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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

WILLINGNESS TO SEEK ACADEMIC HELP IN PRECLINICAL
NURSING STUDENTS: THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL
SELF-EFFICACY AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Bernice Wallace Carmon

College of Natural and Health Sciences
School of Nursing
Nursing Education

August 2013

This Dissertation by: Bernice Wallace Carmon

Entitled: *Willingness to Seek Academic Help in Preclinical Nursing Students: The Influence of Social Self-efficacy and Learning Environment*

Has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of doctor of Philosophy in the College of Natural and Health Sciences in School of Nursing, Program of Nursing Education

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ABSTRACT

Carmon, Bernice W. *Willingness to Seek Academic Help in Preclinical Nursing Students: The Influence of Social Self-efficacy and Learning Environment*.
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The purpose of this study was to describe willingness to seek academic help among nursing students and to examine the influence of predictor variables, social self-efficacy, learning environment, and demographic factors, on academic help-seeking motivation. One hundred- twenty-one preclinical baccalaureate nursing students completed a computerized survey comprised of measures of the study variables. Descriptive statistical analyses were used to describe participants' willingness to seek academic help. A 3-step hierarchical regression analysis was completed to determine the amount of variance each predictor variable contributed to participants' scores on the willingness to seek academic help measure.

Results of the analyses revealed that study participants exhibited moderate levels of willingness to seek academic help as determined by their scores on the study measure. Demographic factors, social self-efficacy, and learning environment interacted to account for 24% of the variance in participants' willingness to seek academic help scores. However, learning environment had the strongest statistically significant influence on willingness to seek academic help scores, solely accounting for 7% of the variance.

These findings provide further insight into the influence of demographic, intrapersonal, and environmental factors on nursing students' willingness to seek

academic help and reveal potential avenues for future research. In addition, these findings may be used to inform nurse educators and student success facilitators in implementing academic advising approaches and in structuring learning environments that facilitate help-seeking as an adaptive self-regulated learning strategy.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study describes the willingness to seek academic help in preclinical nursing students. Additional purposes were to explore the influence of social self-efficacy and learning environment on the willingness of preclinical nursing students to seek academic help and how social self-efficacy and learning environment interact with demographic characteristics of preclinical nursing students to predict their willingness to seek academic help. Willingness to seek academic help is the motivational beliefs that drive academic effort and goal achievement. Social self-efficacy is confidence to engage in social interaction. Learning environment refers to the pedagogical and psychosocial comfort present in the learning environment.

This descriptive quantitative study was conducted using surveys with baccalaureate preclinical nursing students. Selected demographic variables include self-reported age, gender, ethnicity, primary language, geographical location, status as first generation college student, prior degree, number of academic credits, and cumulative grade point average (GPA).

Background

As a nurse educator, this researcher has observed that nursing students often encounter academic difficulties. When these difficulties arise, faculty expects that students will simply make a decision to seek help and then seek the help they need to overcome their difficulties. Yet, the process of seeking academic help is deceptively

Complex (Hannabuss, 1999). Students must first have the metacognitive awareness that alerts them that help is needed. Then, they must be motivated to seek the appropriate help. Unlike other learning and study strategies that students might use to address academic difficulties, seeking help involves reaching out to another person. Because of this social aspect, help-seeking is subject to the influence of social factors, as well as personal factors. These factors interrelate in a complex manner to influence students' decisions and willingness to seek academic help.

Notwithstanding its complexity (Hannabuss, 1999), help seeking remains one of the most effective strategies for addressing academic difficulties (Karabenick & Newman, 2006). This fact has not gone unnoticed by postsecondary institutions as higher education has become accessible to more students. For example, 69% of the high school students enrolled in college following high school graduation in 2008 (Aud et al., 2010); in contrast, only 1% of high school students enrolled in college after high school graduation in 1900 (Hunt, 2002). As access has increased, so has the realization that many high school graduates arrive on college campuses without the prior knowledge, requisite learning, and study skills to successfully manage college-level coursework (Gabriel, 2008).

In a 2006 national study, 55% of the surveyed professors described their most recent class of incoming freshman as unprepared to handle the rigors of college-level academics (Zogby, Bruce, & Wittman). In 2009, almost half (47%) of the high school students who took the ACT Reading Readiness Test failed to achieve the college-level benchmark, confirming students' lack of college readiness (American College Testing, 2009). Although estimates vary widely, it has been conservatively estimated that as

many as 60% of students enrolled in two year colleges and 30% of those in four year institutions will need remedial course work (Kirst, 2007; Kirst & Venezia, 2008). Among first generation, low income, and ethnic/racial minority students, the academic readiness gap is even wider (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006; Schnieders, 2010) with these students being at higher risk for attrition. When academic deficiencies are not addressed, students do not progress, and, ultimately, do not graduate.

In response to these challenges, academic support programs on college and university campuses have proliferated over the last twenty years (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). The components of academic support programs may vary in structure, but they all share the goal of offering some form of academic assistance, such as tutoring, mentoring, or advising to help students meet academic expectations. Nursing programs have adopted similar strategies to assist academically at-risk students (Lockie & Burke, 1999; Robinson & Niemar, 2010). Academic support programs are shown to have a beneficial impact on learning competence, student retention, and academic achievement (Gabriel, 2008; Stone & Jacobs, 2008). However, these benefits only accrue to those students who are willing and decide to seek help.

When faced with academic difficulties, students typically have three options: they may persist on their own without success, cease all effort and give up, or reach out to others for help (Newman, 1998a). Obviously, among the three options, seeking help from others holds the greatest promise of achieving the desired learning outcomes. The other two options do not move students any closer to achieving their academic goals and are ineffective strategies for coping with academic difficulty. According to research studies,

many students who need help do not seek help (Hodges & White, 2001; Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998). This finding is a particular source of concern to educators.

Problem Statement

Nursing students who do not seek appropriate academic help when help is needed are ill-prepared to successfully address the academic challenges that students typically experience in nursing schools. When students do not seek needed help, they are not engaged in effective self-regulated learning. They are not managing their learning resources effectively which increases their vulnerability to academic stressors and their risk for academic underachievement and failure. The failure of students to effectively manage their academic challenges comes at great costs to students and to the nursing profession.

It is projected that 260,000 more nurses will be needed by 2025 to meet rising health care needs and to replace an aging nursing workforce (Buerhaus, Auerbach, & Staiger, 2009). As nursing programs mobilize resources to meet the public's demand to graduate more nurses, they do so knowing that changing demographics mandate a more diverse and culturally competent nursing workforce (Amaro, Abriam-Yago, & Yoder, 2006). By mid-century, racial and ethnic minorities will account for 33% of the population. Yet, the health care workforce has not achieved a level of diversity commensurate with the changing demographics that are currently underway in the United States. *The Future of Nursing: Leading Health, Advancing Change* (Institute of Medicine, 2011), *Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Professions* (Sullivan, 2004), and *Unequal Treatment: Addressing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care* (Institute of Medicine, 2002) are all major reports released between 2000 and 2010 that

attest to the need for a diverse workforce and its impact on the quality of health care. As stated in the report, *Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Professions*:

The fact that the nation's health professions have not kept pace with changing demographics may be an even greater cause of disparities in health access and outcomes than the persistent lack of health insurance for tens of millions of Americans. Today's physicians, nurses, and dentists have too little resemblance to the diverse populations they serve, leaving many Americans feeling excluded by a system that seems distant and uncaring. (Sullivan, 2004, p. 1)

In response to this need to increase the size and the diversity of the nursing workforce, nursing programs have increased their enrollments and expanded their recruitment of students from diverse socio-cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds (Allen, Schumann, Collins, & Selz, 2007).

However, expanding student enrollment and diversity in nursing programs will do little to change the profile and size of the nursing workforce if those students fail to graduate. Academic problems, specifically those arising from the unexpected receipt of a bad grade, have been cited as critical events that factored into students' decision to drop out of college (Pleskac, Keeney, Merritt, Schmitt, & Oswald, 2011). Although no students are immune to academic problems, first generation college students and ethnically diverse students are particularly vulnerable to attrition (Chen & Carroll, 2005). In a study commissioned by the United States Department of Education, Chen and Carroll found that first generation college students are disadvantaged in terms of their access to, persistence through, and completion of postsecondary education. Among racial and ethnic minority students who are also vulnerable to attrition, four broad categories of program barriers have been identified: personal barriers, language barriers, cultural barriers, and academic barriers (Amaro, Abriam-Yago, & Yoder, 2006). Although academic barriers pose a great risk to these students' academic achievement and

retention, when one or more of the remaining barriers occur concurrently with academic barriers, ethnically diverse students are at greatest risk for course failure and program non-retention.

Academic help-seeking is a valuable adaptive and strategic resource that is associated with positive learning outcomes and academic achievement (Karabenick, 1998; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990). Even though help-seeking has been shown to have a positive influence on academic performance and retention (Robbins, et al., 2004), often students who would benefit from help do not seek the help they need (Newman & Schwager, 1995; Ryan, Pintrich, & Midgley, 2001). Why students do not seek needed help has been the focus of numerous research studies that attribute help-seeking behavior to two broad categories of factors: environmental factors and personal factors (Lee, 2006).

