstrate their test anxiety as measured by the MSLQ (Pintrich, et al., 1991).

**African American**--A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (NCES, 1997).

**Attitude towards learning** --Students reasons for engaging in an academic task, belief about their goals and skills to succeed and test anxiety as assessed by the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)--These reasons include intrinsic and extrinsic values, self-efficacy and beliefs for learning, test anxiety (Pintrich & Garcia, 1991).

**Course completion** --A student who has satisfactorily completed the course with a grade of (S) or with a score of 70% or higher and with a course grade of 70% or higher.

**Cohort**--A set of people who share a common experience across time (Newman, 2000)
Collaborative learning--A process in which the ongoing exchange among students serves a central educational function (Bruffee, 1993).

Pre-College Level English courses--Courses in English for college students who lack the necessary college level skills in English. This study examines the Essentials of Writing Course.

Expectancy--The social cognitive construct where students demonstrate their beliefs about their academic abilities and self-efficacy as assessed by the MSLQ (Pintrich & Garcia, 1991).

Integrated Instruction--the synthesis of two or more disciplines, establishing a new level of discourse and integration of knowledge. The term refers to the process to construct knowledge in which students and instructors come together to analyze differences in disciplinary approaches to a problem and to work toward a synthesis—a new, more comprehensive view than allowed by the vision of any one field (Klein, 1990).

Learning Communities--Consists of a variety of approaches that link or cluster classes during a given term, often around an interdisciplinary theme, that enroll a common cohort of students. This represents an intentional restructuring of students’ time, credit, and learning experiences to build community, and to foster more explicit connections among students, among students and their teachers, and among disciplines. At the heart of learning communities is the integrated assignment. (Smith et al., 2004).

Value--The social cognitive construct where students demonstrate their intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for engaging in an academic task, and their judgments of how interesting and important the course content is to them as assessed by the MSLQ (Pintrich & Garcia, 1991).
Assumptions

1. It was assumed that participants selected for the study would respond honestly to survey items.
2. It was assumed that participants’ responses to survey items were based on their attitudes toward success in the linked courses.
3. It was assumed that the instruments selected for the study were valid and reliable.
4. It was assumed that participants completed the surveys independently and did not request assistance from other individuals.
5. It was assumed that the MSLQ represents actual motivation, not just self-reported motivation.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study was delimited to focus on pre-college level English classes at one historically Black institution. The students were assigned to pre-college level English classes because they lacked basic skills needed for success in a college level composition course. The results of this study may not apply to pre-college level courses at community colleges or other four year institutions where the criteria for participation in a learning community are different.

The learning community at the Florida university provided students with an additional opportunity. Students who completed all course work satisfactorily with 70% or higher, passed a comprehensive final exam, a 7 or higher on a holistically scored
essay, and earned at least 70% on the COMPASS, received a grade of S for the pre-college level course and a passing grade for a college level course. Students who did not meet all of these standards but did score 70% or higher on the COMPASS exam and a 6 on a holistically scored essay received an S (Satisfactory) which meant that the students passed the pre-college level English course. Students, who scored lower than 70% or a 5 or lower on the holistically scored essay, were given an NR (Needs Repeating) which represented a failure.

Summary

This chapter provided a description of the study. Included were a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and the conceptual framework upon which the study was based. The research questions, hypotheses and methodology and procedures were also presented along with delimitations and limitations, assumptions and significance of the study. The following chapters provide a review of the literature, a detailed description of the methods and procedures utilized in the study, an analysis of the data, and a summary of the findings.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter provides a synthesis of the literature dealing with college students’ under-preparedness, educational learning communities as they relate to minority students and historically Black colleges and universities. The literature related to the theoretical basis for the study, including the social construction of knowledge and the motivational constructs of (a) expectancy, (b) value, and (c) affect, are also explored.

Under-preparedness

Historically, student under-preparedness has been an ongoing problem plaguing colleges and universities since their inception. Universities, most of whom have ascribed to the aristocratic philosophy of education as opposed to the meritocratic or egalitarian, sought to avoid the responsibility of preparing the pre-college level students (Cross, 1971). The community college system, in fact, emerged from the proposal of several university presidents to reserve their institutions for higher level scholarship. In 1851, proposals initiated by the presidents of the University of Michigan and the University of Minnesota, with the support of several other university presidents, called for secondary schools to prepare students for entry into the university (Cohen, 1982). These efforts, however, did not stop the need for remedial education course in the university. Rather, the movement gave rise to a new educational system designed to assist underprepared students.
During the 1940s, community colleges were developing with the intent of preparing underprepared students for college level work. The number of community colleges had dramatically increased from 20 colleges in 1909 to 610 colleges nationwide by 1940 (Cohen, 1982). The 1948 Truman Report, which established open enrollment policies and began the community college system, called for a “free and universal access to education in terms of interest, abilities, and need of the students. . .” (Callan, 1997, p. 101). Cohen stated that social forces, e.g., the need for trained workers in the nation’s expanding industries and the drive for social equality, contributed to the rise of the community college system. The need for remedial courses to be provided, mainly at community colleges, was proliferated during the 1950s and 1960s with the publication of key reports and the establishment of critical legislation. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and federal legislation such as Brown vs. Board of Education of 1954, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 diversified college campuses not only racially but also academically by giving minorities more rights in the academic field and more access to education (McCabe & Day, 1998).

Community colleges effectively changed American education by expanding access to all. No longer was higher education reserved only for the wealthy. Cohen (1982) stated the following:

Of all higher education institutions, the community colleges contributed most to opening the system. Established in every metropolitan area, they were available to all comers, attracting the ‘new student,’ the minorities, the women, the people who had done poorly in high school, those who would otherwise never have considered further education. (p. 43)
However, opening the doors of educational opportunity brought students who were not familiar with the rigorous academic requirements of higher education.

Although the role of preparing students for college level work has been traditionally reserved for community colleges, almost all universities and colleges have offered remedial courses. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported that at the beginning of the 21st century, all community colleges and many universities were offering courses for the purpose of preparing students who would not be able to complete a higher education program of study (NCES, 2003). Of the institutions that enrolled freshmen students, 76% offered at least one pre-college level reading, writing, or math program. Of all institutions surveyed in 2000, 71% offered pre-college level mathematics, 68% offered developmental writing, and 56% offered pre-college level reading courses. Furthermore, 40% of all college students reportedly had taken at least one remedial course (Adelman, 2004). At historically Black colleges and universities, 55% of the students have been enrolled in pre-college courses (Adelman).

Boylan, Bonham, Claxton, and Bliss (1992) found that 33% of the minority students who attended colleges and universities were developmental students. Boylan et al. (2003) found that students of color were disproportionately represented in developmental courses. Penny and White (1998) conducted a study of 712 pre-college level students and found that 48% were Black, 44% were White, and 8% Hispanic, Asian, or Native American. Despite having a higher percentage of students represented in remedial courses, minority students have displayed higher attrition rates than have
majority students in higher education. As a result, researchers have questioned the effectiveness of pre-college level programs.

Although developmental courses have been aimed at giving students the necessary skills to be successful in college, many researchers of pre college level education programs have disputed the effectiveness of the courses (Bettinger & Long, 2004; Diel-Amen & Rosebaum, 2002; McCabe, 2002). However, advocates for the programs have contended that pre-college level courses have removed barriers to college success. Advocates such as Shields (2005) have contended that the courses provide under-prepared students the opportunity to obtain a college education that would not be possible otherwise. McCabe believed that students who take the courses complete their degrees successfully. Other proponents have expressed their views in regard to the additional diversity that these courses give colleges and universities (Boylan et al., 2003). Critics, however, have challenged the effectiveness of these programs. Diel-Amen and Rosebaum have argued that the courses and the programs are a “hoax perpetuated upon academically weak students who will be unlikely to graduate” (p. 279). Bettinger and Long called for an end of developmental programs and for a redirection to community colleges of those students who need these programs. Lamkin (2004) explained his position that the courses have been ineffective because of a lack of program evaluation which has contributed to high attrition rates among students enrolled in the courses. At the time of the present study, research about the effectiveness of pre-college level education programs was inconclusive.
Academic comparisons between African American children and their White classmates often begin in preschool and continue through higher education. Duncan and Magnuson (2002) reported that African American children have typically lagged in academic preparation to the extent that by the fourth grade they are two years behind White students. Robelen (2002) found that by the end of high school only one in 100 students of color could read and comprehend specialized text. Chubb and Loveless (2002) stated, “The average black or Hispanic student in elementary, middle, or high school currently achieves about the same level as the average white student in the lowest quartile of white achievement” (p. 1). Additionally, the achievement gap has persisted in higher education.

Though under-preparedness of all students has been a widespread concern among all colleges and universities, it has been most evident with regard to minority students who have the highest attrition rates. Stoops (2004) found that by for the 25-29 age group, 34 of every 100 White students obtained bachelor’s degrees, compared to 17 of every 100 Blacks and just 11 of every 100 Latinos. Lee (2002) stated that the contributing factors of racial and ethnic achievement included: socioeconomic and family conditions, youth culture and behavior, schooling conditions, and practices. Carey (2004) reported that of the 772 colleges and universities in the United States where at least 5% of the full time students were African American: (a) 299 had graduate rates for students of color under 30%, (b) 164 had graduate rates for students of color under 20%, and (c) 68% had graduate rates under 10%.

Traditionally, it was thought that a lack of academic preparedness was the main reason for high attrition rates in higher education. Tinto (1996) outlined seven sources for
student attrition: (a) problems adjusting to the academic and social setting, (b) unclear career and personal goals, (c) uncertainty about goals, (d) finances, (e) internal and external commitments, (f) congruence or the outcome of the quality of the student’s interaction with others at the college, and (g) isolation from either social or intellectual interaction. Additionally, researchers have shown that retention is a result of the academic environment, the social systems of the institution, and the individuals who shape those systems (Spady, 1971; Tinto, 1975). The arguments have focused, for the most part, on retention rates at predominately majority institutions.

The graduation rate at historically Black colleges and universities has tended to be much lower than graduation rates at high ranked institutions. Williams (2006) stated that although graduation rates for African Americans at HBCUs was well above the national average, it was only 43%. Poor academic achievement of college students, especially students of color of low socio-economic status, has been a major concern for colleges and universities.

The important explanation for high dropout rate at Black colleges is the fact that larger number of African American HBCU students do not come to college with strong academic preparation and study habits. The graduation results at HBCUs are worsened by the fact that the flagship universities in the southern states often tend to shuttle the lowest performing black applicants to state controlled colleges in their states. (Williams, 2006, section, para. 10)

Learning Communities

Research indicates that the social and academic integration of learning results in greater achievement and retention. (MacGregor & Limblad, 2004; Tinto, 1997; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Tinto (1987) stated that retention is a function of the three strategies which
are incorporated within the design of learning communities: (a) social and academic integration, (b) addressing the issue of academic preparedness, and (c) fostering a sense of belonging. Learning communities provide a social environment that promotes student engagement which is critical to student retention in the first year (Tinto, 2001; Upcraft, Gardner, & Associates, 2005). The establishment of supportive environments, through the intentional structuring of learning communities, may be an answer to retention rates and low student achievement.

There have been a myriad of studies that recognized the need for higher education to restructure the form and the content of the college curricula in order to meet the challenges facing higher education in the 21st century. The *College Learning for the New Global Century Report* (2007) called for the adoption of a set of educational outcomes that all students need to obtain from attending institutions of higher learning. *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of US Higher Education Report* (2006), commissioned by Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, called for greater accountability measures within higher education. *The Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College Report* (2002) made a case for active inquiry based approaches to learning through the development of learning communities. The Boyer Commission on *Educating Undergraduates in Research Universities* (1998) recommended the reinvention of undergraduate education in the areas of collaborative learning, inquiry-based teaching, integrated first-year programs, and faculty development. The reports confirmed that putting learning at the forefront of education would improve the quality of teaching and learning at institutions of higher learning.
In an effort to reform higher education, many colleges and universities have begun to look with renewed interest at transforming the teaching and learning environment of higher education by implementing learning communities. Smith et al. (2004) defined learning communities in the following way:

... variety of curricular approaches that intentionally link or cluster of two or more courses, often around an interdisciplinary theme or problem, and enrolls a common cohort of students. This represents an intentional restructuring of students’ time, credit, and learning experiences to build community, enhance learning, and foster connections among students, faculty, and disciplines. (p. 67)

Earliest renditions of learning communities sought to legitimize alternative curricular and pedagogical practices designed to improve the quality of students’ learning experiences. The goal was to take traditionally disconnected experiences and replace them with interdisciplinary study and theme-based curriculum. Formulaic testing and rote learning would be replaced by reading and intensive writing and student inquiry. To offset lectures team teaching and active learning would be used (Cross, 1998; Hill, 1985).

History of Learning Communities

The historical roots of learning communities can be traced to the 1920s. The Experimental College was founded by Meiklejohn at the University of Wisconsin. Meiklejohn believed that the college curriculum was becoming too narrow and fragmented into unrelated academic departments (Smith et al., 2004). He called for the integration of learning and the unification of curriculum, so that students developed a holistic education. Curriculum should be guided by the principle of integration.

Meiklejohn (2000) stated:
It says that students go, in terms of ideas, into all fields in which we wish him to be intelligent, that in each of these fields his mind should be given active work to do, and especially the principle of integration...is very direct and similar ideas into all fields in which we wish him to be intelligent, that in each of these fields his mind should be given active work to do, and especially that these separate pieces of work should be such that they will run into another. The underlying purpose is that the study shall in this way develop a ‘scheme of reference” covering all fields, within which each field shall find its proper place. And the result of this will be that any new experience within any field may then be seen in its place, in its relations, the ways with we sum up under the terms, “with understanding” or “intelligently.” An intelligent mind is one to which, in some essential sense, all fields of experience are familiar. (pp. 46-47)

Meiklejohn’s Experimental College was housed in a communal living environment at the University of Wisconsin, and its curriculum was based on interdisciplinary instruction. Capitalizing on the curriculum of the Experimental College, Joseph Tussman founded a learning community at Berkley in 1969 which had a significant impact on the learning community initiative. Tussman saw the lower division curriculum as a program rather than a collection of courses, and he believed that general education could be reformed by abolishing courses as the basic curricular planning units. By the 1970s, two programs emerged at the State University of New York-Stony Brook and LaGuardia Community College which demonstrated that learning communities could be implemented in different institutional contexts. By 1983, the learning community movement had formed a centralized organization at Evergreen State College whose purpose was to educate and support institutions of higher education in the development of learning communities. Under the new name of Washington Center for Undergraduate Education at Evergreen State College, the center has continued to provide leadership in the area of learning communities. By the year 2000, learning communities had become a
national movement with more than 500 institutions adopting the approach (Smith et al., 2004).