According to Tinto (1975; 1997), the learning environment sets the stage for learning. Whether or not students feel valued, respected, and supported in their learning environment will influence their sense of connectedness to the institution and commitment to their academic studies (Tinto, 1975; 1997). Teachers and students interact in ways that create the learning environment of the classroom. Teacher-student interactions and classmate-student interactions create the learning environment that shape students' learning and response to learning. When teacher-student relationships and peer-student relationships foster a sense of belonging, students feel supported (Morris, Lee, & Barnes, 2009). A supportive learning environment creates a level of interpersonal trust and fosters a sense of belonging that may minimize the potential threat to self-esteem that seeking help generates in some students. Students' perceptions of the supportiveness of

the learning environment determine how willing they are to seek help and from whom they prefer to elicit help. Efforts to facilitate students' willingness to seek academic help must address the impact of the learning environment on students.

Self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to be successful in initiating specific actions (Bandura, 1991), is a personal factor that has been discussed extensively in the help-seeking literature (Butler, 1998; Newman, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). However, research findings regarding the influence of self-efficacy on help-seeking have been mixed. Newman (1990) and Ryan and Pintrich (1997) found that students with low self-efficacy were less likely to ask for help because of concerns that they would be seen as less competent. Conversely, Butler (1998) found that students with high self-efficacy were less likely to ask for help because asking for help was incongruent with their views of themselves. The researchers who have examined the relationship between academic help-seeking and self-efficacy have focused on general self-efficacy. Because academic help-seeking requires social interaction, examining its relationship to social self-efficacy, rather than general self-efficacy, helps to further clarify the relationship and the mixed findings in the literature. When students feel less confident in social situations, they may find it more difficult to ask others for help. How social self-efficacy relates to academic help-seeking merits investigation.

To facilitate timely academic progression and to strengthen student capacity to manage the learning and academic challenges, nursing education programs need to be more precise in identifying students who are unlikely to seek help, putting them at greater risk for poor academic outcomes (Ofori, 2006). By knowing the personal and environmental factors that influence academic help-seeking in nursing students, nurse

educators are in a better position to develop the learning environments and the resources that target factors that facilitate academic help-seeking, self-regulated learning, and academic achievement.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe the willingness to seek academic help in preclinical baccalaureate nursing students and the role of social self-efficacy and learning environment on their willingness to seek academic help. The understanding gained from this study's findings provides a basis for developing guidelines for faculty and academic success facilitators to assist them in the early identification and academic support of students who may be hesitant to seek help.

Significance

The findings from this study expand the academic help-seeking literature by identifying additional factors that will further explain the complexity of willingness to seek help in academic settings, in general, and in nursing programs in particular. Research in the nursing literature on willingness to seek academic help in nursing students is minimal. However, there were four dissertations on academic help-seeking in nursing students produced between the years of 2004 -2006.

As participants in this study were recruited from preclinical nursing students, this study offered the opportunity to examine their willingness to seek academic help before they transition into the clinical phase of the program. This is an understudied population for which approaches need to be developed in order to impact the greatest proportion of at-risk students. The findings from this study should provide a more precise profile of students who are less willing to seek help. With this information, academic support

interventions, such as referrals to academic success facilitators, advisors, and counselors, can occur earlier in students' academic careers.

In addition, this study provides information on students' perceptions of the learning environment. Faculty-student interaction and peer-student interaction are major contributors to the learning environment. It is important to identify how they influence students' willingness to seek academic help. With this knowledge, it may be possible to raise awareness of the learning environment's influence on help-seeking and to use the findings from this study to modify the learning environment to enhance students' willingness to seek academic help. Even though some personal factors, such as social self-efficacy, may not be amenable to change, referrals to advising resources may be appropriate.

Research Question

This study was designed to answer the following research question:

What combination of social self-efficacy, learning environment, and demographic characteristics (i.e., of self-reported age, gender, ethnicity, status as first generation college student, self-reported number of academic credits, prior degree, geographical location, cumulative grade point average (GPA), primary language, and hours of paid work) best predicts willingness to seek academic help in preclinical baccalaureate nursing students?

Conceptual Definitions

Academic help-seeking. A self-regulatory learning strategy and social interactive process that students use to carry out achievement related tasks designed to improve their learning capabilities, increase their understanding, or solve an academic problem (Karabenick, 1998; Karabenick & Newman, 2006).

Willingness to seek academic help. Willingness to seek academic help refers to the motivational beliefs that activate academic effort and facilitate goal achievement (Ofori, 2006).

Social self-efficacy. Social self-efficacy is confidence in one's ability to engage in the social interactional tasks necessary to initiate and maintain interpersonal relationships in social life and career activities (Anderson & Betz, 2001).

Learning environment. Learning environment is the psychosocial and pedagogical contexts in which learning occurs and which affects student achievement and attitudes (Fraser, 1998).

Theoretical Framework

According to the social cognitive theoretical perspective of self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 1989), self-regulated learning is an active process wherein learners consciously and strategically use cognitive, motivational, and behavioral strategies to monitor and regulate their thoughts, motivations, and behaviors as a means to achieving their desired academic goals (Puustinen & Pulkkinen, 2001; Zimmerman, 1989). A fundamental assertion of a social cognitive formulation of self-regulated learning is that learning is influenced by the reciprocal interactions of personal factors, behavior, and the environment. Students have control over their learning through the use of self-regulatory processes that enable them to monitor and adjust their cognitive and affective states, environmental conditions, and performance outcomes (Puustinen & Pulkkinen, 2001). Students are able to manage their learning and achieve their goals using processes involving goal-setting and also self-monitoring of their behavior, comparing their behavior to personal and societal standards, and adjusting their behavior to address goal

discrepancies (Bandura, 1991; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). While all students have the capacity to self-regulate, they vary in their motivation to self-regulate and in their knowledge and use of self-regulated learning strategies.

According to Karabenick (1998), academic help-seeking is a self-regulatory learning strategy that students use to improve their learning capabilities, increase their understanding, or solve an academic problem. Newman (2002) offered a descriptive account of academic help-seeking:

When students monitor their academic performance, show awareness of difficulty they cannot overcome on their own, and exhibit the wherewithal and self-determination to remedy that difficulty by requesting assistance from a more knowledgeable individual, they are exhibiting mature, strategic [help-seeking] behavior. (p. 132)

From a social cognitive perspective, the willingness to seek academic help is an adaptive learning behavior that is the product of the reciprocal interaction of person-related factors, environment-related factors, and the behavior itself. The willingness to seek help is self-initiated and self-driven, yet is enacted through social relationships within a social environment. When students seek academic help, they are admitting to themselves that they need help. Admitting that help is needed may threaten students' perceptions of themselves as competent learners, as well as their perceptions of how others may view them. It is expected that students' perceptions of themselves as socially competent and of their environments as socially supportive will influence their willingness to seek academic help.

Gaining knowledge of preclinical nursing students' willingness to seek academic help and how social self-efficacy and the learning environment influence their willingness to seek help are the focus of this study. Figure 1 depicts the study's

conceptual model as conceived within the person, behavior, and environment framework of Social Cognitive Theory. The conceptual model depicts the hypothesized relationships among the main variables in the study: willingness to seek academic help, social self-efficacy, and learning environment. Demographic variables refer to social characteristics, to include, but not limited to age, gender, and educational level.

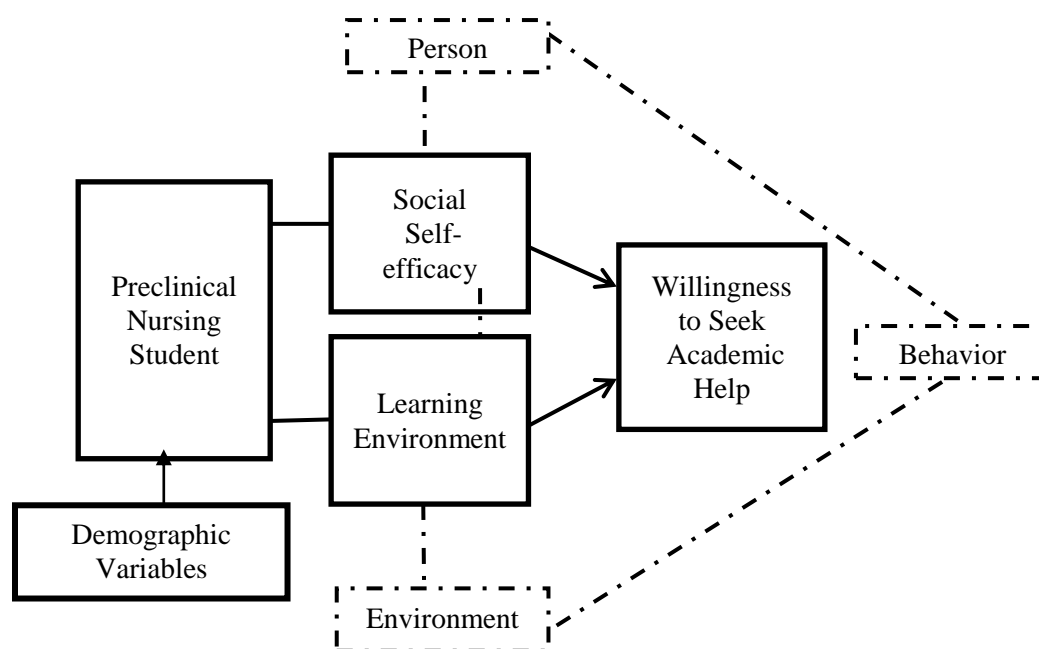


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

According to the social cognitive model of self-regulated learning, learning behaviors are influenced by the reciprocal interactions of persons, environment, and behavior (Bandura, 1991). Students' perceptions of their social self-efficacy, a personal factor, and students' perceptions of their learning environment, an environmental factor, interact to influence students' motivational beliefs which influence their willingness to seek academic help, a behavioral factor. Demographic variables influence students' perception of themselves and their learning environment.

Summary

Unraveling the complexity by which social self-efficacy and learning environment influence academic help-seeking is an important step in gaining a better understanding of academic help-seeking behavior in nursing students. An enhanced understanding of nursing students' willingness to seek academic help provides a basis for identifying nursing students who are less willing to seek academic help and who may, therefore, be less prepared to overcome academic difficulties and, consequently, be at greater risk of failing to successfully resolve the difficulties. It is anticipated that the findings from this study will provide guidance on which strategies to use to assist reluctant students to seek help.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe the willingness to seek academic help in preclinical baccalaureate nursing students and how social self-efficacy and learning environments influence the willingness to seek academic help. The literature review that provided the context for this study on willingness to seek academic help is organized in sections: an overview of academic help-seeking, academic help-seeking, self-regulatory perspective of academic help-seeking, motivation and academic help-seeking, social self-efficacy and academic help-seeking, learning environment and academic help-seeking, and nursing students and academic help-seeking.

Empirical evidence citing the benefits of academic help-seeking in promoting learning competence and success in academic settings is vast (Hendriksen, Love, & Hall, 2005; Karabenick & Newman, 2006; Nelson-LeGall, 1981; 1985). In spite of the considerable evidence extolling the benefits of academic help-seeking, many students who need help do not seek help. The array of academic support services available to students is useless if students do not avail themselves of these services. Conversely, students who know when and how to seek help effectively are using their resources strategically to regulate their learning towards achieving their academic goals. When help-seeking is used to facilitate learning and accomplish academic tasks, help-seeking is described as a self-regulated learning strategy.

From a social-cognitive view of self-regulated learning, help-seeking is a specific form of behavioral self-regulation (Wolters, Pintrich, & Karabenick, 2003; Zimmerman, 1989) that is a product of both self-generated (personal) and external (environmental) sources of influence (Zimmerman, 1989). Efforts to understand academic help-seeking have addressed how personal and environmental factors interact to influence and shape students' help seeking behavior (Wolters, Pintrich, & Karabenick, 2003; Zimmerman, 1989). The purpose of this study was to identify how nursing students' willingness to seek academic help is influenced by their social self-efficacy and their learning environment.

An Overview – Help-seeking

Help-seeking is a naturally occurring, universal act (DePaulo, Nadler, & Fisher, 1983); it is not restricted to any specific persons, places, or situations. Because help-seeking is a familiar and commonplace experience to most people, it is generally perceived as a simple act. However, a more complex picture of help-seeking emerges from the literature (Gross & McMullen, 1983; Nadler, 1991). Nadler (1991) proposed a model that emphasized the three essential elements of help-seeking: a person in need of help, a specific need for help, and a source of help. Gross and McMullen (1983) expanded on the essential elements that Nadler identified. In their model, Gross and McMullen (1983) described help-seeking as a process that unfolds in three phases: “(a) identifying the problem, (b) deciding to seek help, and (c) obtaining the desired help” (p. 47). In a critique of their model, Gross and McMullen readily admitted that their model is, at best, an oversimplification and does not fully capture the “tortuous route of many help-seeking decisions” (p. 48). The complexity of the help-seeking process is most

accurately captured in what Karabenick and Dembo (2011) described as the common elements shared by most help-seeking models: “ (1) determine whether there is a problem; (2) determine whether help is needed/wanted; (3) decide whether to seek help; (4) decide on the type of help (goal); (5) decide on whom to ask; (6) solicit help; (7) obtain help; and (8) process the help received” (p. 34).

However, the actual decision to seek help is a pivotal step in the help-seeking process. It is during the decision-making phase that the help-seeker weighs the costs and benefits of seeking help. Without making the decision to seek help, a person who is in need of help will not receive the benefits that derive from seeking help. Bamberger (2009) cited several benefits of seeking help including: “(a) acquiring new skills and knowledge to resolve problems, (b) gaining information and expertise, (c) improving task performance, and (d) forming relationships with experts” (p. 52). While these potential benefits are indisputable, seeking help is not without social and psychological costs. A considerable segment of the help-seeking literature in counseling (Vogel & Wester, 2003), health behavior (Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2005), and organizational studies (Bamberger, 2009) has focused on the social and psychological costs of seeking help (Nelson-LeGall, 1981; 1985). Although time, effort, and finances are often cited as costs associated with seeking help, help-seeking as a potential threat to the help-seeker’s self-esteem has garnered the most attention in these studies.

Seeking help is a social process that involves admitting an inadequacy to self and disclosing that inadequacy to others (Nelson-LeGall, 1981; 1985). According to Lee (2002), by seeking help, the help-seeker admits incompetence (a problem exists that the help-seeker cannot solve), inferiority (the helper has greater knowledge than the help-

seeker), and dependence (the help-seeker cannot solve the problem alone). In western culture where individualism and self-reliance are highly valued, there may be real and perceived costs of seeking help. Publicly admitting to inadequacies that require dependence on the help of others can socially stigmatize help-seekers by calling into question their overall sense of competence and autonomy which threatens their self-esteem (Lee, 2002; Nelson-LeGall, 1981; 1985).

Several authors have cited the threat to self-esteem as a major reason for not seeking help when help is needed (Huang, Lui, & Shiomi, 2007; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Nadler, 1991; Newman, 1990; Ryan, Hicks, & Midgley, 1997). Two theoretical perspectives describe how seeking help poses a threat to self-esteem. According to the recognition consistency perspective (Bramel, as cited in Tessler & Schwartz, 1972), the level of threat perceived by the help-seeker is proportional to the degree of inconsistency between the help-seeker's realization that help is needed and his or her level of self-esteem. Because persons with low levels of self-esteem have lower self-worth, being faced with problems they cannot resolve on their own would be consistent with their negative self-perceptions; hence, they would be more willing to seek help than persons with higher levels of self-esteem. While earlier studies have supported this view (Nadler, Mayseless, Peri, & Tchemerinski, 1985), the vulnerability perspective offers a different interpretation.

The vulnerability perspective (Tessler & Schwartz, 1972) asserts that persons with low self-esteem have few positive self-affirmations to draw upon and are threatened by seeking help. Consequently, they are more likely to avoid seeking help since seeking help would further undermine their self-esteem. Conversely, persons with high self-

esteem have an abundance of positive self-affirmations that sustains their self-worth; consequently, they would not have their self-esteem threatened by the need to seek help from others and would therefore be more willing to seek help.

Many studies lend support to the vulnerability perspective (Alexitch, 2002; Huang, Liu, & Shiomi, 2007; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Kennedy, 1997; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998; Ryan, Hicks & Midgley, 1997). Seeking help is most threatening for those students who have low levels of self-esteem and who are identified as low performers (Ryan, Hicks, & Midgley, 1997; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991). Kennedy (1997) reaffirmed the central premise of the vulnerability perspective with his study of 907 third grade students regarding their fears of seeking academic help from teachers. Using data gleaned from the Louisiana School Effectiveness Study, Kennedy (1997) used logistic regression analysis to assess the impact of selected students' personal characteristics (gender, academic performance, academic self-concept, performance attributions, and achievement motivation) and social and environmental factors (peer academic achievement norms and negative teacher feedback) on students' help-seeking behavior. He found that students with low academic self-concepts were more threatened by seeking help when compared with students with more positive self-evaluations (Kennedy, 1997). Alexitch (2002) reported a similar finding in her study of the role of help-seeking attitudes and tendencies in 361 first-year undergraduate students' preferences for academic advising. She found that college students who were more threatened by seeking help or those who were more grade-oriented and doing poorly were less likely to reach out to others for academic help.

Although the study of help-seeking in the educational domain continues to build on previous research, the work of Nelson-LeGall (1981; 1985) has been influential in spurring research exploring the costs of *not* seeking help. Nelson-LeGall (1981; 1985) described help-seeking as an adaptive behavior. Newman (2000) defined adaptive help seeking as “a particular subset of speech, acts that individuals use for the purpose of seeking information, i.e., for correcting a knowledge deficit that interferes with academic task completion” (p. 352). As an adaptive behavior, help-seeking serves as an effective strategy for coping with learning tasks and difficulties by drawing upon the assistance of others (Nelson-LeGall, 1981; 1985). This perspective of help-seeking has had a strong influence on contemporary understanding of help-seeking in academic settings.