Organization and Instruction in Learning Communities

Learning communities have been built on five core practices: (a) community, (b) diversity, (c) integration, (d) active learning and (e) reflection/assessment (Smith et al., 2004). Structurally, three basic forms of learning communities have emerged: (a) unmodified courses, (b) linked or clustered classes, and (c) team taught learning communities. According to Smith et al., “The unmodified courses are the simplest structure, and they involve enrolling a cohort of students in at least one additional course like a freshman seminar course in which there is no change to the curriculum, syllabi, or teaching methods” (p. 71). Linked and clustered classes are another variation of a learning community which involves explicitly linking or pairing two or more courses; however, when three of four courses are linked they form a pure cohort of students or a cluster. Linked courses and clusters provide teachers a better opportunity to collaborate and to develop interdisciplinary themes and to make thematic connections within integrative assignments. Finally, team taught learning communities bring together two or more courses in which faculty members create a common syllabus around a common theme. The intention is to “examine broad questions or themes in an extended way, to explore interdisciplinary topics from multiple perspectives, and to practice academic skills in rich, meaningful contexts” (p. 85). The faculty and the pedagogy used within the learning community play an important role in engaging diverse learners academically and
culturally in a way that the traditional methods do not. “When appropriately designed, learning communities become spaces to bring together the theory and practice of student development and diversity, of active inclusive pedagogies, and of reflective assessment” (Malanrich & Associates, 2003, p. 97).

**Interdisciplinary Instructional Themes**

Learning communities have used interdisciplinary instructional themes and integrated lessons to make learning relevant. Klein (1990) defined interdisciplinary instruction as the “synthesis of two or more disciplines which establish a new level of discourse and integration of knowledge” (p. 104). Klein further explained as “a process used to construct knowledge in which students and instructors come together to analyze differences in disciplinary approaches to a problem and to work toward a synthesis—a new, more comprehensive view than allowed by the vision of any one field (p. 104).” Dezure (2003) stated that interdisciplinary learning promotes higher level critical thinking by using collaborative and cooperative learning, discovery and problem based learning, writing across the curriculum, and multidimensional assessment. As teachers integrate the curriculum, learners obtain a unified view of knowledge that motivates and develops learners’ powers to perceive and create new relationships for themselves (Smith et al., 2004). Tinto (1997) found that the actions of faculty within learning communities shaped classroom practice which heightened engagement and student persistence.
Learning Communities and the Social Construction of Knowledge

Learning communities have been effective in reforming education because they challenge traditional assumptions about student learning and the social construction of knowledge. Based on the situated cognition theory of instruction, learning communities have suggested that learning is naturally tied to authentic activity, context, and culture (Brown et al., 1989). Wenger (1998) summarized the basic premises of situated cognition theory: (a) Individuals are social beings, and this is a central aspect of learning; (b) knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises; and (c) meaning is what learning is intended to produce. Situated cognitive theory is not, however, a new theory. Dewey (1938) and Vygotsky (1978) both advocated similar approaches, and the philosophical, structural and even pedagogical roots of learning communities can be found within their work (Driscoll, 2000). Dewey defined learning as a shared inquiry process situated in a social context and as a process between the collaborative and cooperative work of the teacher and the student. Vygotsky also understood learning and development to be housed within the social and cultural context.

Lave (1988), who has often been credited for beginning the situated cognition movement, stated that most learning occurs through activities, contexts, and cultures. Lave called for apprentice-like situations between students and teachers in order for students to model the work of an accomplished instructor. Brown et al. (1989) proposed a model of cognitive apprenticeship as a means to acculturate students into authentic practices of a discipline. Brown (1997) outlined the role that adults play in these cognitive apprenticeships. Apprenticeship, according to Brown, suggested a paradigm of
situated modeling, collaborative learning, coaching where adults provide a welcomed source of domain expertise, and they act as role models of thinking, planning, and reflective processes.

When the situative concept of communities of practice are applied to a classroom context, the culture of the “classroom changes from the traditional structure in which the teacher dispenses knowledge to one in which the teacher and the learner work together collaboratively (Driscoll, 2000, p. 159).” Additionally, Brown et al. (1989) argued that traditional teaching practices result in the inability of students to use what they know in relevant situation. Lave (1988) criticized schools for too often abstracting learning and removing it from its natural context. Anderson (2000) argued that most of the teaching in higher education is not oriented towards students who are more relational and less analytical. Relational learners have often excluded because the learning environments in which they are engaged do not create enough opportunities to connect learning and life, or to put new learning to meaningful contexts. Maton, Hrabowski & Schmitt (2000) observed that researchers and educational practitioners, alike, have suggested that the social integration of students leads to higher grade point averages and student persistence. They also believed that a school’s activities must be authentically and socially constructed through the negotiations of its students.

Learning Communities and Minority Students

Retention did not become a significant problem until the advent of open enrollment policies which gave students of various races and academic abilities access to
higher education (Seidman, 2005). Early retention models identified the interaction between personal attributes and environment as an aid in the successful assimilation of students in the academic system (Spady, 1971). Another widely accepted retention model was Tinto’s retention model (1975, 1987, 1993) which stated that pre-entry college attributes form individual goals which eventually interact with institutional experiences. In Tinto’s models a student’s intentions are reinforced by positive experiences that reinforce persistence through the heightening of students’ intentions and commitments. “The extent to which the individual becomes academically and socially integrated into the academic and social systems of an in institution determines the individual’s departure decision.” (Seidman, 2005). Learning communities may serve as a method to integrate students into the institution of higher learning both socially and academically.

According to Hardiman (2001), the social context of learning communities effectively assists minority students. Ibarra (1999) stated in his theory of multi-contextuality that learned patterns or behaviors are imprinted on individuals by family and community and that these patterns form the context for individuals to interact and learn about the world. Cultures, in Ibarra’s theory, could be clustered into two groups based on context: High Context Cultures (HC), which were predominately ethnic minorities and females, tended to focus on streams of information from a situation or the interaction with the situation in order to derive meaning from the context in which it occurs. Low Context Cultures (LC), which were predominately northern European ethnic groups and males, tended to filter conditions and situations analytically. Ibarra concluded
that most of the norms and practices of academia were relatively low-context; thus, students from high context cultures were at a disadvantage.

Ibarra’s theory provided a framework for developing higher education in a way that supported high context learners. Ibarra (2001) continued to argue that multi-contextuality provided the framework for thinking about learning communities as places where colleges could improve the accessibility of higher education to all students. As a result, learning communities could be developed in ways that supported high context, field dependent learners. Gay (2000) explained that field-dependent learners benefited from examples and contextual and cooperative learning environments in which learning materials were related to students’ personal experiences rather than casting them in an abstract, de-contextualized manner.

Studies on minority participation in learning communities have revealed that the social context of learning within the community has had a profound effect on minority students. Hardiman (2001) observed Evergreen State College, which had a 40% African-American student population, attributed its high (91-95%) retention and graduation rate to the development of its learning communities. Tierney et al. (2003) conducted a study on learning communities and their effect on minority students, and they concluded that learning communities successfully prepared Latino and students of color for undergraduate success. In addition to providing a meaningful social context for learning, researchers have found that students benefit when learning communities have been purposefully constructed to include the culture of the students within the learning community. Incorporating students’ culture within the overall theme of the community
and within the interdisciplinary activities of the learning community have been important to its success. Harris (1992) stated that incorporating students’ culture within the curriculum of the community could drastically affect students’ motivation. Furthermore, Tierney (1993) suggested that honoring students’ histories and cultures could help students grasp the tools that a college education offers and that learning communities needed to be purposefully designed.

Furthermore, Rhoads and Valdez (1996) described multiculturalism as a human relations approach designed to promote and increase understanding of others; however, they contended that this approach to multiculturalism did not challenge Eurocentric thinking that permeates institutions. Ladner (2003) stated that learning community curricula must be designed to move students beyond simply achieving tolerance of another culture to providing students with a deeper understanding of the world. Administrators at Seattle Central Community College stated that simply incorporating multicultural themes within their curriculum would attract a meaningful representation of diverse students. They concluded that effective learning communities were hospitable places for students of color if faculty purposefully transformed the curriculum (Ladner).

In the fall of 2001, 36 students of color participated in an interdisciplinary learning community in an effort to find ways to assist the first year students assimilate into the academic culture. The learning community was formed to assist students of color by helping them join the academic community (James et al., 2006). He observed the following:
This group became a learning community in which members helped each other learn to join the academic community: by supporting each other through listening, disagreeing, and working together, students build academic skills and explored ideas in ways that value individual knowledge. Second, students were invited to use these academic skills by working together as a group with a shared mission in order to better understand the nature of communities. (p.11)

Students’ reflective writings revealed that the learning community provided students with a greater sense of connectivity to the university and to the students.

James et al., (2006) concluded:

The multifaceted environment of the linked courses offered culturally diverse first generation students a means to use multiple ways to represent ideas, further enabling them to contribute to the intellectual life of the university. Students work that the social, cultural, and epistemological bridges of the learning community led to a deeper understanding of self, other people, culture, and the construction of knowledge. (p. 15)

Simply incorporating multicultural themes within a learning community was not enough to retain students of color or to make the learning community conducive for academic development. On the contrary, the effective learning community for students of color creates a challenging curriculum that incorporates multiculturalism with “academic footholds and scaffolding” (James et al., 2006, p. 18) establishes clear expectations, gives attention to affective and cognitive ways of knowing, creates process-based learning, and gives students the opportunity to serve as teachers (James et al., p. 18).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

The primary institutional focus of Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) that has been reflected through their missions has been student learning (Seifert et al., 2006). Kim (2002) reported that prior to 1954 and the Supreme Court case to desegregate
institutions of learning, HBCUs were founded for the purpose of training students. Allen and Jewell (2002) stated that many HBCUs were established as “teaching colleges” because they embraced the mission to take academically underprepared students and prepare them for college level work. Seifert et al. stated that the mission of HBCUs provides the measurement for determining policies and practices that guide the quality of education provided at the institution. “Despite their differing origins, all HBCUs address three basic primary goals: a) education of Black youth, b) the training of teachers, and c) the continuation of the ‘missionary tradition’ by educating blacks” (p. 244). Seifert et al. theorized that the defined mission of HBCUs created “a culture in which student-faculty interaction, engagement with peers, and high expectations for learning in and outside the classroom is valued and articulated not only to faculty and staff but also to students” (p. 196).

Gallien (2007) outlined six historical values and traditions that influenced the school culture at HBCUs: (a) a “lift as you climb” mentality which suggested that one’s achievements were built on the dreams, aspirations, and achievements of others; (b) students not learning which was attributed to instructors not teaching; (c) a spirit of collaboration and cooperation that ran deeper than the careers of faculty members; (d) positive role models presented through African American faculty and through presentation in convocations, communities, and special programs; (e) advice from faculty members about the degree of bicultural acquisition needed for success in the larger society; and (f) “other-mothering” by African American faculty who serve as mentors (p.
39). In these ways, HBCUs have created an environment rooted in good practices for students of color.

Seifert et al. (2006) studied the effects of the institutional type on African-American students and found that the in-class learning environment at HBCUs was conducive for greater student-faculty contact, greater feedback on class performance, and more scholarly and intellectual emphasis than they would have received at predominately White universities. There have been many benefits for minority students attending HBCUs. In early research on the benefits of HBCUs, Allen (1992) analyzed data from the National Study on Black College Students and found that Black students at HBCUs benefited socially and psychologically. This was due to the emphasis on feelings of engagement, connection, acceptance, extensive support, and encouragement at HBCUs. Ehrenberg and Rothstein (1993) found that students who attended HBCUs were likely to have better self images, be psychologically and socially well adjusted and have higher grades than their counterparts at other institutions. Additionally, Horvat and Lewis (2003) concluded that when both professors and students shared common cultural characteristics, there was a cultural understanding consisting of common knowledge, communication, values, traditions, attitudes, and norms that promoted learning.

Palmer and Young (2009), in their research, found that HBCUs provided non-cognitive variables such as campus activities, positive peer interaction, connection with role models and mentors significantly influence college success. Drummond and Pascarella (2006) expressed their belief that HBCUs were more effective in promoting academic achievement for Black students. Key (2003) stated that a Black student who
attends an HBCU can increase the likelihood of graduating by 200%. On the other hand, there has been growing concern about the effectiveness of HBCUs because of their high attrition rates. Smith (2003) noted that the supportive relationship among students and faculty members was a significant contributor to students’ commitment academic success and social interaction.

**Motivation**

Understanding student motivation has been critical for general education programs in institutions of higher learning. Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2008) defined motivation as the “process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained.” (p. 4). Glynn, Aultman, and Owens (2005) defined “motivation as an internal state that arouses, directs, and sustains human behavior” (p. 150). It can affect and influence what, when and how students learn. Pintrich and Schunk (2002) defined motivational theories as the “attempt to answer questions about what gets individuals moving toward various activities or tasks (p. 232).” Schunk et al. (2008) stated that motivation has a “reciprocal relation to learning and performance” and therefore, influences learning and performance (p. 631); what students do and learn, in turn, influences their motivation. In other words, according to Schunk et al., as students attain goals they develop confidence in their ability to learn and then their beliefs motivate them intrinsically to set new goal. However, there have been numerous motivational constructs which have been applied to college student motivation. Schunk (2000) had earlier cited the problems associated with the many definitions of motivation.
The field of motivation is beset with a lack of a clear definition of motivational constructs and specification of their operation within larger frameworks. These problems have implications for interpretation of research results and applications to practice. (p. 116)

Glynn et al. (2005) identified four orientations to motivation that permeated the educational research: behavioral, humanistic, cognitive, and social. Educational researchers with a behavioral orientation have focused on concepts such as reinforcement and incentive. Researchers with a humanistic orientation have concentrated on students capacities for personal growth and self-determination. Those researchers with a cognitive orientation have emphasized students’ attributions and goal setting, plans, and expectations.

Finally educational researchers with a social orientation have emphasized students’ identities and interpersonal relationships particularly in learning communities. Pintrich (2003) concluded that the many orientations to motivation have led researchers to derive hybrids such as the social-cognitive orientation to motivation. It is this orientation that was used to guide the present study. Specifically, this study focused on the expectancy-value model of achievement theory that has long been a component of achievement motivation research. Wigfield and Eccles (2000) summarized the influence expectancy and values have on achievement.

Expectancies and values are assumed to influence directly achievement choices. They also influence performance, effort, and persistence. Expectancy is and values are assumed to be influenced by task-specific beliefs such as ability beliefs, the perceived difficulty of different tasks, and individuals’ goals, self-schema, and affective memories. These social cognitive variables, in turn, are influenced by individuals’ perceptions of their own previous experiences and a variety of socialization influences. (p. 69)
The expectancy-value model has proven to have the greatest implications in the educational arena.

**Expectancy-Value Theory**

Expectancy-value theory has provided one of the most important views on achievement motivation. Wigfield and Eccles (2002) stated, “To characterize the theory broadly, theorists adopting this perspective posit that individuals’ expectancies for success and the value they have for succeeding are important determinants of their motivation to perform different achievement tasks, and their choices of which tasks to pursue” (p. 91). The construct of the expectancy component of student motivation involves students’ beliefs about their ability to perform a task and the belief that they are responsible for their own performance. Early research on expectancy and value constructs highlighted the roles of cognitive beliefs and overt behaviors. The early models developed the distinction between beliefs about:

- being able to do the task (probability and expectancy for success) and beliefs about the importance, value, and desire to do the task (motives, incentive value) and posited that it is the combination of the two that resulted in motivated behavior. (Schunk et al., 2008, p. 49)

However, this study was based on the contemporary expectancy-value model which expanded the model to make it more social-cognitive in nature.

The Eccles et al. (1983) expectancy-value model of motivation provided the initial theoretical framework for motivation and the rationale for the use of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) which was used to gather data from
participants in regard to their motivation. The MSLQ is a Likert scale that measures both motivation and students’ learning strategies. The motivation section of the instrument is comprised of 31 items which specifically measures the three constructs of the Eccles et al. expectancy-value model of motivation. Their model is comprised of three components of self-regulated learning: (a) an expectancy component which includes students beliefs about their ability to perform a task, (b) a value component which includes students goals and beliefs about the importance and interest of the task, and (c) an affective component, which includes students emotional reactions to the task; for this study, test anxiety served as the affective component (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). Using the MSLQ, specific items related to three components of motivation that were investigated for this study are discussed in the following sections

Expectancy

The first component, expectancy, has been viewed as important in predicting students’ beliefs that they can accomplish a task. It answers the question, “Can I do this task?” Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) stated, “different aspects of the expectancy component have been linked to students’ metacognition, their use of cognitive strategies, and their effort management” (p. 34). Expectancy was based on two subscales within the MSLQ: self efficacy and beliefs for learning. Schunk (2000) suggested that students who believe they are capable of successfully completing a task often times are more likely to persist at a task than students who do not.
Understanding students’ beliefs about their ability and students’ self concepts is essential to understanding expectancy. There are several ability and self concept theories. Weiner (1992) argued that students’ attributions about their ability have important motivational consequences. Covington (1992) argued that “individuals attempt to maintain a positive sense of ability in order to maintain their self worth” (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, p. 71). Deci and Ryan’s self determination theory (1985) identified the need for competence as a reason why people seek challenging activities. But the basic principle in all expectancy constructs such as the previous one listed is the same. Pintrich (2003) stated,

Students who believe they are able and that they can and will do well are much more likely to be motivated in terms of effort, persistence, and behavior than students who believe they are less able and do not succeed. There is also good evidence to suggest that these confident students will be more cognitively engaged in learning and thinking than students who doubt their capabilities to do well. (p. 671)

Task Value

The second construct of the expectancy-value model of motivation measured by the MSLQ was the value construct which involves students’ goals and reasons for engaging in the task and their beliefs about the importance and interest of the task. According to Pintrich & DeGroot, (1990), value answers the question, “Why should I do this?” (p. 34). These answers can influence achievement behaviors such as choice, persistence, and actual achievement. Pintrich and Schunk (2002) stated that expectancy predicted achievement and value predicted choice. Value, as it was investigated for this
study, referred to task value and was focused on why students engage in academic tasks, i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic, and task value beliefs.

The subscales of the value construct measured by the MSLQ on which this study was focused related to extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation reflects the feedback and approval of others (Dweck, 1986). Extrinsic motivation pertains to an activity having been completed in order to attain some external reward or outcome. Ryan & Deci, 2000 explain that the process of motivating students to value and self regulate activities that are not inherently, intrinsically motivated is based in Self-Determination Theory. Furthermore Ryan & Deci identified four forms of extrinsic motivation: (a) external regulation in which behaviors are performed to satisfy an external demand or obtain an externally imposed reward; (b) interjected regulation which is regulation by self esteem, (c) identification which refers to one’s having identified with the personal importance of a behavior and having accepted regulation as his or her own; and (d) integrated in which one internalizes reasons for an action and assimilates them to oneself. The latter form is the most autonomous.

Ryan and Deci (2000) believed that the primary reason people were willing to behave in a certain way was because their actions made them feel valued by significant others with whom they would like to feel connected. Integration, or internalization, provided both a sense of belongingness and connectedness which, in Self-Determination Theory, has been called relatedness; internalization is supported by competence. Ryan and Deci suggested that to fully internalize a regulation and become autonomous, people must inwardly grasp its meaning and worth. They added that these meanings become
“internalized and integrated in environments that provide support for the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy” (p. 64). In the classroom, more autonomous extrinsic motivation has been associated with greater engagement (Connell & Wellborn, 1990); higher quality learning (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987) and better performance (Miserandino, 1996).

Eccles continued to refine his work over an extended period (Eccles & Wigfield, 1995; Eccles et al. (1998). He and his colleagues concentrated on task specific beliefs. The authors defined (a) task value in terms of their attainment value (perceived importance of doing well), (b) intrinsic value (how much enjoyment the individual derives), (c) utility value (how the task relates to future goals), and (d) costs (the undesirable consequences of task engagement). Utility value was viewed as the extrinsic reason for engaging in a task not for one’s own sake but to reach some desired end.

**Affect (Test Anxiety)**

The final construct of the expectancy-value model of motivation was an affective component. Affect in this study referred to students’ anxiety in testing situations and was measured by one of the MSLQ subscales. Test anxiety has been defined as “a set of phenomenological, physiological, and behavioral responses that accompany concerns about possible negative consequences or poor performance on an exam or similar evaluative situation” (Zeidner, 1998). Recent theorizing has distinguished test anxiety as an attribute of the person and as a dynamic process (Zeidner, 2007). Test anxiety can be construed as a personality trait referring to a person’s disposition to react with extensive
worry, intrusive thoughts, mental disorganization, tension, and physiological arousal when exposed to evaluative contexts and situations (Speilberger et al., 1976). Test anxiety, according to Zeidner (1998), also depends on the reciprocal interaction of a number of distinct elements at play in the ongoing stressful encounters between a person and the evaluative situation. Two important distinctions in the study of test anxiety have been identified: (a) the distinction between trait anxiety and state anxiety and (b) the distinction between cognitive and emotional components.

Zeidner (2007) described trait anxiety as reflecting individual differences in students’ “proneness” toward feeling anxious during a test, with some students experiencing pervasive or excessive worry about exams even when they were not in the immediate testing situation. “Trait reflects a general way of responding to the world which varies by person, but is relatively stable over time” (Linnenbrink, 2007, p. 108). However, state anxiety may vary depending on the context of a given test and can be brought by changes in the testing environment (Davis, Schutz, & DiStefanio, 2008).

The phenomenological aspects of test anxiety include cognitive and emotional components. In distinguishing between the cognitive and the affective components of test anxiety, scholars have attempted to distinguish between the thoughts and the beliefs that have led students to perceive threats in the testing context as somewhat different from the forms of arousal they may feel while taking a test. The cognitive component is worry. The emotional or affective component refers to actual arousal that individuals experience as they take the test (Zeidner, 1998).
Behavioral Components of Test Anxiety

Emotional regulation has been defined as the physiological, behavioral, and cognitive processes that enable individuals to modulate their experiences and expression of emotions (Gross & Thompson, 2007). In some cases, moderation may mean dampening, or down regulating the experience of an emotion, whereas in other cases, moderating may involve amplifying or up-regulating and emotion (Davis et al., 2008). Gross and Thompson noted that emotion regulation occurs on a continuum from conscious, effortful, and controlled to unconscious, effortless, and automatic. As stated within the context of test taking, although some students may consciously engage in trying to reduce unpleasant feelings during tests, their engagement of specific strategies may not necessarily produce the results they desire. A strategy that may be defined as less adaptive might actually serve a functional purpose for a given student, and strategies that have been historically defined as adaptive may not assist students in modulating their emotion experience if they are enacted poorly (John & Gross, 2007). Strategies deployed to dampen an unpleasant emotion may provide students with a short term benefit; however, strategies may have the hidden consequence of diminished performance (Davis et al., 2008).

The largest body of research within the field of emotion regulation is the literature in the area of coping. Lazarus (2001) defined coping as “the effort to manage psychological stress” (p. 45). Researchers on coping have identified two types of problems in which individuals deploy strategies to manage the demands of a task. The research on the effectiveness of problem coping strategies has been varied. A large body
of research has stated that there may be consequences for reliance on emotion-focused coping strategies. These include higher depression and unpleasant emotions like anger (Martin & Dablen, 2005; Rafnsson, Jonsson, & Windle, 2006) Within the test taking field, (Schultz, et al., 2004) have identified three different dimensions of coping that students use to manage problems during tests: task-focused processes, regaining task focus, and emotions focused processes.

Task-focused processes reflect the students’ attempts at intentional deployment, in which students focus on those elements of the test that they can control: reading directions, finding the main idea, and eliminating responses. This shifts their concentration away from what confuses them to what they understand. This not only regulates the emotion but also manages the actual demands of the test (Davis et al., 2008). The second dimension of emotion focused processes involves students to disengage from the task and focus on their feelings and thoughts about their performance on the task and potential causes for that performance. Lastly, Schultz et al. (2004) argued that regaining task-focus processes involves students’ attempts to get back on task by attempting to reduce their tension or put the test in perspective.

Students of Color and Motivation

Historically, much of the research conducted on African-American students and motivation has been guided by the relationship of socioeconomic status to theoretical constructs (McClelland, 1961; Rainwater, 1966; Veroff & Peele, 1969). Such comparisons were used to account for motivational deficits of Blacks perceived by
society, and these comparisons led to broad assumptions about societies’ perception about the motivational deficits of African Americans. Graham (1994) reviewed 14 studies examining the expectancy construct of African-Americans, and she noted when studies comparing Black and White aspirations in the literature appeared, researchers consistently reported Blacks had lower aspirations of success than Whites. In addition Graham found the following assumptions prevalent in the literature: (a) African Americans display motivational deficits because they lack certain personality traits needed for achievement strivings; (b) African Americans are less likely to believe in internal or personal control of outcomes, a belief system that accompanies high achievement behavior; and (c) economic disadvantage and poor academic achievement have led African Americans to have low expectations for the future and negative self views. Graham concluded that the literature reviewed revealed very limited differences between locus of control, attributions, ability beliefs and expectancies.

However, more recent researchers have suggested that previous assumptions of African American motivational deficits may not be true. Contrary to the earlier research, Graham (1994) found students of color were remarkably optimistic about their futures and endorsed positive self reviews. Cokley (2000, 2003) challenged the anti-intellectualism myth of students of color represented in literature which perpetuates that these students are not against intellectual development. Bennett (2006) found that Black students’ academic self confidence was an indicator of personal expectations toward ability and level of expectancy toward achievement. The belief in their ability and expectancy has been viewed as affected by the amount of confidence they have in
knowing that there are people around who can lend some attention, provide a social connection, assist their motivation toward goals that are individualistic, and provide them with personal fulfillment (Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975). Related research focused on the academic achievement and attitudes.

Although there has been a growing amount of literature on the expectancy of African Americans, Graham (2002) suggested that values provide additional insight into African American motivation. In addition, Graham suggested that unlike achievement-related expectancies that are largely centered on beliefs about ability such as “Can I do it?”, values have to do with desiring and preferences such as “Do I want it?” They are more concerned with perceived importance, attractiveness, or usefulness of achievement activities. In addition, higher education has been oriented towards a learning style that is contrary to the learning style that benefits most students of color. Anderson (2001) argued that most of the teaching that goes on in higher education has been centered on field independent learners who prefer analytical thinking and are comfortable with learning materials in abstract terms that are separated from their own life experiences. A mismatch of teaching and learning styles in higher education for African Americans may result in animosity and less motivation toward the educational environment (Delphit, 1996).

Hwang, Echols, Wood and Vrongistinos (2001), in their motivation study, interviewed 60 randomly selected students of color and found that highly intrinsically motivated students were also likely to be highly involved, extrinsically, socially, and future oriented. The four principle questions designed to generate a narrative about
students of color’s thoughts and perceptions of education were as follows: (a) What is your major? (b) What does education mean to you? (c) What does it mean to be a good student to you? and (d) Why do you study? Analysis of students’ motivation for the question, “What is your major?” and “Why did you choose your major?” yielded three themes: enjoyment (58.4% of responses), empathy (15%) and a combination of enjoyment and empathy (26.7%). A total of 40% of responses indicating personal enjoyment were supported by extrinsic factors. Hwang et al. (2001) continued to explain the result. In response to a question concerning the meaning of education to those surveyed, the following three themes emerged: opportunity (48.3% of the participants), self-fulfillment (43.3%), and money (5%). In addition Hwang et al. explained that in response to a question querying students on why they studied, two themes emerged: interest in learning (55%) and learning itself (43.3%). The construct of extrinsic motivation was specifically important to the theoretical framework of this study.

Cultural Influences on Learning

In order to ascertain the best teaching practices for students of color, it is important to understand their culture and learning styles. Spade (1982) defined culture as the rules that members of a particular group use to govern themselves. Hale-Benson (1986) postulated that culture affects recognition and learning style, attitude, behavior, and personality of students of color. Madere (1998) added to the definition of culture by defining it as “a group’s way of perceiving, judging, and organizing the ideas, situations, and events they encounter in their daily lives” (p. 9). Adler (2001) theorized that culture
shapes people’s attitudes and behavior as well as people’s perceptions of the world. Lewis (2002) defined culture as the learned systems of values, beliefs, meanings, symbols, and behavior imprinted on individuals by family and community beginning at birth. Parillo (2003) added “values, customs, beliefs, communication patterns, and aesthetic standards that are passed from one generation to the next” (p. 116) to the definition of culture. Rovai, Gallien and Wighting (2005) concluded that communication was at the center of the educational process. Communication, according to Rovai et al. served as a guide to social reality and could condition one’s thinking about social processes reflecting different cultural patterns and values.

Learning Styles of African Americans

How a person interacts, perceives, and responds to learning greatly affects his or her achievement. There has been general acceptance that the manner in which individuals choose to or are inclined to approach a learning situation can impact on performance and achievement of learning outcomes” (Cassidy, 2003, p. 42). Students have tended to “reach higher levels of achievement when they are taught in ways that are compatible with their preferred learning style” (Cronbach & Snow, 1981, p. 12). Dunn, Dunn, and Perrin (1994) defined leaning styles as the way in which a learner concentrates on, processes, and retains difficult information. Johnson and Engelhard (1992) defined learning styles as a learning preference for strategies and methods with which students are most comfortable and that produce the best results.
Learning styles can be classified into various models. Cassidy (2003) identified the various models based on environmental preferences, social interaction, information-processing preferences, and cognitive personality types. Learning styles of African-Americans have been characterized as the patterns that express African American culture (Hale-Benson, 1986; Hilliard, 1976; Kwate, 2001; Willis, 1992). Much of the cross-cultural research has provided strong evidence that certain ethnic groups have learning style preferences that differ from other ethnic groups, suggesting a linkage between learning style and culture (Bennett, 2002; Hernandez, 2000). Boykin (1983) described the following nine dimensions applicable to learning styles that have influenced African American culture:

1. Spirituality--a belief that great powers exist and are at work
2. Harmony--man is connected with his environment; therefore, man is at harmony with nature rather than trying to control it.
3. Movement--a rhythmic orientation to life that may be manifested in music and dance as well as behavior.
4. Verve--the psychological aspect of the movement dimension; involves a preference to be simultaneously attuned to several stimuli rather than singular routinized or bland orientation; energetic, intense.
5. Affect--emotional expressive and sensitivity to emotional cues
6. Communalism--interdependence of people; social orientation.
7. Expressive individualism--focuses on a person’s unique style or flavor in activity.
8. Orality--importance of information learned and transmitted orally: call and response

9. Social time perspective--time is viewed in terms of the event rather than the clock.

As a result of cultural influences on the educational process, learning environments must be constructed to promote the maximum benefit to the students. Perry, Steele, and Hilliard (2004) stated that students of color are more successful in learning environments characterized by harmony, cooperation, affect, socialization, and community. Benson-Hale (1986) stated that African-American learners have been inclined to engage in learning in a holistic manner, compared to the compartmentalized and analytical manner of Euro-American students and institutions. Petchaucher (2007) stated that this relation style of learning works best with students of color who prefer material that is “relevant to their own experiences and embedded in context” (p. 25). This suggests that schools should be relevant to the students with education that is centered on cooperation, collaboration, and cultural relevancy. Therefore, students of color will see the congruence between their educational experiences in schools and their own cultural upbringings and beliefs.