Academic Help-seeking

Studies conducted in primary, secondary, and postsecondary settings have consistently shown that help-seeking in academic settings can have a positive influence on learning outcomes (Hendriksen, Yang, Love, & Hall, 2005; Karabenick, 2003). The benefits of help-seeking accrue when students request the appropriate amount and type of help that will enable them to achieve their learning goals independently (Nelson-LeGall, 1985; Newman, 2002), a state referred to as adaptive or instrumental help-seeking. When needed help is avoided (avoidant help-seeking) or when help is requested unnecessarily to minimize effort (executive help-seeking), the behavior is not constructive in that neither approach resolves academic difficulties (Nelson-LeGall, 1985; Newman, 2002). Help-seeking is constructive (instrumental help-seeking or mastery help-seeking) when help is undertaken to increase mastery and enhance students’ learning competence and

capacity as self-regulated learners (Nelson-LeGall, 1985; Newman, 2002; Newman, 2008; Ryan, Patrick, & Shim, 2005).

Verhasselt (2008) developed the Preference for Seeking Academic Help scale (PSAH) to measure students' preferences for different types and sources of academic help-seeking. The instrument measures different types of help seeking, including instrumental, executive, and avoidant, as well as different sources of help-seeking, such as formal and informal. Subscales measuring help-seeking threats and beliefs are also included in the PSAH. The initial psychometric analysis revealed that most of the subscales functioned well (Cronbach's alpha between 0.80 and 0.87); the executive subscale, however, had the lowest reliability estimate (Cronbach's alpha = 0.68).

Verhasselt's study of undergraduate students' preferences for and sources of help-seeking revealed that less experienced students (freshmen and sophomores) preferred executive help-seeking slightly more than more experienced students (juniors and seniors).

Executive help-seeking, as previously noted, is a type of help that is characterized by a learner's preference for obtaining the desired information with minimal effort or energy by depending on others to provide answers (Nelson-LeGall, 1985; Newman, 2002).

Conversely, instrumental help-seeking is characterized by seeking only that level of assistance necessary to independently increase the learner's mastery and competence (Collins & Sims, 2006). The study further revealed that more experienced students held more positive beliefs about seeking help than less experienced students and that students who had more outside demands on their time, such as work, commuting distance, and extracurricular activities, were more likely to show less preference for instrumental help-

seeking. Instrumental help-seeking is adaptive in that it elicits only that amount of help sufficient for the learner to resolve the academic challenge on his or her own.

While most researchers have used quantitative approaches in studying academic help-seeking, a few studies have used a qualitative approach to elicit students' personal experience with seeking academic help. Grayson, Miller, and Clarke (1998) conducted a study on help-seeking barriers perceived by students enrolled in a university in the United Kingdom. The aim of their study was to provide an account of help-seeking experiences using a qualitative approach which would, as they described it, "get behind the statistical patterns presented in the literature, to explore issues of *meaning*" (Grayson, et al., p. 238). A structured interview format was used to elicit students ordinary explanations of the who, what, when, and why of help-seeking episodes they had experienced. The analysis of the textual data, derived from the taped interviews, was structured according to the five 'locations' from which a person could describe their help-seeking behavior: "(1) the problem, (2) themselves (3) the potential helper (4) their relationship with the potential helper and (5) the context" (Grayson, et al., p. 241). The analysis revealed that informal sources of help are often a first-line source for help when students seek help, a finding that has strong support in the existing literature. The researchers also discovered that their approach yielded a picture of help-seeking that is more contextualized and 'fuzzier' than the more rational, systematic view of help-seeking offered in various accounts of help-seeking derived from quantitative studies. Grayson and colleagues concluded that the process of getting help is not linear and "is not always related straight-forwardly to the rational act of *seeking* it" (p. 250).

In a more recently conducted qualitative study, Protheroe (2009) used constructivist grounded theory to investigate university students' motivation to seek academic help. Data gathered in interviews and videos from eight participants were analyzed using grounded theory. The findings revealed four motivating factors for seeking academic help: students' recognition of the need for help; their view of help-seeking; their view of themselves as help-seekers; and their confidence (Protheroe, 2009). Further analysis led to the development of an expanded view of academic help-seeking that incorporates four types of help-seeking (executive, instrumental, instrumental/executive, and executive/instrumental), two types of help-seeking approaches (dependent and independent), core motivating factors, and help-seeking precipitators.

Self-regulatory Perspective of Academic Help-seeking

Academic help-seeking is a form of self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning refers to “self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and systematically adapted as needed to affect one's learning and motivation” (Schunk & Ertmer, 2000, p. 631). Self-regulated learners control their learning outcomes by setting academic goals, applying appropriate learning strategies, eliciting motivation to sustain their effort, and self-monitoring their learning behavior to evaluate goal achievement (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez- Pons, 1992).

Zimmerman (2008) described this self-regulative process in his cyclical model of self-regulated learning. The model presented self-regulated learning as the recursive interaction of three cyclical phases: the forethought phase, the performance phase, and the self-reflection phase. In the forethought phase, the learner establishes academic goals

and activates motivational beliefs, such as beliefs about self-efficacy, outcome expectation, and task interest and value (Zimmerman, 2008). In the performance phase that follows, the learners observe and control their own behavior in response to the selected learning strategy. Help-seeking and other learning strategies would be activated during this phase. Phase three is the self-reflection phase and involves an evaluation of the outcome and its causes; an emotional reaction to the outcome occurs as well. The learner's emotional and evaluative response in phase three serves as feedback to the forethought phase, thereby activating motivational beliefs and expectations. This cyclical interaction among the three phases creates a recursive feedback loop that enables learners to monitor their learning and make appropriate adjustments in their motivational beliefs and learning strategies to achieve their academic goals.

Academic help-seeking is one of a variety of learning strategies that self-regulated learners use to control and regulate their learning. Pintrich (1999) identified three categories of learning strategies: “(1) cognitive learning strategies, (2) cognition control strategies, and (3) resource management strategies” (p. 422), the latter of which is exemplified by academic help-seeking is an example. Resource management strategies help learners adapt to the learning environment and use resources to maximum benefits. As a resource management strategy, academic help-seeking may involve using academic support services, tutoring, peers, and teachers. According to Pintrich (1999), “good learners and good self-regulators know when, why, and from whom to seek help” (p. 468). Studies have shown that students who are more self-regulated as learners are more likely to seek help (Karabenick & Knapp, 1988; Karabenick & Newman, 2006; Newman, 1998b; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994). For example, Karabenick

and Knapp (1988) examined the relationship of academic help-seeking to college students' use of learning strategies. They found that college students who used a variety of learning strategies were more likely to seek help when needed, whereas, those students who had a greater need for help, reported using fewer learning strategies and were less likely to seek needed help.

However, unlike other learning strategies students use to deal with academic challenges, help-seeking involves another person. Help-seeking is both a self-regulatory learning strategy and a social-interactive process (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985). As a social interactive process, help-seeking behavior is influenced by environmental factors. The research on academic help-seeking has focused upon deciphering the myriad ways in which these personal and environmental factors interact to influence help-seeking and, ultimately, academic achievement. The academic help-seeking literature that has developed along these lines of inquiry consists of four broad themes: students' motivational beliefs and academic help-seeking, students' self-efficacy and academic help-seeking, students' learning environments, and students' academic help-seeking. A review of the literature relevant to each of these themes follows.

Motivation and Academic Help-seeking

When students lack the personal and material resources to resolve academic challenges, seeking help from knowledgeable others in the learning environment is both an adaptive behavior and a self-regulatory learning strategy. Students who reach out for help are motivated to exert the effort necessary to achieve their desired academic goals. Motivation encompasses the beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes that increase students' willingness to engage in academic tasks and persist in their efforts to learn and achieve

(Lai, 2011; Wolters, 2003). The precise manner by which motivation exerts its influence on help-seeking behavior continues to be a major topic of interest. Several motivational beliefs have been proposed to explain help-seeking behavior; some of the most prominent motivational constructs from which these beliefs are derived include outcome expectancy, goal achievement, attribution, and self-efficacy.

Grounded in expectancy-value theory, outcome expectancy refers to a person's belief in the probability that a certain action will produce a specific outcome. Expectancy for success was one of several motivational variables investigated in a recent study on help-seeking patterns in an ethnically diverse population. Zusho and Barnett (2011) employed a descriptive survey design to examine the help-seeking patterns of 293 high school girls enrolled in math and English courses. Using both self-report and behavioral measures of help-seeking (number of tutor sessions attended), students' expectancy for success significantly predicted their help-seeking in math and English. Zusho and Barnett recommended that future studies should further explore the role of expectancy for success in help-seeking behavior.