Perry et al. (2004) believed that African Americans were more successful in environments characterized by harmony, cooperation, affect, socialization, and a strong sense of community. African Americans have reportedly learned less in environments that are highly stratified and competitive. Gallien and Peterson (2004) surmised that students of color employ people-oriented and relational approaches to learning rather
than independent and analytical educational environments. Hilliard (1976) compared schools as they existed and as they could be. He concluded that most schools are constructed around the learning styles of Caucasian students. He labeled this learning style as the atomistic-objective style. Hilliard (1976) stated that in this learning style an objective is manifested by “breaking down the experience into its parts or atoms, separating from the experience, preferring regularity, environmental control, and placing little value on the meaning of an event” (p. 124). In contrast, the synthetic-personal style characteristic of students of color is similar to the “synthesis of materials, prefers experimentation, improvisation, and harmonious interaction with others and the environment” (p. 125). Willis (1989) integrated the learning styles of African American children into four characteristic groups: (a) social/affective which refers to people oriented with emphasis on the affective domain, and in which social interaction is crucial and common; (b) harmonious which refers to knowledge that is sought out for practical and relevant purposes and results in holistic approaches to experiences and synthesis; (c) expressive creativity where creative, adaptive, variable, intuitive and simultaneous stimulation is preferred, along with oral expression; and (d) nonverbal in which movement and rhythm are important as well as nonverbal communication.

Educational psychologists have suggested two cognitive learning styles constructs: field dependent or field independent (Witkins, 1977). Furthermore, Witkins stated that field dependent people need cues from the environment, prefer external structure, are people oriented, are intuitive thinkers, and remember material in social context. Ibarra (2001) suggested that field dependent learners prefer student-centered,
personal environments where learning is related to life experiences. According to Ibarra
field dependent learners are those who require externally defined goals and
reinforcements, are negatively affected by criticism, and prefer the observational
approach to learning concepts. Students of color were found to be more field dependent
than White students who were field independent. In contrast, Ibarra stated that field
independent persons develop structures themselves, can pull out cues embedded in a
context, prefer to work alone, are objective and task oriented, and are analytical thinkers.
Ibarra also stated that field independent learners have self defined goals, provide their
own reinforcement, are less affected by criticism, and prefer a hypothesis testing
approach to learning. The theories summarized for this review reflect the effect culture
has had on students of color’ learning styles, and these theories suggest that differences in
culture and learning styles require different pedagogical approaches.

Curricular Approaches Beneficial to Students of Color

In order to effectively facilitate learning of adult learners, educators must consider
the characteristics of the learner and the context in which it takes place (Haysbert &
and the process for teaching adults in his andragogy model. He noted that teachers of
adult learners must act as facilitators and not dispensers of knowledge, and they must
continue to sell adults on the idea of continuing to learn (Knowles, 1970). Knowles
(1990) outlined six characteristics of adult learners that differ from children and
adolescents: Adult learners need to know the process and organization in the process to a
greater extent than young learners, and as a result learning must have a purpose. Their self concept tends to make them more self directed. Adults also have a reservoir of experiences on which to draw while learning, and they learn best when their experiences are utilized and respected in the classroom. They demonstrate a readiness to learn when they experience something in order to perform more effectively in their lives, and they enter learning situations with a problem-centered orientation to learning. They learn information in the context that the new information is useful in accomplishing some goal or objective. Finally, adult learners are more responsive to intrinsic motivation than to extrinsic motivation.

Adult learners must be active in the process of learning. As a result of Knowles (1990) assumptions about adult learners, he developed a seven step educational program that is beneficial to adult learners. The seven step process includes the following: (a) Create a climate that is informal, democratic, and conducive to learning, (b) create a climate that involves learners in the planning process, (c) involve learners in diagnosing their needs and readiness for learning, (d) involve learners in the framing of their learning objectives, design a plan of activities, (e) flesh out the plan of activities, and (f) involve learners in the evaluation of their own individual learning outcomes.

Another way to effectively facilitate learning of adult learners has been to incorporate culturally relevant teaching. Hale-Benson (1986) stated that African American culture affects students’ learning style, attitude, behavior, and personality. Designing curriculum around cultural images may enhance academic performance for these students. Ladson-Billings (1995) addressed three principles on which she believed
that culturally relevant teaching must rest: (a) Students must experience success, (b) students must develop and maintain a critical consciousness, and (c) students must develop a cultural competence. Ogbu (1992) criticized multicultural education, claiming that: (a) the students role in their academic achievement was ignored by making teachers and schools change their attitudes towards students culture; (b) programs were rarely based on actual study of minority cultures and languages; rather they were based on a curriculum of observations of minority group members; and (c) programs failed to separate minority groups that were successful in crossing cultural and language boundaries from those who could not do so. Ogbu (1992) also criticized the assumptions upon which the curriculum of multicultural education was based:

The multicultural education movement is based on the erroneous assumption that academic achievement is primarily a result of the transaction between the specific skills and abilities of the students and the teaching of the curriculum and the process of the classroom environment, including teacher attitudes. These movements failed to recognize that the meaning and value students associate with school learning and achievement play a very significant role in determining their efforts toward learning and performance. Furthermore, the meaning and value that students from different cultural groups associate with the process of formal education vary and are socially transmitted by their ethnic communities. The important point here is that neither the core curriculum approach nor the multicultural education approach will appreciably improve the school performance of some minority groups until they and other school interventions, innovations, and reforms are informed by an understanding of why children from specific minority groups are experiencing leaning and performance difficulty. (p. 7)

Forms of pedagogy that have proven beneficial to students of color learning styles have been cooperative, collaborative, and have included extensive interaction and field dependency (Hale-Benson, 1986). In addition, instructors have played an important role in the academic success of students of color. Rhea & Ponton (2007) outlined the role
instructors of African Americans should fill in order to create optimum learning environments for students of color. First the instructor must act in the role of an engager. When instructors engage students via thought provoking questioning, students develop into self-directed learners. Next the instructor must act as a motivator by proactively explaining to students the relationship between prescribed course performances and desired outcomes. Third, instructors must act as models by presenting themselves in a manner that is consistent with a successful person. Finally, instructors must act as mentors by sharing insights outside the course.

**Summary**

Under preparedness has historically been a widespread concern among all colleges and universities. After the establishment of open enrollment policies, students of various racial and academic abilities came to institutions of higher learning. With the different students came a need for colleges and universities to provide remediation for these students. At the time of the present study, nearly all colleges and universities were offering some form of remediation to students. At both predominately White institutions and historically Black universities and colleges, minority students disproportionately make up the most of the students enrolled in pre-college courses. However, these programs have contributed little in preventing the attrition of these students. Therefore, despite offering these programs and services, the effectiveness of pre-college level programs has been debated. As a result, it has been suggested by many individuals that institutions of higher education seek new ways to educate these students.
This chapter has provided a review of the literature relating to the under-preparedness of college students and the various ways in which institutions have addressed that condition. The literature and research on educational learning communities, particularly as they relate to minority students and historically Black colleges and universities, has been synthesized and reported. Also, the literature related to the theoretical basis for the study, including the social construction of knowledge and the motivational constructs of (a) expectancy, (b) value, and (c) affect, were explored. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the cultural influences on students of color, their preferred learning styles, and curricular approaches.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This study was conducted to gain insight into the impact of learning community membership on the academic achievement and motivation of African American college students. Students enrolled in pre-college level English courses and selected to participate in a learning community were identified and compared to students enrolled in pre-college level English courses who did not participate in a learning community. This study has the potential to inform instructors and administrators about the best learning environments for students of color and to add to the literature and body of research on learning communities as related to students of color.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study addressed the following specific questions and hypotheses:

1. Is there a difference on the COMPASS, a standardized assessment, in pre-college English courses for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities versus those in the comparison group?

2. Is there a difference in the final grades in pre-college level English courses for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities versus those in the comparison group after controlling for pre-COMPASS grades?
3. Is there a difference in students’ motivation in pre-college level English courses for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities versus those in the comparison group?

Three specific hypotheses were used to address Research Question 3 as to the impact of the learning community on students’ motivation in English courses for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities. They are:

\[ H_{a3a} \] The mean for the learning community group will differ significantly from the mean of the comparison group on the construct, task value.

\[ H_{a3b} \] The mean for the learning community group will differ significantly from the mean of the comparison group on the construct, extrinsic motivation.

\[ H_{a3c} \] The mean for the learning community group will differ significantly from the mean of the comparison group on the construct, affect (test anxiety).

**The Setting: Demographics of the Florida University**

The Florida university, a United Methodist affiliated institution, was founded by an African American female in 1904. In 1923, the institution was a coed high school, but by 1941 it evolved to offer a four-year baccalaureate program in liberal arts and teacher education. The college obtained accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. By the 1970s, the major fields of study increased from 12 to 37. By 2008, the college instituted a master’s degree program and achieved University status. (B. Website, 2009, History Section).
In the fall of 2008, the University had graduated more than 13,200 students since 1943 and had a total enrollment of 3,434 students. Students of color were the largest portion of the total student population at 92.5%. White students are 1.5%, Hispanic were 2%, Asian were 0.2%, and non-resident aliens were 0.7%. A total of 64% of the students were from within the state of Florida, and 33% of the students were from outside the state of Florida in the United States. Foreign students comprised 5% of the student population.

The approximate student body make-up was 59% female and 41% male. A total of 93% of the students who were age 24 and under, and 92% received financial aid. Only 8% did not receive financial aid. There were 980 first generation college students in the fall term of 2008 as shown in Table 1.
Table 1
Demographics: Florida Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>Florida (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 24</td>
<td>93.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 +</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>93.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-resident Alien</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residency</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Out of State/USA</td>
<td>33.0</td>
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<td>Foreigner/Outside USA</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Aid</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive aid</td>
<td>92.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not receive aid</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. % may not equal 100% due to rounding.
Population

For this study, the population from which the sample was drawn was comprised of students enrolled in the learning community at a historically Black institution of higher education in Florida. The learning community was entitled From Africa to the Americas. The comparison group was formed using students enrolled in pre-college level courses from the same institution who did not participate in any learning community.

The Sample: Learning Community Group

A total of 120 students were enrolled in six learning community sections of the learning community entitled From Africa to the Americas at the institution in Florida. In order to be eligible for participation in the study, students met the following criteria: (a) consented to participate by signing the informed consent form (Appendix C), (b) took both the COMPASS pre-test and posttest, and (c) had a final grade in the class. Of the 120 students, 75 students met the criteria for participation.

Description of the Florida Learning Community

There were five different thematic learning communities at the Florida institution: From Physical to Metaphysical, From Personal Business to Global Business, From Africa to the Americas, Sister to Sister, and Brother to Brother. From Africa to the Americas was the longest existing learning community for first year students at the Florida university. It was created in 1996 in order to assist under-prepared students in developing the skills necessary for success in college level courses.
Students were placed in a learning community if they received a score of 60-69 on the COMPASS placement test. After students completed the requirements in the learning community, i.e., pre-college level courses, they were eligible to be placed in college level courses. In fall of 2008, the University offered six sections of the learning community, From Africa to the Americas.

Within the learning community, students were enrolled in the pre college level English course entitled EN112: Essentials of Writing. Using integrated teaching methods and thematic units, the learning community focused on linking pre-college level courses in English, reading, African-American history and freshmen seminar courses. Many assignments and activities were centered on the theme of exploring the contributions of African Americans throughout literature and history. For 14 weeks, students enrolled in the learning community were taught writing and grammar skills through direct instruction, computer assisted instruction, and cooperative learning groups. In addition, teachers from the other disciplines collaborated on projects, reading assignments, and writing assignments. Assignments included the writing process, revision and editing, developing a thesis statement, grammar and usage. In addition, students were mandated to attend one hour of laboratory per week in the University Writing Center. Within the Writing Center, students used Mywritinglab, an online grammar skills software program, to further develop their skills in English. Additionally, students in the learning community were required to read and write essays on various novels. The students were required to read and respond to three novels and various literature anthologies, history textbooks, and reading skills texts. The novels they were required to read were the following: Family by J. California Cooper, Dust Tracks on the Road by Zora Neale Hurston, and Secret Life of Bees by Sue Kidd Monk.
At the end of 14 weeks, the COMPASS exit examination, an exit essay, and a comprehensive literature examination were administered to students to determine if their skills were at college level. Depending on students’ scores on the examinations, students received one of two possible grades. Students who scored a 6 on a holistically graded exit essay, 70% on the COMPASS exam, and had a passing grade in the coursework but did not pass the comprehensive final exam were given credit for passing the pre-college level course. Students, however, who scored a 7 on a holistically graded exit essay, 71% on the COMPASS exam, had a passing grade in the coursework, and passed the comprehensive final exam received credit for passing the pre-college level course and the college level English course, EN 131. The syllabus for EN131 is presented in Appendix D.

Comparison Group at the Florida Institution

The comparison group was also drawn from the Florida institution. It consisted of 27 students who were enrolled in traditionally taught EN 112: Essentials of Writing in the fall of 2008. In order to be eligible for participation in the study, students met the same criteria required of the learning community group. The comparison group did the following: (a) consented to participate by signing the informed consent form, (b) took both the COMPASS pre-test and posttest, and (c) had a final grade in the class. Only students who met the criteria were allowed to participate in the study.

Students in the control group were placed in the pre-college English course, EN 112: Essentials of Writing, if they received a score ranging from 69 or below on the COMPASS placement exam. The syllabus for EN 112, a non-credit writing course
designed to prepare students to be successful in college level English courses, is presented in Appendix E.

Using traditional teaching methods, students enrolled in the course were taught the basic skills for successful writing. For 14 weeks students had the option of attending the Writing Center for extra tutoring. In the laboratory, students were able to either work with a peer-tutor for help with grammar on writing assignments or to use an online grammar skills software program, Mywritinglab. Students were given six writing assignments, weekly grammar quizzes, a midterm and a final examination.