The variable, expectancy to attain help, was the focus of another study that examined the influence of expectancy beliefs on help-seeking outcomes. Oettingen, Stephens, Mayer, and Brinkmann (2010) conducted an experimental study whereby mental contrasting, a self-regulation strategy, was used to induce students' commitment to help-seeking. In mental contrasting, commitment is activated through a process of imagining and contrasting a positive future state with the negative reality that impedes it (Oettingen, et al., 2010). Undergraduate students were placed in one of three experimental groups: the mental contrasting group (imagining positive fantasy and

negative reality), the dwelling group (imagining negative reality only), and the indulging group (imagining positive reality only). Each was asked to identify an academic problem that needed solving or improving, a knowledgeable person who could offer help, and the likelihood the person would provide the help. An analysis of the findings revealed that students in the mental contrasting group who had high expectations of attaining help were successful in receiving help; however, those who had low expectations of attaining help did not receive help. Expectations had no discernible effect on help attainment for the dwelling group and the indulging group.

Achievement goal theory was highly influential in shaping current understanding of students' motivation to seek help (Zusho & Barnett, 2011). The theory seeks to explain why students engage in certain tasks. According to achievement goal theory, students' willingness to engage in academic tasks is motivated by their reasons for setting specific goals and their desire to achieve them (Pintrich, 1999). The theory further asserts that achievement goals vary between two types of goals: mastery goals and performance goals (Dweck, 1986). Mastery goals are concerned with learning as a means of developing and improving ability (Tanaka, Murakami, Okuno, & Yamauchi, 2002). Mattern (2005) described students who hold a mastery goal orientation as being motivated by the insight, understanding, and personal enrichment that comes with understanding and mastering knowledge and skills.

Performance goals, which focus on demonstrating and proving ability, are further classified into performance-approach goals and performance-avoidance goals. Performance-approach goals place an emphasis on demonstrating superior ability whereas performance-avoidance goals strive to avoid demonstrating a lack of ability

(Tanaka et al., 2002). Achievement goals have a positive impact on help-seeking behavior (Newman, 1998b). Because goals provide a purpose and direction to students' academic behavior (Mattern, 2005), understanding their goal orientations provides insight into students' willingness and reluctance to seek help.

A study conducted by Butler (1998) was instrumental in illustrating how achievement goal orientations influence students' help-seeking patterns. Elementary school students, aged 10 through 12 years, were surveyed to identify their reasons for not requesting math help when needed. Post analysis, three distinct reasons for students' reluctance to seek help were identified and labeled as autonomous, ability-focused, and expedient rationales. Subsequently, in an experimental setting, students were assigned a series of math problems to solve and their behaviors observed as they completed the numerical tasks. The findings revealed that when students sought help with their assignments, their pattern of help seeking reflected the reasons they gave for avoiding help. For example, students who gave reasons for avoiding help based on their need to master academic tasks independently, when assigned the math problems, actually proceeded to try to solve the math problems without assistance (Butler, 1998). Hence, Butler was able to demonstrate that students "may construct qualitatively different perceptions of the costs of requesting help, which may then promote different patterns of behavior when they encounter difficulty" (p. 639).

Similar findings were apparent in a study involving college age students. In a study of achievement goal orientations and help-seeking patterns in undergraduates, Karabenick (2004) found that students who demonstrated instrumental help-seeking (help undertaken to increase mastery, enhance learning competence and reduce need for

subsequent help) held a mastery goal orientation and attained higher course grades. Those students characterized by help-seeking avoidance patterns were more performance goal oriented; they were more threatened by seeking help, tended to avoid seeking help, or would seek help unnecessarily to minimize effort.

Attributional theory is another source of motivational beliefs used to frame help-seeking research and achievement behavior. The theory is concerned with the causal ascriptions that persons make to explain occurrences in their lives (Cano, 2006; Svinicki, 2004). In terms of academic motivation, the causal ascriptions generally focus on occurrences of success or failure. For instance, when students experience a success or a failure, they analyze the situation and look for reasons why the event occurred, ultimately, attributing the outcome to a specific cause. The specific cause may be categorized along three dimensions: stability (whether the cause is likely to change or not), controllability (whether the cause can be controlled or not,) and locus (whether the cause is attributable to actions of the student or the situation) (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Svinicki, 2004). According to attribution theory, the strength of students' motivation is determined by whether the cause of their success or failure is perceived as stable, controllable, and their responsibility. These attributional dimensions are important in that they help to gauge the impact that an attribution may have on students' help-seeking behaviors (Martini & Page, 1996).

Evidence to this effect was demonstrated by Tessler and Schwartz (1972) whose study on help-seeking, self-esteem, and achievement motivation revealed that college students sought more help when they attributed their academic difficulties to external factors rather than to self. The authors interpreted these findings to mean that it is less

threatening to students' self-esteem and sense of competence when the cause of their difficulty can be attributed to an external factor rather than to their own lack of ability.

Notably, students' help-seeking behavior may also be affected by the attributions that others make of their academic difficulties. In a study of help-seeking in low literate adult learners, Martini and Page (1996) found that the belief among low literate adult learners that others made internal attributions (low ability) for their reading difficulties was correlated significantly with their fear of being negatively evaluated and their unwillingness to seek help ($r = 0.53, p = .05$).

Social Self-efficacy and Academic Help-seeking

With increasing attention being given to the role of students' thoughts and beliefs in the learning process, interest in self-efficacy has grown significantly. Self-efficacy is "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). According to Bandura, the expectations of personal competence (self-efficacy) and of success (outcome expectancy) determine whether a person will choose to carry out a specific action. In essence, persons will be motivated to engage in behaviors that they believe will produce the outcomes they desire.

Self-efficacy is a component of social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory asserts that individuals are capable of self-reflection and that their thoughts and beliefs mediate between their knowledge and their actions. Individuals' interpretations of their actions have the reciprocal effect of altering their environment and their thoughts and beliefs, which in turn inform and alter any subsequent actions (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996). Self-efficacy beliefs are powerful forces in directing human behavior by virtue of

their impact on cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional processes (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 2012; Pajares, 1996; Pajares, 2003).

The explanatory power that self-efficacy beliefs hold for understanding human behavior has generated considerable interest in its role in academic achievement and motivation. Pajares (2003) noted:

This focus on students' [efficacy] self-beliefs as a principal component of academic motivation is grounded on the assumption that the beliefs that students create, develop, and hold to be true about themselves are vital forces in their success or failure in school. Judgments of personal efficacy affect what students do by influencing the choices they make, the effort they expend, the persistence and perseverance they exert when obstacles arise, and the thought patterns and emotional reactions they experience. (p. 140)

Researchers have shown that even at varying grade levels and abilities, self-efficacy has both direct and indirect effects on students' achievement (Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004; Pajares, 1996). Other studies have revealed that self-efficacy is positively related to grade point average (GPA) and persistence rates (Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984; Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2011). Self-efficacy is strengthened when students set proximal rather than distal academic goals (Bandura & Schunk, 1981), and self-efficacy beliefs contribute to academic success (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

Self-efficacy has been shown to exert its effect on academic motivation and achievement by affecting students' task interest and persistence, the goals they set, the choices they make, and their use of self-regulatory learning strategies (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). For instance, Pintrich (1999) reported a positive relationship between self-efficacy and self-regulated learning. Students who were assessed with higher levels of self-efficacy also reported using a variety of self-regulatory learning strategies.

Help-seeking is a self-regulatory learning strategy (Zimmerman, 1989). Self-efficacy has been shown to influence students' willingness to seek help. Students with low academic self-efficacy are more likely to avoid seeking help out of a concern that others will perceive them as lacking ability, displaying what is referred to as avoidant help-seeking. Conversely, students with high self-efficacy engage in adaptive help-seeking; they appear unperturbed by the appraisals of others and readily seek help when needed (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Ryan & Shin, 2011).

Help-seeking is a social process as well as a self-regulatory learning strategy (Nelson-LeGall, 1981; Newman, 1998a; Ryan, Pintrich, & Midgley, 2001). As a process that requires the helpee to seek out a person who can provide the help desired, the helpee must have the social skills that will afford the helper a level of confidence in the ability to initiate the interaction. One aspect of effective social skills is social self-efficacy (Iskender & Akin, 2010). Social self-efficacy is defined as "confidence in one's ability to engage in the social interactional tasks necessary to initiate and maintain interpersonal relationships in social life and career activities" (Anderson & Betz, 2001, p. 98). Social self-efficacy has been shown to be related to college student adjustment (Solberg, O'Brian, Villareal, Kennel, & Davis, 1993) and higher levels of global self-esteem (Smith & Betz, 2002), but negatively correlated with interpersonal stress and coping (Matsushima & Shiomi, 2003), learned resourcefulness (Erozkan & Deniz, 2012) and problem-solving (Bilgin, & Akkapulu, 2007).

The decision to seek help must be followed by the decision to act. For persons who lack the social skills and confidence to initiate and sustain a social interaction, the thought of asking for help presents as a likely deterrent. Even though there is agreement

that help-seeking is a social process, no studies have examined the influence of social self-efficacy on help-seeking behaviors. One would expect that low social self-efficacy would be associated with help-avoidant patterns of behavior. Although no studies could be found that specifically examined social self-efficacy and help-seeking, studies examining shyness, a related construct were found.