At the end of 14 weeks, students were given the COMPASS exit exam to determine if their skills were at college level. A holistically graded exit essay was also administered to students to determine if their writing skills were at college level. Using the College Level Academic Skills Test Writing Rubric (CLAST), essays were read by two teachers within the English department. Students who obtained a passing score on the COMPASS exit examination (70% or higher), 6 on the exit essay, and 70% or higher on all course work, were judged to have met the required skill levels and were permitted to enroll in college level English courses.

Instrumentation/Measures

Two instruments were used to gather data for this study. The COMPASS test was administered as a pre- and posttest to both groups of students. The second instrument, Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), was administered to all study participants during the twelfth week of the fall term.
COMPASS Test

The COMPASS test is a comprehensive, computer adaptive testing program that quickly assesses students’ skills in reading, writing, writing production, mathematics, and ESL. The COMPASS provides information for student placement, diagnostic scoring, and final assessment. The COMPASS test is a pre- and posttest of basic skills deemed necessary for successful completion of the course and to demonstrate college level proficiency.

The COMPASS contains four multiple-choice tests—English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science—and an optional Writing Test. These tests are designed to measure skills that are most important for success in postsecondary education and that are acquired in secondary education. The COMPASS tests are designed to measure students’ problem-solving skills and knowledge in particular subject areas (ACT, 2007).

COMPASS provides English language arts placement testing, as well as diagnostic pretests and posttests, in reading, writing skills, and writing production. The COMPASS English Test is a 75-item, 45-minute test that measures understanding of the conventions of standard written English (punctuation, grammar and usage, and sentence structure) and of rhetorical skills (strategy, organization, and style). In addition, the COMPASS writing system offers eight writing skill diagnostic tests covering critical concepts related to punctuation, verb formation and agreement, usage, relationships of clauses, shifts in construction, organization, spelling, and capitalization. For this study, the COMPASS test in writing was given as a pretest and posttest to the students enrolled in pre-college level English courses.
Compass Score Validity and Reliability

COMPASS is a computer adaptive test that assists institutions of higher education to place students by gathering measuring students’ skills in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and English as a Second Language. Because COMPASS is an adaptive test and examinees are given different sets of test items, the reliability cannot be measured in traditional ways. “Conventional formulas for computing internal consistency reliability do not directly apply to adaptive tests, because different examinees are administered different sets of test items” (ACT, 2007, p. 105). Because each examinee is measured in accord to the items administered, the marginal reliability coefficient was used.

The marginal reliability coefficient can be computed through simulation studies, in which artificial data are generated in a manner that closely resembles actual examinee responses. The advantage of such studies is that the examinees’ “true” abilities are known in advance and can be directly compared with the “observed” results obtained through the testing process. (p. 105)

In addition, the conditional standard error of measurement (SEM) was used to determine the test’s reliability. The SEM provides a measure of the difference between a student’s actual obtained score and the average score; however, the conditional SEM is more accurate. “The conditional SEMs can be estimated for different values across the score scale, thereby helping users interpret likely reliability throughout the score scale. Conditional SEMs can be interpreted in much the same way as confidence intervals” (p. 106). The COMPASS test can be administered in three test lengths: standard, extended, and maximum. Longer tests are more reliable than shorter tests. For the Writing Skills Placement Test the reliability estimates are as follows: standard (.85) and maximum test length (.90) (p. 106).
In addition, validation cannot be measured in the traditional way. According to (Sawyer, 1989), measuring validity of using the COMPASS for placement can be best accomplished by using placement validity indices. Placement validity indices are generated from “logistic regression models and distributions of predictor variables to determine placement effectiveness” (ACT-2007, p. 116). Placement validation methodology is accomplished in the following ways:

Placement validation using this methodology is accomplished by calculating the percentage of students correctly placed (percentage of correct decisions or accuracy rate) given the cutoff score used to place students. The accuracy rate is the sum of the true positives and true negatives. Alternative cutoff scores can be evaluated by estimating the percentage of students who would be correctly placed using each alternative cutoff score. (ACT-2007, p. 103)

The benefit of this method is that the strength of the relationship between test scores and course grades vary by test score and it predicts students’ probability of success in standard level courses. Traditionally to place students in courses, students are evaluated using their test scores and course grades. However, using the logistic regression model, the researcher can better estimate students’ probability of success for all tested students. The test yields four estimated percentages:

1. The percentage of students who scored below the cutoff who failed the standard course had they enrolled in it (true negative).
2. The percentage of students who scored below the cutoff who have succeeded in the standard course had they enrolled in (false negative).
3. The percentage of students who scored at or above the cutoff who actually succeeded in the standard course (true positive).
4. The percentage of students who scored at or above the cutoff who actually failed in the standard course (false positive). (pp. 116-117).

Since the fall of 1993, COMPASS placement tests have been administered to entering freshmen at colleges, and logistic regression models have been used to calculate
probabilities for success in standard level courses. Course grade success was predicted from the COMPASS test score using the criterion course grade of B and C or higher. Success has been defined as completing a course with a B or higher. Between January 1995 and November 2001, 68 colleges used COMPASS for English course placement. The media cut off score was 71. Validity statistics revealed a median accuracy rate of 66.

**Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)**

To measure students’ motivation, the students responded to the self-reported questionnaire, the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Appendix F). The MSLQ consists of 81 items grouped into 15 scales using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = not at all true of me to 7 = very true of me. The self-reported MSLQ items are based on a comprehensive line of research carried out in the areas of motivation and learning strategies and student management of different resources. The MSLQ requires 20 minutes to administer and is designed to be given in class. Scores are constructed by calculating the mean of items that comprise the scales. Negatively worded items in the scale have to be reversed before an individual’s score can be calculated. Reverse coded items can be computed by subtracting 8 from the original score.

The MSLQ scales can be administered as an entire instrument, or subsections of the instrument can be selected for use (Pintrich et al., 1993). There are 15 subscales representing the following six motivation dimensions: intrinsic goal orientation, extrinsic goal orientation, task value, control of learning beliefs, self-efficacy for learning and performance, and test anxiety. This study used data gathered from three of the subscales.
within the motivation section of the MSLQ to obtain information on expectancy, value, and affect as outlined in the Eccles et al. (1983) model of motivation. To interpret the scores, a higher scores such as 4, 5, 6, or 7 is better than a lower score like 1, 2, or 3. The only exception to this rule is in the case of test anxiety in which a high score means more worrying.

**Motivation Subscale Items**

**Expectancy.** This construct refers to students’ beliefs that they can accomplish a task, and it is based on two subscales, beliefs for learning and self-efficacy. For this study, a total of 12 statements were used to explore expectancy. Four statements were used to determine the extent to which students believed that their efforts would have positive results. The statements were:

- If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in this course (item 2).
- It is my own fault if I don’t learn the material in this course (item 9).
- If I try hard enough, then I will understand the course material (item 18).
- If I don’t understand the course material, it is because I didn’t try hard enough (item 25).

In addition, expectancy was based on eight questions which examined self-efficacy for learning and performance. They were:

- I believe I will receive an excellent grade in this class (item 5).
- I’m certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for this course (item 6).
- I’m confident I can understand the basic concepts taught in this course (item 12).
- I am confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in the course (item 20).
- I expect to do well in this class (item 21).
- I am certain I can master the skills being taught in this class (item 29).
- Considering the difficulty of this course, the teacher, and my skills, I think I will do well in this class (item 31).

Task Value. The MSLQ measures task value and focuses on the reasons why students engage in academic tasks: intrinsic, extrinsic, and task value beliefs (Pintrich et al, 1993). In order to explore how the learning community may impact student’s values, this study focused specifically on extrinsic values. Students responded to the following six statements that permitted the examination of task value:

- I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses (item 4).
- It is important for me to learn the course material in this class (item 10).
- I am very interested in the content area of this course (item 17).
- I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn (item 23).
- I like the subject matter of this course (item 26).
- Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to me (item 27).

Extrinsic Motivation. The MSLQ contains four statements that permitted the examination of extrinsic motivation for the present study. They were:

- Getting a good grade in this class is the most satisfying thing for me right now (item 7).
- The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern in this class is getting a good grade (item 11).
- If I can, I want to get better grades in this class than most of the other students (item 13).
- I want to do well in this class because it is important to show my ability to my friends, family, employer or others (item 30).

Test Anxiety/Affect. The following five statements in the MSLQ were used to measure test anxiety in the present study:
- When I take a test, I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students (item 3).
- When I take a test I think about items on other parts of the test I can’t answer (item 8).
- When I take tests I think of the consequences of failing (item 14).
- I feel my heart beating when I take an exam (item item 28)
- I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take an exam (item 19).

**MSLQ Score Reliability and Validity**

The MSLQ was based on the social cognitive model of motivation that proposes three general motivational constructs: (a) expectancy, (b) value and (c) affect. To test the reliability and predictive validity of the MSLQ, the MSLQ was administered once in the winter of 1990, and data were gathered from 380 Midwestern college students. By using factor analyses for both the motivation items and the cognitive and metacognitive items, a quantitative test was conducted of the theoretical model. For example, the items that were indicators of a construct were tested to reveal how closely the input correlations could be reproduced given the constraints and if the items fell into one specific factor (Pintrich et al., 1993). The 31 motivational items were tested for how well they fit correlated factors.

In addition to factor analyses, internal consistency estimates of reliability (coefficient alphas) were computed, and zero-order correlations between different motivational and cognitive scales were calculated. To determine predictive validity, the performance measure was the final grade in the class which was standardized to control for instructor differences.

Pintrich et al. (1993) calculated several statistics to determine how well the model fit the data. “The chi square to degrees of freedom ratio ($\chi^2/df$); the goodness-of-fit and
adjusted goodness-of-fit indices (GFI and AGFI); and the root mean residual (RMR). A $\chi^2/df$ ratio of less than 5 is considered to be a good fit between observed and reproduced correlations matrices (Hayduk, 1987). For the 31 items contained in the motivational scales, $\chi^2/df$ ratio was 3.4. A GFI or AGFI of .9 or greater and an RMR of .05 or less indicated the model fit the input data well. According to Pintrich et al., the following were used to determine the internal consistency of the scores.

Coefficient alphas were robust for the motivational scales which demonstrated good internal consistency with most of the scores above .70. Task value beliefs had the highest (.90) alpha; as well as students self-efficacy (.93). Test anxiety and intrinsic goal orientation yielded good internal estimates (.80 and .74). Extrinsic goal orientation yielded (.62). Control of beliefs (.68) had more variability in students’ responses. (p. 51)

These scores show that the general model of motivational items constituted a reasonable representation of the data. (Pintrich et al., 1993)

The motivation scales tended to be negatively skewed. Means for expectancy, task value and affect were as follows: extrinsic goal orientation (M = 5.74; SD = 1.23), control of learning beliefs (M = 5.74; SD = .98) and self-efficacy for learning and performance (M = 5.47; SD = 1.14). The affective component was more normally distributed (M =3.63; SD = 1.50).

Correlation analysis showed that students’ final grades were significant for students who “approached their course work with an intrinsic goal for learning, who believed that the material was interesting and important, who had self efficacy beliefs for accomplishing the tasks and who do well in terms of course grades.” (Pintrich et al., 1993). Based on these results, the MSLQ has good reliability, and it was determined to be
a good measure of students’ motivation in the college classroom. The MSLQ is displayed in Appendix E.

**Procedures**

During the first week of the semester, students in the learning community and the comparison group completed the COMPASS English pre-test. The COMPASS test is a pre- and posttest of basic skills deemed necessary for successful completion of the course and to demonstrate college level English writing skill proficiency. In order to gain information about students’ motivation for learning, the researcher administered the MSLQ survey during the 12th week of the semester to students in both the learning community and the comparison group based on the directions posted in the MSLQ survey instructional booklet obtained from the University of Michigan. Students responded to the survey items during a regular class period. The researcher administered a demographic survey to students on the same day (Appendix G). The completed MSLQ instruments and demographic surveys were collected by the researcher, scored, and recorded on an EXCEL computer spreadsheet. The COMPASS posttest was administered during the last week of class by the instructors. Completed test scores were returned to the researcher, and the results were recorded.

In December of 2008, the final grades were recorded by the instructors and submitted to the researcher. The identity of the subjects was kept confidential, and the information was only reported as group data. All completed instruments were kept in a locked file cabinet and destroyed after completion of the research. Care was taken to treat
subjects with dignity and respect. High ethical standards were maintained throughout the study. Participants were treated in accordance with the standards set forth by the American Psychological Association’s guideline for research with human subjects.

**Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data consisted of comparisons between students enrolled within a learning community and students enrolled in a traditionally taught pre-college level English course. Demographic data were collected and used to describe the sample. Means and standard deviations were used to report descriptive statistics.

Research Question 1 inquired as to whether participation in the learning community impacted the performance on the COMPASS, a standardized assessment, in pre-college English courses for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities. Students’ COMPASS standardized test-scores were used to identify differences between groups. To answer this question, the test of Repeated Measures was used.

Research Question 2 was used to investigate whether participation in the learning community had an impact on the final grades in pre-college level English courses for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities after controlling for the pretest differences on the COMPASS. The Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to determine the differences between the groups.

The third question of this study was used to investigate whether participation in the learning community impacted students’ motivation in pre-college level English courses.
for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities. The MSLQ, Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire, was used to measure motivation. The MSLQ was based on the Eccles et al. (1983) Expectancy-Value motivational model which is comprised of three parts of motivation: expectancy, task value, and affect (test anxiety). Those components are further divided into subscales. The subscales measured in this study were extrinsic motivation, task value, and affect (test anxiety). To explore this question, three Independent Sample t-Tests were generated to test the specific construct of motivation relevant to this study.

Summary

This chapter has detailed information regarding the methodology and procedures used to conduct the study. Using Repeated Measures, the students enrolled in the learning community COMPASS scores were compared to the students enrolled in traditionally taught pre-college English courses. On the other hand, the ANCOVA was used to determine if students’ final grades differed while controlling for pretest differences. Assuming, the learning community group would have significant gains in both their COMPASS test scores and their classroom final grades. Finally, motivation, as measured by the MSLQ, was evaluated using independent samples t-Test to delineate the differences between students in both groups. Chapter 4 contains the analysis of the data using narratives and tabular displays.
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

Chapter 4 contains a discussion of the results of data collected and analyzed for two groups who participated in the study. The first group was comprised of under-prepared students enrolled in pre-college level English courses within a learning community. The second group was the comparison group which consisted of under-prepared students enrolled in traditionally taught pre-college level English courses. The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of a learning community on students enrolled in pre-college level English courses at historically Black colleges and universities and on underprepared students’ motivation. “Since underprepared students often feel alienated in the academic environment, it is important that educators provide a curriculum that will not only increase chances for success but also increase motivation” (Marcelo, 2003, p. 132).

The learning community consisted of students who were selected by the institution to participate within the learning community at a historically Black institution in Florida. The learning community group consisted of 75 students. The comparison group consisted of 27 students enrolled in a traditionally taught pre-college level English course from the Florida institution. The total number of participants in both the learning community and the comparison group was 102. To answer the research questions, Repeated Measure One-Way ANOVAs, ANCOVA, and t-test procedures were performed.
Research Question 1

The first question asked whether students enrolled in the learning community would have higher scores on the COMPASS final exam than students enrolled in traditionally taught pre-college level courses. To determine if the comparison group and the learning community group were statistically different, the Repeated Measures ANOVA with one between factor was run. There was no statistically significant gain in COMPASS scores, \( F = 3.767, \text{df} (1,100), p>.05 \). Almost 4\% of the variance in scores was explained by score change from pre to post. There was no significant interaction, \( F = .167, \text{df} (1,100), p>.05 \). Less than 1\% of the variance in score can be accounted for by interaction. There was a statistically significant difference in score change between groups, \( F = 24.11, \text{df} (1, 100), p<.01 \). Approximately, 19\% of the variance was accounted for by student group. Further analysis revealed that the comparison group gained 4.00 points; while the learning community group gained only 2.00 as shown in Table 2. The means for the group are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Community</td>
<td>71.07</td>
<td>6.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>53.49</td>
<td>25.105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 2

Analysis of Covariance was performed to answer the second research question, “Is there a difference in the final grades in pre-college level English courses for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities versus those in the comparison group after controlling for pre COMPASS grades?” An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to determine if a difference existed between the learning community group and the comparison group after adjusting for pre-test differences on the COMPASS.

The assumptions for ANCOVA were met. In particular, an evaluation of the homogeneity-of-slopes assumption revealed no significant interaction between the covariate (pre-test) and the fixed factor (group): \(F(1, 98) = .507, p = .478\). Therefore, the ANCOVA was performed to evaluate the impact of study participants’ inclusion or exclusion from learning communities on their final grades in the pre-college level English course under review. The ANCOVA was not statistically significant: \(F(1,99) = .039, p > .05, \eta^2 = .000\). Although the mean scores for students in the learning community were slightly higher, the difference in students’ grades was not statistically significant. The results are displayed in Table 3.
Research Question 3

The third research question asked whether students enrolled in the learning community would be more motivated than students enrolled in traditionally taught English courses. Three specific hypotheses that addressed the final research question were tested in this analysis. In order to examine this claim, an independent sample t-Test was conducted on the three subscales of the MSLQ that were relevant to this study: extrinsic value, task value, and test anxiety.

Extrinsic Value

The first hypothesis addressing Research Question 3 was, “The mean for the learning community group will differ significantly from the mean of the comparison group on the construct, extrinsic motivation.” To measure students’ extrinsic motivation, the students responded to the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). The MSLQ consists of 81 items grouped into 15 scales using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = not at all true of me to 7 = very true of me. The MSLQ scales can be administered as

### Table 3

*Means for Final Grades*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Community</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>76.47</td>
<td>8.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>74.61</td>
<td>13.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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79
an entire instrument, or subsections of the instrument can be selected for use (Pintrich et al., 1993). Scores are constructed by calculating the mean of items that comprise the scales. Higher mean scores of 4, 5, 6, and 7 indicate higher extrinsic motivation (Pintrich, 1991). There was a statistically significant mean difference ($t = 3.59, df = 100, p < .05$) in students’ extrinsic motivation. Students enrolled in the comparison group had a higher mean score ($M = 6.22, s = .899$) than did students in the learning community group ($M = 5.54, s = .820$). Approximately, 11% of the variance was accounted for by knowing in which group the students were enrolled ($\eta^2 = .114$).

### Task Value

The second hypothesis was, “The mean for the learning community group will differ significantly from the mean of the comparison group on the construct, task value.” According to Pintrich (1991), higher MSLQ mean averages such as 4, 5, 6, and 7 indicate students are higher in task value (p. 51). There was a statistically significant mean difference ($t = -2.104, df = 100, p < .05$) in the task value for students enrolled in the traditionally taught comparison group ($M = 5.49, s = 1.27$) and those enrolled in the learning community group ($M = 5.93, s = .789$). The learning community group demonstrated a slightly higher mean score on the construct, task value. Approximately, 4% of the variance was accounted for by knowing the students’ groups, ($\eta^2 = .04$).
Affect (Test Anxiety)

The final hypothesis that addressed the third research question was, “The mean for the learning community group will differ significantly from the mean of the comparison group on the construct, affect (test anxiety).” Students responded to the following five statements in the MSLQ which measured test anxiety. According to the manual for the MSLQ, higher scores such as 4, 5, 6, and 7 on test anxiety means that the students are exhibiting more worry or in this case test anxiety (Pintrich, 1991, p. 51). There was a statistically significant mean difference in (t = -3.84, df = 100, p<.05) students’ test anxiety enrolled in traditionally taught comparison group (M = 4.01, s = 1.103) and the learning community group (M = 4.99, s = 1.14). Approximately, 13% of the variance was accounted for by knowing the student group ($\eta^2 = .129$). Students in the learning community demonstrated a higher mean score on the construct affect (test anxiety). Results of these analyses are displayed in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task Value</td>
<td>Learning Community</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>5.937</td>
<td>.7831</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.493</td>
<td>1.276</td>
<td>-2.104*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic Value</td>
<td>Learning Community</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>5.546</td>
<td>.82065</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6.225</td>
<td>.79740</td>
<td>3.59*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Anxiety</td>
<td>Learning Community</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4.996</td>
<td>1.1487</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.014</td>
<td>1.103</td>
<td>-3.848*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates significance
Summary

The Repeated Measures One-Way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in COMPASS score change between groups. However, the comparison group demonstrated a greater change than did the learning community group. The claim that the learning community assists in improving students’ standardized scores was found to be greater for the comparison group. Analysis of Covariance test was used to answer the second research question regarding differences in final grades between the two groups. After adjusting for the COMPASS pre-test, there was no difference in final grades between groups.

Finally, motivation differences between groups were examined using the Independent Samples t-Test. There was a statistically significant mean difference in extrinsic value with the students enrolled in traditionally taught pre-college level English courses demonstrating more extrinsic motivation. There was a statistically significant mean difference in task value with students enrolled in the learning community demonstrating higher task value than the comparison group. Finally, there was a statistically significant mean difference in affect with students in the learning community group demonstrating more test anxiety.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In order to effectively facilitate learning of adult learners, educators must consider the characteristics of the learner and the context in which it takes place (Haysbert & Williams, 2007). Researchers have shown that students tend to “reach higher levels of achievement when they are taught in ways that are compatible with their preferred learning style” (Cronbach & Snow, 1981, p. 12). As a result, many institutions of higher learning have intentionally tried to construct learning environments that are compatible with students’ preferred learning styles. One such environment is the learning community which is believed to be beneficial to minority students. According to Hardiman (2001), the social context of learning communities can be the most effective environment for students of color.

This study was designed to add to the literature on learning communities by investigating the impact they had on pre-college level students of color at historically Black colleges and universities. This study was a quasi-experimental test of the learning community’s impact on students’ academic achievement and motivation. It was specifically focused on the motivational components of task value, extrinsic motivation, and test anxiety as measured by the MSLQ.

The purpose of this research was to provide additional information to pre-college level educators of English, and pre-college level program administrators concerning the effectiveness of the curriculum design. This chapter contains a discussion of the findings.
and the relevance of literature reviewed to the findings, implications of the findings for classroom application, and recommendations suggestions for further research.

Summary of Findings: Academic Performance

It is important to note that both groups of students involved in the present study demonstrated achievement gains after participating in pre-college level courses. Students enrolled in the traditionally taught courses scored higher on the posttest than did students enrolled in the learning community.

COMPASS Examination

The first question explored the claim that students enrolled in the learning community would have higher scores on the COMPASS final examination than students enrolled in traditionally taught pre-college level courses. According to Sawyer and Schiel (2000), one way of determining students’ educational growth is to posttest them with an equivalent form of the placement test. The students in both the learning community group and the comparison group were given the COMPASS posttest at the end of the semester. “If the remedial course is effective in teaching students the required knowledge and skills; and an alternate form of the placement test is administered at the end of the remedial course, then students’ test scores obtained at the end of the remedial course should exceed their obtained scores at the beginning of the course” (p. 4). For this study, there was no statistically significant gain in COMPASS scores. There was only a slight learning gain between the pre-test and post test for both groups. There was, however, a
statistically significant difference in score change between groups. The comparison group gained four points. It is interesting to note that students enrolled in the learning community gained only two points. Of the total variance in scores, 19% was accounted for by group determination. Therefore, traditionally taught students performed better on the COMPASS exam than did their learning community counterparts.

Test Anxiety

The finding regarding students’ standardized test scores was particularly interesting when compared with students’ self reported test anxiety as measured by the MSLQ. Students within the learning community had higher test anxiety than did students in traditionally taught pre-college level courses. Perhaps, students may have exhibited test anxiety because of the gravity of the test. Students in the learning community group took not only the COMPASS examination but also a comprehensive final examination over literature. Students in the comparison group took only the COMPASS examination. The stakes were high for both groups of students. The students in both groups were required to pass the COMPASS examination before they could advance to college level courses. The learning community students may have felt more pressure to pass all tests. Researchers have concluded that test anxiety during evaluative situations adversely affects test performance at the school and university level (Spielberger et al., 1978). In addition, students may have reported test anxiety due to the test itself. The COMPASS examination is a computerized test. Students were given one prior opportunity to take the test, and that was during the first week of class. Researchers have concluded that
computerized testing requires a different mix of information-processing skills than does static print media (Messick, 1999). In this study, the small gains in test scores may have been the result, in part, of test anxiety. Although standardized tests have been noted as poor predictors of the performance of students of color (Hilliard, 1991), Stiff-Williams (2007) stated that scores on standardized tests such as the COMPASS were generally strong predictors of student success in college for all ethnicities. It is clear that more research must be conducted on the correlation between the COMPASS test and final grades.

**Final Grades**

The second research question explored the claim that students enrolled in the learning community would have higher final grades than would students enrolled in traditionally taught courses. Prior research on learning communities seemed to suggest that learning communities were beneficial to students’ grades. For example, Maton et al. (2000) stated that the social integration of students in learning communities led to higher grade point averages. Furthermore, because of the social integration within learning communities, researchers have contended that they provided the best environment to meet the needs of African-American students’ learning styles (Hardiman, 2001; Tierney et al., 2003). Within most research, there has been general acceptance that “the manner in which individuals choose to or are inclined to approach a learning situation has an impact on performance and achievement of learning outcomes” (Cassidy, 2003, p. 42). As a result, students have tended to reach higher levels of achievement when they are taught in
ways that are compatible with their preferred learning styles (Cronbach & Snow, 1981). This study did not support this claim. Students enrolled in the learning community did not achieve higher course grades. Further research must be conducted to determine if there is a correlation between the COMPASS exam and the students’ final grades.

The structure of the curriculum and pedagogy used with the learning community may have impacted the findings. First, it may be that students in the learning community simply had more complex assignments and grades than students in the traditionally taught courses. The teachers within the learning community focused more on integrating literature and reading skills than they focused on skill acquisition in preparation for the post-test. Students were given literature assignments, essay writing practice, creative writing assignments and grammar skill building exercises. In contrast, the primary focus of teachers within the traditionally taught pre-college level English courses was on the development of basic skills. As a result, most of the lessons and assignments were centered on basic writing and grammar skills and they were taught in a skill and drill fashion. Within the learning community, integrated assignments were carefully constructed to promote critical thinking and develop students’ ability to transfer knowledge into other classes. Dezure (2003) stated integrated learning promotes higher levels of critical thinking. On the contrary, traditionally taught classes were not structured with critical thinking at the forefront of the curriculum.

The learning community in this study was constructed to capitalize on the learning styles of students of color. The community was carefully constructed using the best practices for educating African Americans. Gallien and Peterson (2004) stated that
students of color employ people-oriented and relational approaches to learning rather than independent and analytical educational environments. Benson-Hale (1986) indicated that African-American learners engage in learning in a holistic manner rather than the compartmentalized and analytical manner of Euro-American students and institutions. The holistic manner of teaching enables teachers to integrate the curriculum, and the learners obtain a unified view of knowledge that motivates and develops learners’ powers to perceive and create new relationships for themselves (Smith et al., 2004). However, integrating college level work into a pre-college level course may have overwhelmed students.

**Summary of Findings: Student Motivation**

The third research question was, “Is there a difference in students’ motivation in pre-college level English courses for students enrolled in a learning community at historically Black colleges and universities versus those in the comparison group?” This study focused on three subscales of motivation: extrinsic motivation, task value, and test anxiety as measured by the MSLQ. Test anxiety was discussed in relationship to Research Question 1 concerning performance on the COMPASS. Extrinsic motivation and task value will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

**Extrinsic Motivation**

It was hypothesized that the mean for the learning community group would differ significantly from the mean of the comparison group on the construct, task value.
However the data revealed that the comparison group was more extrinsically motivated than was the learning community group. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), extrinsic motivation is concerned with people’s willingness to engage in a behavior in order to feel valued by significant others with whom they would like to feel connected. Additionally, extrinsic motivation is concerned with the degree to which students participate in a task for reasons such as grades, rewards, performance, evaluation by others, or competition. The literature on extrinsic motivation indicated that extrinsic motivation was associated with greater engagement (Connell & Wellborn, 1990); higher quality learning (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987) and better performance (Miserandino, 1996). One reason for the differing levels of motivation could be that students in traditionally taught classes were more extrinsically motivated due to their placement in the pre-college level courses. For these students, engaging in a learning task may have been a means to an end. Also, it could be that traditionally taught students felt negatively about being enrolled in pre-college level courses. As a result, the students may have been motivated by their peers to quickly exit the course. The learning community students, however, may have compared their course to college level courses because of the possibility of obtaining college level credit for successful completion of all requirements. In fact, students in the learning community participated in some of the same assignments and activities as students in college level courses. Further research should be conducted to explore students’ perceptions regarding being enrolled in pre-college level courses.

One interesting finding was related to the social context within the learning community environment which did not serve to extrinsically motivate students. The
findings of this study did not support the literature on learning styles suggesting that students of color have a proclivity toward field-independent cognitive styles characterized by highly developed social skills (Ibarra, 2001; Petchauer, 2007). It was believed that students would be motivated by peer interaction and competition. It was also believed that students enrolled in pre-college level English courses within learning communities would experience increased extrinsic motivation as a result of the integrated instruction and collaborative learning activities throughout the semester. However, these beliefs were not substantiated in this study.

Task Value

In regard to task value, it was hypothesized that the mean for the learning community would differ significantly from the mean of the control group on the construct, task value. Task value refers to students’ perceptions of the course material in terms of interest, importance, and utility. The students in the learning community had higher mean scores for task value. The differences between groups were statistically significant, and further analysis of the descriptive statistics revealed that students enrolled in the learning community valued tasks more than students enrolled in traditional courses.

The assumption of most of the teachers at the HBCU was that students enrolled in the learning community would be more interested in the content if it focused specifically on African American literature and achievements. This general assumption has been supported by research. Gay (2000) called for culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum. Hale-Benson (1986) stated that designing curriculum around cultural images
may enhance academic performance. Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) found that students who perceived tasks to be interesting and worthwhile also reported more self-regulation and persistence.