Shyness was found to be associated with avoidance of help-seeking in a sample of undergraduate students (Horsch, 2006). When given complex problems to solve, shy students took longer to ask for help when compared with not-shy students. DePaulo, Dull, Greenberg, and Swain (1989) did not detect a significant difference between shy and not-shy students in the frequency in which they sought help, but did find that shy students asked for help less frequently when the helper was of the opposite sex. Without the social skills and confidence to act on the decision to seek help, help-seeking will be delayed at best, or perhaps, avoided all together.

Learning Environments and Academic Help-seeking

According to social cognitive theory (SCT), environmental factors also exert their influence on behavior. Behavioral, personal, and environmental factors act upon one another to influence students' academic behavior through a process of reciprocal interaction. In higher education, the role of the learning environment on student achievement has generated increasing interest as issues of student retention and persistence gain prominence. As a leading researcher in the field of learning environment and the editor of the inaugural edition of the journal, *Learning Environment Research*, Fraser (1998) conceptualized learning environment as “the social, psychological, and

pedagogical contexts in which learning occurs and which affect student achievement and attitudes” (p. 3).

As research in this field has broadened, so has the array of theoretical constructs used to investigate learning environment and its influence on students’ academic persistence and success. For instance, students’ integration into the academic and social culture of their undergraduate institutions was cited by Tinto in 1975 as a major factor in fostering institutional commitment and explaining voluntary departure of students from institutions. Tinto’s model of student departure explained attrition in college freshman as their failure to adjust to college life and their inability to form new relationships during this transitional period. Astin (1999) looked to the construct of student involvement to advance his hypothesis that the more involved that students were in the life of their academic institutions, the more successful they will be in college; others proposed the sense of belonging construct as a factor in students’ academic success (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2002-2003).

The sense of belonging construct is perceived by some researchers as presenting a more balanced view of where the responsibility lies for student success. Johnson et al. (2007) noted:

Rather than expecting students to bear sole responsibility for success through their integration into existing institutional structures, sense of belonging illustrates the interplay between [the] individual and the institution. Students’ success is in part predicated upon the extent to which they feel welcomed by institutional environments and climates. (p. 526)

Hoffman and colleagues (2002-2003) developed an instrument to measure sense of belonging, which they defined conceptually as an aspect of interpersonal relatedness characterized by perceptions of valued involvement and social support. In an empirical

test of the Sense of Belonging (SOB) instrument, they compared the responses of students enrolled in a freshman seminar organized in a learning community format with responses of students enrolled in a traditional seminar format. Because learning communities are designed to foster feelings of affiliation, mutual respect, and involvement, Hoffman and colleagues expected the learning community freshman seminar to score higher on sense of belonging. Their expectations were confirmed when students in the learning community scored higher on all SOB factors: perceived peer support, perceived faculty support/comfort, perceived classroom comfort, and empathic faculty understanding.

Researchers investigating the learning environment as perceived by racial and ethnic minority students have examined their perspectives through the constructs of acculturation and cultural congruity. Acculturation is the process of adapting to and becoming absorbed into the dominant social culture (Spector, 2009); cultural congruity is the extent of value similarity between the learning environment and the learner (Gloria, Hird, & Navarro, 2001). Gloria and colleagues examined the influence of cultural congruity and the university environment on undergraduate students' help-seeking attitudes. Students' help-seeking attitudes were found to be influenced by their perceptions of cultural congruity and the university environment, although the relationship between these variables and help-seeking attitudes was much stronger for racial and ethnic minority students than for White students, and much stronger for female than for male students (Gloria, et al.).

Even as each construct proposes to tap a different aspect of the learning environment, there is ample support in the literature regarding the positive impact that

academic and social integration (Beil, Reisen, Zea, & Caplan, 1999; Halawah, 2006; Wortman & Napoli, 1996), involvement (Grayson, 1997; Hoffman, et al., 2002-2003), and sense of belonging (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Meeuwisse, Severiens, & Born, 2010) have on academic success.

Because students experience multiple environments concurrently during the course of their academic lives, influences may intrude from one or more of these environments and impact students' academic outcomes. However, it is the learning environment of the classroom that is central to students' academic success. Tinto and Pusser (2006) asserted that:

- 1 “... the classroom is often the only place where they [students] meet other students and engage with the faculty and peers in learning. If [academic and social] involvement does not occur in these smaller places of engagement, it is unlikely that it will easily occur elsewhere” (p. 8).

The extent to which students are academically and socially involved in the classroom depends on the social climate of the classroom which reflects the quality and quantity of the interactions between faculty and students and among students and their peers (Allodi, 2010; Morris, Lee, & Barnes, 2009). Because help-seeking requires social interaction, it is reasonable to expect that the social climate of the learning environment will influence students' willingness to seek help. When classrooms are organized in ways that students feel valued, supported, and included, they feel more comfortable in relating to peers and instructors and less likely to feel threatened by asking for help (Ryan & Pintrich, 1998).

Nursing Students and Academic Help-seeking

Few researchers have investigated nursing students' willingness to seek academic help. However, several studies have explored nursing students' decisions to seek help for

psychological problems (Cankaya & Duman, 2010; Halter, 2004; Hener, Weller, & Shor, 1997). Notably, interest in academic help-seeking theories, behavior, and strategies is increasing as concerns mount regarding student retention and academic performance in nursing programs (Lee, 2006).

In an effort to create a more coherent framework for understanding how factors interact to influence academic performance, Ofori and Charlton (2002) developed and tested a theoretical model based on their premise that age and admission qualifications influence students' academic motivation which in turn affects their willingness to seek help, thereby, affecting academic performance. A correlational design, using path analysis was used to test the model. Three hundred-fifteen nursing students were surveyed using a tool designed to measure academic motivation (locus of control, academic worries, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations). Support seeking was measured by the number of times students sought one-to-one support. Students' performance was assessed by course grade (Ofori & Charlton, 2002). The authors found that both students' entry qualifications and support-seeking had a direct effect on academic performance; however, support-seeking had the greater effect. The findings were similar to earlier findings reported by Pintrich (1999) that more successful students access the help they need to achieve their academic goals, a characteristic feature of a self-regulated learner. When compared with younger students, older students had lower program admission qualifications, more modest self-efficacy beliefs, stronger intrinsic control, and sought more support (Ofori & Charlton, 2002).

The testing of Ofori and Charlton's theoretical model provided the basis for Ofori's subsequent work. In 2006, Ofori developed an instrument to measure students'

motivation or willingness to seek support. The Motives for Tutorial Support-Seeking Questionnaire (MTSSQ) is a 20 item self-report instrument comprised of three subscales based on the motivational constructs of expectancy for success, internal locus of control, and academic worry. The MTSSQ has undergone both reliability and predictive validity testing. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire tool was .95 and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the three subscales ranged from .79 to .94. Predictive validity was established by comparing the scores on the MTSSQ with actual reports of support-seeking behavior. Ofori anticipated that the MTSSQ would be used as both a risk assessment tool for the early identification of students who may be reluctant to seek help and as a research tool, using its subscales.

A study was conducted by Stewart, Mort, and McVeigh (2001) at an Australian university to identify factors that influence first-year nursing students' decisions to follow-up on instructors' referrals to seek support. Of those students referred for support who did not follow-up, almost one-third (32%) gave no reason, while 29% indicated that they did not have time, and 28% spoke of conflicting times and family commitments. The use of academic support use was, however, associated with positive academic outcomes. Younger students (≤ 25 years of age) were more likely to avoid seeking help or following-up on referrals. Older students were more likely to follow-up on faculty referrals or self-refer when help was needed.

Howard-York (2006) conducted a predictive study to determine whether self-efficacy, goal orientations, and attributions were predictive of help-seeking behavior in a population of associate degree nursing students. Self-efficacy was found to be positively correlated with attributions of effort and ability and with more adaptive help-seeking

behaviors and negatively correlated with avoidance and expedient help seeking behaviors.

Hegge, Melcher, and Williams (1999) described the relationship between baccalaureate nursing students' hardiness, help-seeking behavior, and social support. Help-seeking was measured by self-report of the extent to which they sought help with life circumstances and with academic work. Help-seeking behavior was not significantly related to academic performance, a finding that is not supported by the majority of the literature. Hegge and her colleagues described the findings as inconclusive, suggesting instead that the quality of the instrument used to measure help-seeking may have been a factor.

Academic Self-regulation

Academic self-regulation has been identified as a major factor in nursing students' success (Tutor, 2006). Self-regulated learners know what they know and what they do not know and regulate their thoughts, motivations, and behaviors to achieve their academic goals (Zimmerman, 1989). When students enter nursing programs sufficiently lacking in academic self-regulation, they are unprepared to assume greater ownership of and responsibility for their learning. To successfully adapt to the pace and rigor of baccalaureate nursing programs, students must be prepared to use self-regulatory learning strategies to help them to integrate and apply nursing knowledge (Mullen, 2006).

In a study of self-regulatory learning (SRL) strategies used in second and third trimester accelerated second-degree nursing students, Mullen (2006) found that both groups of students used both cognitive strategies (rehearsal, elaboration, organization, critical thinking, and metacognitive self-regulation) and resource management strategies

(help-seeking, effort regulation, and peer learning). The third trimester group, which included the more experienced (older) students, used more self-regulatory learning strategies than did younger students. Older students in both the second and third trimester studied more, used more time and environmental strategies, and had higher grade point averages (GPAs) than younger students.

In a comparative study of learning strategies used by first year nursing and medical students, Salamonson, Everett, Koch, Wilson, and Davidson (2009) found that nursing students were more extrinsically motivated and were less likely to use help-seeking ($p = .008$), as well as three other self-regulated learning strategies examined in the study: peer learning, critical thinking, and time and study environment management. The authors interpreted these findings as indicative of potential obstacles to successfully implementing interprofessional education involving the two disciplines.

Schutt (2009) investigated academic self-regulation differences between traditional baccalaureate nursing students and non-traditional students (registered nurse (RN) students returning for their baccalaureate degrees). Non-traditional students were found to be more intrinsically motivated to self-regulate (autonomous regulation) than were traditional students who were more extrinsically motivated (controlled regulation). Intrinsic motivation is associated with better learning outcomes (Alexander, 2006).

Social self-efficacy

The role of self-efficacy has been studied fairly extensively as it relates to clinical practice and outcomes, but less so relative to nursing students' academic achievement (McLaughlin, Moutray & Muldoon, 2007). The few published nursing studies have generally demonstrated that self-efficacy exerts a positive influence on academic

performance. For instance, self-efficacy has been shown to positively influence academic achievement in various domains, including math computations (Rainboth & DeMasi, 2006), science (Andrew, 1998), and clinical competency (Goldenberg, Iwasiw, & MacMaster, 1997).

McLaughlin and colleagues (2007) conducted a longitudinal study that examined the role of personality and self-efficacy in predicting retention among nursing students. While academic self-efficacy was not predictive of retention, occupational self-efficacy was. Students who were higher in occupational self-efficacy (confidence in one's ability to perform nursing duties) upon entry in the program also achieved higher grades at completion of the nursing program. Chako and Huba (1991) tested a causal learning model of academic achievement in which self-efficacy was found to have a positive and direct effect on academic achievement.

Peterson (2009) conducted a descriptive correlational study to examine whether self-efficacy and self-esteem were predictive of student success during the first semester of a baccalaureate nursing program. A convenience sample of 66 students completed the study. Contrary to most findings, neither self-efficacy nor self-esteem was significantly related to students' academic success as measured by participants' grade point average (GPA).

Learning Environments

Rowbotham (2010) assessed nurse educators' and baccalaureate nursing students' perceptions of their classroom climates to determine the relationship and differences between their perspectives. The study revealed that students of educators who measured high on 'teacher responsiveness' perceived the classroom environments as displaying

greater focus, organization, involvement, time on task, clarity of subject content, and support. Notably, support was defined as the amount of concern, encouragement, and help provided by the educator.

Students attest to the importance of the learning environment in their academic success. In the qualitative component of a longitudinal study on fostering student success (Gardner, Deloney & Grando, 2007), baccalaureate nursing students offered their suggestions on what faculty and students could do to facilitate students' academic success. Most of the suggestions for faculty focused on the learning climate, which included such strategies as supporting students, improving attitude and behavior, listening to students, standardizing tests, and making expectations known. Another theme gleaned from students' suggestions to faculty was the importance of having supplemental (faculty, peer, tutor) assistance available. The most noteworthy suggestion students made to themselves was to improve their study skills, which included the specific strategy to seek help from others.

Shelton (2003) developed and tested an instrument, the Perceived Faculty Support Scale, to assess students' perceptions of faculty support. Shelton developed the tool to examine an underlying premise of the Shelton Model of Retention which asserted that students' academic performance and persistence is the result of the interaction of their internal processes and external environmental supports. Shelton administered the tool to three groups of students who differed in their persistence pattern: continuously enrolled, voluntarily withdrawn, and withdrawn through failure. Her study revealed that the most significant difference occurred between the continuously enrolled group and the withdrawn through failure group. The continuously enrolled group reported greater levels

of perceived faculty support, suggesting that students with greater ability or self-efficacy may access support more readily, thereby, bolstering their likelihood of persistence (Shelton, 2003).

In a 2011 published study, Dapremont used semi-structured interviews to explore African-American nursing students' perceptions of support from peers, faculty, and family. Eighty-nine percent of the participants ($n = 16$) cited peer support as a valued resource. Faculty support and encouragement were cited by 79% of the participants ($n=14$) as being highly valued with some participants indicating how faculty members' words of encouragement helped to re-ignite their confidence during periods of stress. Conversely, some participants also indicated that non-supportive behaviors of faculty were at times a source of motivation by propelling them to work harder and prove faculty members inaccurate in their assessment of the students' competence.

Summary

A substantial body of literature exists regarding help-seeking behavior. Help-seeking has been explored from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (such as psychology, sociology, and education) and situational contexts (such as counseling, health care, and classrooms). When used appropriately, help-seeking can be an effective self-regulatory learning strategy to aid students in addressing academic challenges. Seeking help represents a strategy that learners use to control and regulate their learning and includes using academic support services, tutoring, peers, and others to achieve their academic goals. Yet, many students who need academic help do not seek the help they need. What may appear as a simple act is, in fact, more complex due to the influence of personal and environmental factors.

When students reach out to others for help, they are motivated to do so by a set of motivational beliefs that shape their reasons for setting specific goals and their desire to achieve them. Students' motivational beliefs are influenced by how they perceive themselves relative to personal factors known to influence academic achievement, such as social self-efficacy. Students' confidence in their ability to initiate social interactions may precipitate the motivational beliefs that influence students' willingness to seek academic help. Because students' academic lives are experienced in a social context, the learning environment, students' perception of their learning environment exerts an influence on their motivations and their willingness to seek academic help. When learning environments do not provide what students need to feel connected to and valued by those in their learning environment, their motivation to seek help will likely be tempered. Conversely, when students' feel a valued part of their environment, they will be more willing to reach out to others for help. The learning environment has the potential to exert a positive or negative influence on students' motivational beliefs, subsequently impacting their willingness to seek academic help.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Introduction

Chapter three describes the methods used to conduct the research on preclinical baccalaureate nursing students' willingness to seek academic help and the influence of social self-efficacy and learning environment on students' willingness to seek academic help. The research design, participants, participant protection, measurement, data collection, data analysis and summary are described in this chapter.

Research Design

A quantitative explanatory correlational design was used (Creswell, 2008) to assess preclinical baccalaureate nursing students' willingness to seek academic help and to examine the influence of social self-efficacy and the learning environment on their willingness to seek academic help. An explanatory correlational design was used to determine if a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables, and, if a relationship does exist, the extent to which changes in one variable produces changes in the other variable (Creswell, 2008). The study was designed to address the following research question:

What combination of social self-efficacy, learning environment, and demographic characteristics (i.e., of self-reported age, gender, ethnicity, status as first generation college student, self-reported number of academic credits, prior degree, geographical location, cumulative grade point average (GPA), primary language, and hours of paid work) best predicts willingness to seek academic help in preclinical baccalaureate nursing students?

In this study, participants completed three instruments, The Sense of Belonging Scale-Revised Scale (SBSR), the Perceived Social Self-Efficacy Scale (PSSE), and the Motives for Tutorial Support-Seeking Questionnaire (MTSSQ). The SBSR was used to measure learning environment, a predictor variable. Social self-efficacy, a predictor variable, was measured by the PSSE. Willingness to seek academic help, the criterion variable, was measured by the MTSSQ. Demographic variables measured were self-reported age, gender, ethnicity, status as first generation college student, prior degree, self-reported number of credits, geographical location, cumulative grade point average (GPA), English as primary language, and hours of paid work. The demographic variables were used to describe the participants and analyzed as predictor variables to determine their influence on participants' willingness to seek academic help.

Setting and Participants

The setting for the study was a School of Nursing located in a large public open access university in the northwest United States. The School of Nursing offers undergraduate programs at the associate degree level and at the baccalaureate level, as well as a baccalaureate degree completion program for registered nurses. The school also offers graduate education in nursing at the master's level. All of the programs are approved by the state Board of Nursing and accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission.

Participants for this study were recruited from the School of Nursing's database of preclinical nursing students enrolled in the baccalaureate nursing program for prelicensure students. A preclinical nursing student is one who is 18 years of age or older, has completed 18 or more prerequisite course credits for admission to the nursing major,

and who is not enrolled in an upper division clinical nursing course. The names of prelicensure baccalaureate nursing students who meet the aforementioned criteria are entered into the preclinical database. Only those students whose names appeared in the School of Nursing's preclinical database were eligible for inclusion in this study.

Sampling Method

Preclinical nursing students were the population of interest in this study. A census sample was used because every preclinical nursing student in the prelicensure baccalaureate program was invited to participate in the study. A census is "the complete enumeration of a population or a group at a point in time, with respect to well-defined characteristics" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2008, p. 69). The database of preclinical nursing students maintained at the study site, made it was logistically and economically feasible to survey every member of the population rather than sampling from the population.

The names of 347 nursing students, all of whom met the inclusion criteria, were contained in the preclinical database when the study was launched. Three hundred forty-seven preclinical nursing students were recruited to participate in the study, 130 of whom were enrolled in lower division prerequisite classes; the remaining 217 students had already completed the lower division prerequisite classes and had been assigned a projected date for entry into the clinical major but had not yet started clinical course work. Written permission to have access to the nursing database was received from the program director of the School of Nursing (Appendix A).

Participant Protection

This study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines for human subject protection. Approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the study site (Appendix B) and at the University of Northern Colorado (Appendix C) was sought. No names were placed on the surveys, assuring anonymity. The program assistant who manages the nursing database distributed and collected the surveys and was the only person to see the names and addresses of potential research participants. Students were recruited to participate using an invitation that was emailed to them by the program assistant. The researcher did not have access to the databases or to the names of potential research participants.

Participants were informed that completion of the survey was voluntary, that there were no risks or direct benefits of participation in this study, and that their participation was confidential. Participants were informed that participating or not participating in the study would not affect any aspect of their enrollment or progression in the nursing program, that they have a right to withdraw or stop participating at any time without penalty, and that they may also choose not to answer any question.

Participants were provided with a consent form (Appendix D) that informed them about the research and about their rights as a participant. There were no returned consent forms as return of the survey implied consent as explained on the consent form. Data were kept on password protected computer files in the researcher's office and will be secured and retained under these conditions for a period of five years. Data were reported in the aggregate in all reports or presentations.

Measurement

Willingness to Seek Academic Help. Willingness to seek academic help was measured by the Motives for Tutorial Support-Seeking Questionnaire (MTSSQ). The MTSSQ (Appendix E) was developed by Ofori (2006) to measure students' motives for seeking tutorial support. The MTSSQ consists of a 20 item, six-point Likert scale comprised of three subscales based on the motivational constructs of expectancy for success, academic internal locus of control, and academic worry. These three constructs that address achievement motivation were incorporated in the tool's development because they had empirical support relative to academic achievement and they were shown to have an influence on academic help-seeking in Ofori's previous study (2002) of factors affecting nursing students' academic performance. The MTSSQ was tested for internal consistency and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire tool was 0.95 with the three subscales' yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.79 to 0.94.

Predictive validity was established by comparing the scores on the MTSSQ with actual reports of support-seeking behavior. Nursing students' scores on the MTSSQ were highly predictive, accounting for 35% of the variance in support-seeking (Ofori, 2006). The composite score was used to measure willingness to seek academic help. Permission was granted by the author to use the MTSSQ in this study (Appendix F). For purposes of this study, to enhance clarity and achieve focus, revisions were made in the MTSSQ that involved substituting words 'assignments and exams' for the British term 'assessments' and adding the word 'nursing' to reference courses. The revisions appear in italics in the adapted version of the MTSSQ (See Appendix E).

Social Self-efficacy. Social self-efficacy was measured by the Perceived Social Self-Efficacy Scale (PSSE). The PSSE (Appendix G) is a 25 item instrument, employing a five point Likert scale response format that measures an individual's self-efficacy or confidence involving social behavior (Smith & Betz, 2000). Examples of items include "Work on a school, work, community or other project with people you don't know very well" and "Start a conversation with someone you don't know very well." Each item is scored with a value that ranges from 1 to 5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Scores were derived by summing the responses to each of the items; the result was an individual score that ranged from 25 to 125. Smith and Betz (2000) reported a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.94; construct validity was established by correlating the scale with the similar concepts shyness and social anxiety

Learning Environment. Learning environment was measured by the Sense of Belonging Scale – Revised (SBSR). The Sense of Belonging Scale - Revised (SBSR) was developed by Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, and Salomone (2002-2003) to measure students' sense of belonging (Appendix I). Sense of belonging was defined as the subjective sense of affiliation and identification with the university that was based on students' perceptions of fit and valued involvement (Hoffman, et al., 2002-2003). The Sense of Belonging Scale-Revised is a 26 item using a five point Likert scale response set. It is comprised of four subscales: Perceived Peer Support (8 items), Perceived Classroom Comfort (4 items), Perceived Isolation (4 items), and Perceived Faculty Support (10 items). In the initial version, the SBSR consisted of five subscales; Perceived Faculty Support was originally two factors.

Examples of the items comprising the SBSR include “I have met with classmates outside of class to study for an exam” and “I feel comfortable asking a teacher for help if I do not understand course-related material.” Scores were obtained by summing the responses from 1 (i.e., completely untrue) to 5 (i.e., completely true) with possible scores ranging from 26 to 130. Internal reliability for the entire scale was a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.91 with Cronbach’s alpha ranging from 0.77 to 0.90 for the four subscales (Hoffman, et al., 2002-2003). The composite score was used to measure learning environments. Permission was granted by the author to use the SBSR in this study (Appendix J).

Power Analysis

To determine the minimal number of participants needed for this study, an a priori power analysis was computed using G*Power 3.1 software package (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2009). Assuming a two-tailed test with a power of 0.80, a medium size effect, an alpha of 0.05 and 12 predictor variables, a minimum of 123 completed participant surveys was needed. One hundred-twenty three (123) surveys were returned but two were discarded because none of the survey measures was completed.

Data Collection

After permission was received from the director of the School of Nursing at the study site (Appendix A) and institutional review board approvals were received from the University of Northern Colorado (Appendix B), and from the study site (Appendix C), data collection began.

Qualtrics, a web-based data collection software program, was used to distribute the questionnaires to the 347 prospective participants who constituted the entire population of preclinical students. The program assistant who manages the preclinical

nursing student database at the study site was responsible for emailing recruitment letters, consent forms, surveys, and subsequent email reminders to 347 nursing students, all of whom met the inclusion criteria. Before the researcher began data collection, the researcher reviewed the role and the study procedures with the program assistant and reminded her of confidentiality related to a research study.

Initially, each prospective participant was emailed the recruitment letter containing the URL which directed them to the consent form and the survey where participants responses were captured using Qualtrics, an electronic data-gathering software program. As a recruitment incentive to participate in the study, participants who completed the survey had the option to register to win one of four \$50.00 gift certificates to the university's bookstore. Participants' identities were linked to their responses as two separate surveys were constructed: one containing the survey questions and the other the optional lottery entry which only contained a text field question for participants to enter their name and contact information for the optional incentive drawing. When participants completed the survey and clicked 'submit', they were provided with a link to the second survey where participants could optionally register for the lottery by leaving their name and email address. Survey responses were accessible only to the researcher and the optional lottery entry that was created for purposes of the lottery was accessible only to the program assistant.

Ten days following the initial email distribution of the surveys, the program assistant sent a follow-up email reminder to all prospective participants thanking those who had already participated in the study and asking those who had not yet responded to consider participating. The researcher did not have access to the participants' names and

their names were in no way connected to the survey responses as they were in a completely separate survey.

For the optional lottery entry, the program assistant exported the names of the participants and their email address to an Excel spreadsheet. An online random number generator was used to generate the four random numbers based on the range of participants. The participant names associated with the numbers on the list that corresponded to the four randomly generated numbers were identified as the four lottery winners. The program assistant forwarded the names of the four winners to the researcher who then contacted each winner by email.

At the completion of the data collection, 123 questionnaires had been returned. Two were discarded because no aspects of the questionnaires were completed. One hundred twenty-one questionnaires were thus available for analysis, yielding a response rate of 34.87%.

Data Analysis

The survey data collected in Qualtrics were exported to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a commercial statistical analysis software program. SPSS was used to manage the descriptive and multivariate data analysis. Data analysis proceeded in a systematic approach consisting of phase one, data cleaning; phase two, data description; and phase three, data analysis.

Phase one consisted of data inspection which is designed to assess for possible areas of concern, such as missing data, errors, and outliers. In phase two, each variable was described in terms of its distribution, dispersion, relevant measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode), and Cronbach's alpha for each of the scales used in this

study. The participants were also described during this phase of analysis. Phase three data analysis was directed by the research question. Multiple-regression was used to derive a response to the research question.

Summary

All preclinical nursing students enrolled at a public state nursing school in a baccalaureate program who met the inclusion criteria were recruited to participate in a correlational study investigating students' social self-efficacy, learning environment, and willingness to seek academic help. The census method of data collection was chosen because the population of interest in this study was a finite population that is specific to the setting where the study was conducted, where participants were recruited, and where findings were applied. Data were gathered through online surveys. Data calculations were analyzed using SPSS, a commercial statistical analysis software program.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe the influence of social self-efficacy and learning environment on preclinical nursing students' willingness to seek academic help. The over-arching goal was to determine what combination of social self-efficacy, learning environment, and demographic variables would best predict those students more willing to avail themselves of academic help.

Research Question

An explanatory correlational design (