Students enrolled in the learning community group read African American literature. At the end of the semester, student groups constructed a collaborative creative project which synthesized the themes taught in both the English and reading courses at a Kwanza celebration. Additionally, extracurricular activities allowed students to showcase their talents and interact with students and faculty outside of the classroom. During the semester, students participated in a poetry reading that featured Nikki Giovanni as well as student writers. Students in the traditionally taught courses did not participate in the extracurricular activities that were constructed for students in the learning community.

This finding is noteworthy because it suggests that the learning community can influence the task value of students of color at historically Black colleges and universities. Clearly more research needs to be conducted on the impact culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum have on minority students.

**Implications**

Historic legislation has given access to higher education to all students. Though students have had expanded opportunities, they have often not been prepared for college level work. Rigorous admissions standards of predominately White institutions of higher learning have flooded historically Black colleges and universities with underprepared students. It has been within the mission of all historically Black colleges and universities
to transform students who are under-prepared for college level work. However, without adequate programs and services for these students, many of these students will never obtain a degree. Even though the graduation rates for African Americans at HBCUs have been well above the national average, the graduation rate at HBCUs was only 43% (Williams, 2006). In a time when more and more public citizens and educational stakeholders have demanded that institutions become more accountable for governmental resources, it is imperative that HBCUs develop programs and services that ensure the delivery of effective curricula that are beneficial to all of its enrolled students. Premier pre-college programs have capitalized on contemporary understanding of individual growth and learning theory and have been concerned with both the cognitive and affective development of their students (McCabe & Day, 1998). Researchers have suggested that learning communities could provide the environmental structure to assist these students.

Conclusions

In this study, analysis of the data revealed that under-prepared students of color at historically Black colleges who participated in pre-college level learning communities did not perform better on the COMPASS or achieve higher final grades than students enrolled in traditionally taught pre-college level English courses. Overall, students in learning communities reported higher task value and more test anxiety than did students in traditionally taught courses. Students in traditionally taught courses, however, were
more extrinsically motivated. Further investigation is warranted on the impact learning communities have on pre-college level students of color.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research study utilized the Wigfield and Eccles (1983) model of motivation. With the model, the construct, task value, involved answering the question, “Why should I do this?” The answer to this question can influence achievement behaviors such as choice and persistence. Additionally, students' answers to the question can influence the goals students set for themselves to achieve the tasks and their beliefs about the importance and interest of the tasks (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990). Answers have rarely been concerned with how individuals in different ethnic groups and cultures come to use or rely on different motivational tools and resources (Pintrich, 2003).

Furthermore, there has been great debate as to whether or not social-cognitive beliefs and processes are applicable to different races and ethnic groups. Graham (1989) believed that the vast majority of research on values has been racially comparative, and it has not focused on differences or similarities between and among ethnic or cultural groups. Pintrich (2003) stated, “It is crucial to understand how different cultural and ethnic groups within a culture understand and define motivation as well as understand cross-cultural differences in motivation and various self-related beliefs” (p. 681). Kitayama (2002) stressed the importance of understanding the role context and culture play in motivation. The key issue was cited as understanding the “role that different
contextual and cultural practices play and how they continually interact with and are connected to intra-psychological processes and beliefs” (p. 89).

It must also be noted, that the instrument used in this study to measure motivation may have been lacking in some respects. Kitayama (2002) noted the difficulty with the use of simple, self-reported, attitudinal questionnaires within and across cultures was that results enabled only general mean-level comparisons. These self reported questionnaires do not take into account the cultural meanings and functions of the constructs measured within the questionnaire. Pintrich (2003) stated “the mono-method bias in favor of simple self-report questionnaires in much motivational research will have to be overcome and other types of measures must be developed” (p. 682). Kitayama suggested a systemic cultural approach that he termed on-line measures of (a) cognition, motivation, and emotion; (b) choice behavior; and (c) persistence be used for self reports or behavioral measures. Additionally, Graham (1994) suggested that new motivational constructs need to be developed as viewed through the eyes of different cultural groups. Pintrich (2003) stated, “It will not be productive for future research to do away with or ignore intra-psychological motivational beliefs and processes as in some strong situated models, but rather come to understand them as resources and tools used to cope and adapt to contextual and cultural demands and affordances” (p. 681). Because the traditional research on student motivation has been racially comparable, the exploration of African-American motivation within the group is a great place for further exploration. As result, the following questions should be explored for further study:
1. Within the African-American college student population, does the academic level (college-level or pre-college level) have a significant impact on achievement motivation?

2. What impact, if any, does culture have on academic achievement?

3. What, if any, are the adverse impacts of pre-college level students’ participation in learning communities?

4. Does the social environment of HBCUs impact academic achievement motivation and/or its constructs (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, task value, or test anxiety)?
APPENDIX A
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA IRB APPROVAL
Notice of Expedited Initial Review and Approval

From: UCF Institutional Review Board
FWA0000351, Exp. 6/24/11, IRB00001138

To: Jentoinette White

Date: October 24, 2008

IRB Number: SBE-08-06551

Study Title: THE EFFECTS OF A LEARNING COMMUNITY CURRICULUM ON THE SUCCESS OF FIRST YEAR PRE-COLLEGE LEVEL STUDENTS AT AN HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY

Dear Researcher:

Your research protocol noted above was approved by expedited review by the UCF IRB Chair on 10/24/2008. The expiration date is 10/23/2009. Your study was determined to be minimal risk for human subjects and expeditable per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.110. The categories for which this study qualifies as expeditable research are as follows:

5. Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected or will be collected solely for nonresearch purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

The IRB has approved a consent procedure which requires participants to sign consent forms. Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Subjects or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

All data, which may include signed consent form documents, must be retained in a locked file cabinet for a minimum of three years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained on a password-protected computer if electronic information is used. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

To continue this research beyond the expiration date, a Continuing Review Form must be submitted 2 - 4 weeks prior to the expiration date. Advise the IRB if you receive a subpoena for the release of this information, or if a breach of confidentiality occurs. Also report any unanticipated problems or serious adverse events (within 5 working days). Do not make changes to the protocol methodology or consent form before obtaining IRB approval. Changes can be submitted for IRB review using the Addendum/Modification Request Form. An Addendum/Modification Request Form cannot be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at http://ris.research.ucf.edu.

Failure to provide a continuing review report could lead to study suspension, a loss of funding and/or publication possibilities, or reporting of noncompliance to sponsors or funding agencies. The IRB maintains the authority to take any actions it deems appropriate. The IRB may charge a fee to process the continuing review.

On behalf of Tracy Dietz, Ph.D., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Munro on 10/24/2008 01:52:33 PM EDT

IRB Coordinator
APPENDIX B
FLORIDA INSTITUTION IRB APPROVAL
Date: November 11, 2008
To: Jontoinette White
From: Bethune-Cookman University Institutional Review Board
Title of Proposal: THE EFFECTS OF A LEARNING COMMUNITY CURRICULUM ON THE SUCCESS OF FIRST YEAR PRE-COLLEGE LEVEL STUDENTS AT AN HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY

Dear Ms. White:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Subcommittee on 11/11/08. This approval is valid until 11/10/09.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and the IRB should be notified immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the status of your research project. Please report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the IRB. For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB must be contacted and informed in order to continue review. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued.

If you have any questions, please contact Cecily J. Ball, IRB coordinator, at 386-481-2041 or ballc@cookman.edu.

Sincerely,

Cecily J. Ball
IRB Coordinator
University of Central Florida

Informed Consent

My name is Jontoinette White and I am an English instructor at Bethune-Cookman University. I am working on my doctoral study: *The Effects of a Learning Community on the Success of First Year Pre-College Level Students at Historically Black Universities* under the guidance of Dr. Jeffrey Kaplan in the College of Educational Studies at the University of Central Florida.

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of student motivation in learning communities at historically black universities. Your contribution to this study will improve the communities at Bethune-Cookman University, Edward Waters College, and Voorhees College. As a part of this study you will be asked to fill out questionnaires related to your motivation in this class. In addition, the researcher will collect information from your college transcript, pre-test entrance test scores, post-test exit exam scores, and final grades. If you choose to participate you will receive feedback on your motivation that maybe useful to your college career. All responses will remain confidential to the extent provided by law.

You should take part in this study only because you want to. There is no penalty for not taking part, and you will not lose any benefits. You have the right to stop at any time. Just tell the researcher or a member of the research team that you want to stop. You will be told if any new information is learned which may affect your willingness to continue taking part in this study.

The researcher will be collecting your pretest entrance exam scores and post-test exit exam scores. Additionally, you will be given the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire. The questionnaire will be given in your classroom during class time under the direction of your instructor or the researcher. You will only be administered the survey one time during class time. The survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

There are no expected risks for taking part in this study. You do not have to answer every question or complete every task. You will not lose any benefits if you skip questions or tasks. There are no expected benefits to you for taking part in this study, except that the feedback you receive on your motivation that maybe useful to your college career and your knowledge about the research process will be increased.

There is no direct compensation for taking part in this study. It is possible, however, that extra credit may be offered for your participation, but this benefit is at the discretion of your instructor. If you choose not to participate, you may notify your instructor and ask for an alternative assignment of equal effort for equal credit. There will be no penalty.

Your identity will be kept confidential only the researcher will know your identity. The researcher will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you
gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from the information you give, and these two things will be stored in different places.

Your information will be assigned a code number. The list connecting your name to this number will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my faculty office or in a password protected computer. When the study is done and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your information will be combined with information from other people who took part in this study. When the researcher writes about this study to share what was learned with other researchers, she will write about this combined information. Your name will not be used in any report, so people will not know how you answered or what you did. However if there is a breach of confidentiality, you will be notified immediately by the researcher and you will be removed from the study. There are times when the researcher may have to show your information to other people. For example, the researcher may have to show your identity to people who check to be sure the research was done right. These may be people from the University of Central Florida.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** Jontoinette White, Graduate Student, Educational Studies Program, College of Education, (386) 481-2328 or by email at whitej@cookman.edu, or Dr. Jeffrey Kaplan, Faculty Department Chair, Department of English Language Arts Education at (407) 823-2233 or by email at jkaplan@ucf.edu.

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

The attached questionnaire asks about your motivation for work in this course. There are no rights or wrong answers to this questionnaire. This is not a test. You should respond to the questionnaire as accurately as possible, reflecting your own attitudes and behaviors in this course. Your answers to this will be analyzed by computer and you will receive an individual report in several weeks. The individual report will help you identify your motivation in this course. Additionally your instructor will receive feedback on your class as a whole, which will allow him or her to tailor the course to the class needs. Please sign below if you would like to be involved in this study. Thank you for your cooperation.

Name (Print)__________________________

Signature__________________________

Student ID__________________________

Instructor’s Name__________________________

Course Title and Meeting Time__________________________ Today’s Date__________________________
American Literature - the Oral Tradition to Contemporary African American Literature.
Each student who successfully completes the course requirements while earning a grade of A, B, or C will receive credit for EN 131 - College English.

Reading - RE 112 - Essentials of Reading II is designed to develop literal and critical reading comprehension and critical thinking and reasoning skills. African American readings from the History and English class are used to teach these skills. The same African American Literature time periods are taught simultaneously in History, English and Reading encouraging students to synthesize information covered. The critical reading component of this course is designed to introduce and review critical reading skills. This class uses a textbook to advance critical reading and critical thinking skills through guided discussion and oral and written reports. Special attention will be placed on developing analytical and interpretive skills necessary in completing the General Education program.

Each student who successfully completes the course requirements while earning a grade of A, B, or C will receive credit for RE 210 - Critical Reading.

Required Textbooks & Materials:

English and Reading

History

1 set Headphones – 1/8-inch plug, 4-foot cord

4 - Blue Examination Books

Course Objectives:

History - Upon completion of this course, the student will have an understanding and appreciation of the significant persons and events of the African American experience. The student will have gained some inspiration and encouragement from the courage and sacrifices of those who furthered the ideals of Frederick Douglass, Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., and so many others. Through the successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Discuss the anthropological and historical evidence of early humans and advanced civilizations in Africa.
2. Describe the nature of pre-colonial African social, economic, and political systems.
3. Discuss the origin and development of the African slave trade.
4. Explain comparative slave systems in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the U.S.
5. Describe the role of African Americans in the exploration and development of America.
6) Explain the nature and the causes of the institution of African slavery in the U.S.
7) Describe the issue of slavery as a major cause of the American Civil War.
8) Discuss the efforts, successes, and failures of African Americans to achieve full citizenship following the Civil War.
9) Describe the rise and impact of the segregation era.
10) Describe the forces that organized to combat 20th century discrimination and segregation.
11) Discuss major social and political movements in the African American experience.
12) Discuss major African American personalities and movements in the 19th and 20th centuries and their impacts and influences.

English - The grammar objectives for the English course are that upon completing this course the student should be able to:
1) Maintain agreement between subject and verb;
2) Use proper case forms;
3) Use adjectives and adverbs correctly;
4) Place modifiers correctly;
5) Identify and avoid fragments, comma splices, and fused sentences;
6) Use standard punctuation, spelling, and grammar;
7) Maintain agreement between pronoun and antecedent;
8) Develop cohesive paragraphs with a topic sentence and supporting details;
9) Identify a topic sentence in a paragraph;
10) Maintain parallelism when writing about parallel ideas;
11) Identify the parts of a basic essay; and
12) Conjugate both regular and irregular verbs.

Reading – At the end of the reading course, the students should demonstrate proficiency in literal and critical reading skills. The student should be able to:
1) Identify the main idea;
2) Identify supporting details;
3) Recognize relationships within sentences and paragraphs;
4) Distinguish between fact and opinion;
5) Recognize inferences;
6) Determine an author's tone;
7) Recognize bias within various types of writings;
8) Identify word parts and vocabulary in context; and
9) Apply critical reading and thinking skills to studying and learning in college and beyond.

Additional Requirements for History
Each student is expected to attentively attend every class; to read all assigned readings prior to class meeting; and to use the Socratic Method of Reasoning while engaging in class discussions, presentations, and debates. Each student will daily bring and maintain a class journal/notebook; make oral and written presentations; and enjoy learning.

Requirements for Credit:
EN 112
Score 8 on the exit essay
Earn passing score on grammar exit test
Earn a grade of "C" or above in class work
Must take Jump essay exam

EN 131 - JUMP
Score 7 on the exit essay
Earn passing score on grammar exit test
Earn a grade of "B" or above in class work
Earn a "C" or above on the Jump essay exam

RE 112
Score 12.5 or higher on standardized reading test
Earn a "C" or above in class work
Must take Jump essay exam

RE 260 - Jump
Score 12.5 or higher on standardized reading test
Earn a "B" or above in class work
Pass Jump Essay with a grade of "C" or better.

Exit Standards:
Student must have an overall average of 70% or better on all class quizzes, graded homework, creative project, and the midterm and final exams for both courses.
Student must have regular attendance in the English and Reading labs and class. No unexcused absences.
Student must have earned the established passing score on EN 112 grammar and essay tests.
Student must score 12.5 or higher on standardized reading test.
Student must pass the Jump Essay with a grade of "A", "B", or "C".
A grade of "B" means that the student has successfully completed all requirements for EN 112 and for RE 112.
A grade of "NR" means that the student has not successfully completed all requirements for EN 112 and/or RE 112. This student must repeat the course.
A grade of "A", "B", or "C" means that the student has successfully completed all requirements for EN 112 and/or RE 112 and for RE 250. This student will "jump" EN 112 and/or RE 112 and receive college credit for EN 131 - College English I and/or RE 280 – Critical Reading.
Only English and Reading courses are eligible to jump.

Technology:
Additional readings taken from websites will be assigned by the instructor. The instructors will give the students detailed information in order to access these readings. The students must print copies of the readings to use in class.

All Jump classes are designated as Hybrid Courses. A hybrid course means that the instructor will post information and assignments on the class Blackboard site. The students are responsible for logging onto the class blackboard site on a daily basis.

Instructional Methods:
The instructional methods used for these courses will include lecture, Socratic Method of Reasoning, class discussion/debate, audio-visual materials (including primary source speeches, readings, and music), internet research/presentations, class journals/notebooks, and oral and written "instructional quizzes". Student use of the internet will be essential for research and presentations.

English Evaluation of Student Performance:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance (Class and Lab)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>150 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes, Homework &amp; Journal</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>150 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>150 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>300 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Project</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>150 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000 pts.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading Evaluation of Student Performance:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework / Essays</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance (Class and Lab)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>150 pts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Essentials of Writing II—EN 112
Bethune-Cookman University
Freshman College English Area
Fall 2008

Instructor: 
Office Location: 
Email: 

Title: 
Office Phone: 
Office Hours: 
Monday: 
Tuesday: 
Wednesday: 
Thursday: 
Friday: 

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS VISION
Students will graduate B-CU as transformative leaders with complex cognitive skills; practical knowledge and competency; an appreciation of human differences; and an integrated sense of identity and civic responsibility that prepares them to live successfully within a multicultural and global community.

PREREQUISITE
Students are assigned to English 112 based on their scores on the entrance placement examinations. Students are expected to continuously enroll in Freshman College English courses until all course work is satisfactorily completed.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is designed for those students who need essential composition skills necessary for college English I. Emphasis is placed on composition, grammar, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and standard English usage. Students are required to attend the Writing Center located in Kottle 106 and use computer technology. CREDIT: 3 NON-DEGREE HOURS.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

*NOTE: Students will not be able to pass this course without the required texts. Supplemental materials may or may not be used in each EN 112 class. Check with the instructor before purchasing any supplemental materials.

My Writing Lab is required for this course and it will be used extensively throughout the course. A computer access code for My Writing Lab can be purchased with the Prentice Hall Guide in the bookstore separately.
REQUIRED MATERIALS
- My Writing Lab Computer Access Code
- Blue book for final exit essay
- Jump drive for saving documents
- College-level dictionary
- Blue or black ink pens
- College rule notebook

LEARNING OUTCOMES
- Students enrolled in EN 112 will demonstrate mastery of the rules of Standard English on the departmental exit objective exam with a score of 70% or higher.
- Students enrolled in EN 112 will write at least three essays in a timed setting on impromptu topics which will be holistically graded by the instructor using the CLAST rubric.
- Students enrolled in EN 112 will produce a final five paragraph essay in a timed setting that presents a thesis and suggests a plan of development which will be holistically graded using the CLAST Rubric (level of 6 or higher) by the English department at the end of the semester.
- Students enrolled in EN 112 will utilize technology to access course outlines, type assignments, and submit assignments to the instructor at least once during the semester.

COURSE COMPETENCIES
Each writing assignment and the final exit essay will measure the student’s ability to
- Select a subject that lends itself to development
- Determine the purpose and audience for writing
- Formulate topic sentences
- Present a thesis statement that lends itself to development
- Provide adequate supporting details
- Arrange ideas and details in a logical pattern appropriate to the purpose and focus
- Formulate an essay
- Write and develop unified and coherent prose
- Avoid slang, jargon, clichés, and pretentious expressions in writing
- Revise, edit, and proofread for clarity and consistency to standard American English

Writing assignments, quizzes, tests, and the final exam will measure the student’s ability to
- Avoid sentence errors
- Recognize and repair fragments and run on sentences
- Choose the correct verb tense
- Make a subject and its verb agree
- Maintain agreement between a pronoun and its antecedent
• Understand the functions of antecedents and pronouns
• Choose correct pronoun cases
• Avoid incorrect word choices caused by commonly confused words and distinguish words that sound alike
• Identify and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers
• Recognize and maintain parallel sentence structure
• Express two or more equal ideas in matching or parallel forms
• Correctly use punctuation marks including commas, apostrophes, and quotation marks

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE
To pass English 112, students must complete the following skills and assignments with a passing score:

1. Passing scores on both the objective grammar examination and the departmental exit essay examination with a holistic score of 6 or better.
2. Assignments in grammar and mechanics
3. Weekly Writing Lab attendance
   The Writing Lab (Kottle 106) is a mandatory part of the EN 112 curriculum. Students are required to attend the lab each week to receive help developing writing skills, grammar skills, or completing class assignments. The Writing Lab provides assistance through tutors, computerized assignments, and supplemental exercises, which may also be completed through computer-aided programs as designated by the instructor. Students must have the My Writing Lab computer access code to participate in the lab.
4. Tests and quizzes
5. Prompt class attendance is compulsory for all students.
   • Three instances of tardiness equal one absence.
   • Six unexcused absences may result in a failing grade for the semester.
   • Excused absences include those absences incurred by the student’s participation in B-CU or class-sponsored activities. Examples of excused absences include band, chorale, gospel choir, athletic teams, field trips, proof of illness with official documentation from physician or verifiable authority. All excuses must be immediately presented to instructor when the student returns to class.
   • Every student is responsible for informing instructor of impending absences when the student has such information. Students must complete all make-up work within 48 hours after returning to class.
   • Excuses from the Offices of the Dean of Men and Dean of Women will not be accepted.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION
Students enrolled in EN 112 will study grammar rules, practice grammar and writing skills, analyze readings, and complete exercises from the text and the computer. Additionally, tests and quizzes will be administered periodically. Class discussions and lectures will be supplemented with multimedia and computer-assisted technology. My Writing Lab is
integral to passing this course, and students will need to purchase the *My Writing Lab* access code in the bookstore.

**SAMPLE TOPICAL OUTLINE**

**WEEK 1**  
Introduction to course  
Critical thinking exercise

**WEEK 2**  
Diagnostic tests (essay and grammar)  
Review of parts of speech

**WEEK 3**  
Identifying subjects and verbs  
The paragraph and the topic sentence

**WEEK 4**  
Verb tenses/irregular verbs  
The steps in the Writing Process

**WEEK 5**  
Subject verb agreement  
Basic parts of an essay  
The descriptive essay

**WEEK 6**  
Sentence errors  
Fragments, comma splices and fused sentences  
The narrative essay

**WEEK 7**  
Pronoun case and antecedent agreement  
Expository essay

**WEEK 8**  
Commonly confused words  
Spelling/homonyms  
**MIDTERM EXAM** (This exam will cover material discussed during weeks one through seven)

**WEEK 9**  
Modifiers and parallelism

**WEEK 10**  
Punctuation  
Capitalization  
The cause and effect essay

**WEEK 11**  
Grammar review and essay writing tips

**WEEK 12**  
Practice essay

**WEEK 13**  
Grammar review and essay writing tips

**WEEK 14**  
**FINAL EXAMS**

**TECHNOLOGY**

Students will utilize a variety of websites available for practicing grammar and composition; students can visit the Writing Lab in Kettle 116 and/or these internet sites for further assistance. Completion of Writing Lab/On-line assignments is one of the components of the course requirements. Students are required to submit at least one assignment electronically. *My Writing Lab will be used extensively in this course.*
NOTE: IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO RECEIVE A SATISFACTORY MARK IN ENGLISH 112 WITHOUT TAKING AND PASSING THE FINAL EXAMINATIONS. Students must achieve a passing score of 6 on the exit essay, pass the objective grammar exam (70% or above), and obtain satisfactory marks in required coursework in order to receive a passing grade in this course. It is not possible to receive a satisfactory mark in EN 112 without taking and passing both parts of the final exam and completing all coursework with satisfactory marks.

FINAL EXAMS/MAKE UP EXAMS
The exit essay will be given in class during the week of December 2nd. The location will be determined later in the semester. It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of the location, date, and time of both of these examinations. Make-up tests will not be permitted for either part of the final exam unless the student has an excused absence with official documentation and the approval of the area coordinator. Excused absences include those absences incurred by the student’s participation in B-CU sponsored or class-sponsored activities. Examples of excused absences include band, chorale, gospel choir, athletic teams, field trips, or proof of illness with official documentation from physician or verifiable authority.

INCOMPLETES
In the event of an extreme and unavoidable circumstance that would inhibit the student from successful completion of the course, the student may request to be given an incomplete by the instructor upon approval of the area coordinator. The instructor and the area coordinator reserve the right to deny a student’s request for an incomplete. Prior to receiving an incomplete the student must have a passing grade in the course. Students who request an incomplete must have official documentation to support the request. Examples of official documentation include proof of illness from a physician or verifiable authority, a death certificate or an obituary, a military activation letter on government letterhead. Students will not be granted an incomplete for the following reasons: failure to take the exam at the appropriately scheduled time or location or unsatisfactory performance on an exam. Upon receiving an incomplete, it is the student’s responsibility to complete all assignments and tests agreed upon by the student and the instructor before the removal of incomplete deadline set by the registrar. Failure to complete assignments may result in the failing grade in the course.

THE EXIT EXAMS WILL BE GIVEN DURING THE WEEK OF APRIL 17TH.

GRADING CRITERIA
A grade of “S” (satisfactory) means that the student has successfully completed all course requirements and passed the essay and grammar exit examinations. The grade of an “S” is a prerequisite for entering EN 131, but the grade of an “S” is not calculated into the GPA.

A grade of “NR” (needs to repeat) means that the student has not successfully completed all course requirements and/or passed the essay and grammar exit examinations. A grade of “NR” means that a student must continuously repeat the course until a satisfactory grade is earned prior to entering EN 131. The grade of “NR” is not reflected in the student’s GPA.
Supplemental materials may be accessed using Web-CT.

**Grammar practice**
- SkillsTutor Tutorial: [www.myskillstutor.com](http://www.myskillstutor.com) (ID and password needed)
- Guide To Grammar & Writing: [http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar)
- The Owl at Purdue (on-line writing lab): [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl)

**Writing tutorial**
- Successful College Writing: [http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/successfulwriting/](http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/successfulwriting/)
- Expressways 4 - Writing tutorial program on Writing Center computers

**Online handbooks**

**Research assistance**

**ESOL Assistance:**
- [http://www.esl.net](http://www.esl.net)
- [http://www.esl.glo.com](http://www.esl.glo.com)
- [http://www.englishpage.com](http://www.englishpage.com)

Your grammar handbook, Prentice Hall Reference Guide, also has a website with references listed throughout the book. Students can visit the website for help with specific grammar problems.

**ASSESSMENT/ EVALUATION/ GRADING SCALE**

Students' grade will be accumulated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Maximum Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Assignments/Essays</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>200 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Lab</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>200 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes, Tests, Midterm Objective Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>200 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework/Research Assignment</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>200 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>200 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1000 points</td>
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**Additional requirements to pass the course are as follows:**
- Departmental Final Exit Essay: Passing score of 6 or higher *
- Departmental Final Objective Exam: Passing score of 70% or higher*
APPENDIX F
MOTIVATED STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE (MSLQ)
Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Manual

Part A. Motivation

The following questions ask about your motivation for and attitudes about this class. Remember there are no right or wrong answers, just answer as accurately as possible. Use the scale below to answer the questions. If you think the statement is very true of you, circle 7; if a statement is not at all true of you, circle 1. If the statement is more or less true of you, find the number between 1 and 7 that best describes you.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not at all true of me

very true of me

1. In a class like this, I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in this course. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. When I take a test I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. I believe I will receive an excellent grade in this class. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. I'm certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for this course. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. Getting a good grade in this class is the most satisfying thing for me right now. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. When I take a test I think about items on other parts of the test I can't answer. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
<p>| | | | | | |</p>
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<tr>
<td>9. It is my own fault if I don't learn the material in this course.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>10. It is important for me to learn the course material in this class.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>11. The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern in this class is getting a good grade.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>12. I'm confident I can learn the basic concepts taught in this course.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>13. If I can, I want to get better grades in this class than most of the other students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>14. When I take tests I think of the consequences of failing.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>15. I'm confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor in this course.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>16. In a class like this, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>17. I am very interested in the content area of this course.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>18. If I try hard enough, then I will understand the course material.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>19. I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take an exam.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Manual</td>
<td>not at all true of me</td>
<td>very true of me</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I'm confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this course.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>I expect to do well in this class.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>The most satisfying thing for me in this course is trying to understand the content as thoroughly as possible.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>When I have the opportunity in this class, I choose course assignments that I can learn from even if they don't guarantee a good grade.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>If I don't understand the course material, it is because I didn't try hard enough.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>I like the subject matter of this course.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>I feel my heart beating fast when I take an exam.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>I'm certain I can master the skills being taught in this class.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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<td>30.</td>
<td>I want to do well in this class because it is important to show my ability to my family, friends, employer, or others.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
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<td>31.</td>
<td>Considering the difficulty of this course, the teacher, and my skills, I think I will do well in this class.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
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APPENDIX G
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY
## Student Demographic Questionnaire

Please respond to the following questions based on your individual information. Select the most appropriate answer to each question.

1. **What is your gender?** (Circle One)
   - Male
   - Female

2. **What is your academic status?** (Circle One)
   - Freshmen
   - Sophomore
   - Junior
   - Senior

3. **What year did you graduate from high school?** (Write in the year)

4. **Are you the first one in your family to attend college?**
   - Yes
   - No

5. **What is your racial/ethnic background?** (Circle the one that applies to you)
   - African-American
   - Of African Descent, not African-American
   - Caucasian
   - Pacific Islander
   - American Indian
   - Asian
   - Hispanic
   - Other

6. **What is your age?** (Circle One)
   - 18
   - 19
   - 20
   - 21
   - Over 21

7. **What is your parents' total household income, including all earners in your household?**
   - Less than $10,000
   - $10,000-$19,999
   - $20,000-$29,999
   - $30,000-$39,999
   - $40,000-$49,999
   - $50,000-$59,999
   - $60,000-$69,999
   - $70,000-$79,999
   - $80,000-$89,999
   - $90,000-$99,999
   - $100,000-$149,999
   - More than $150,000
LIST OF REFERENCES


HER@ucla.edu


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http://www9.cookman.edu/about_BCU/history/index.html


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Lamkin, M.D. (2004, Winter).”More money is not enough: Philanthropy can play a unique role in providing greater access and affordability in higher education. *Notebook, 2*.


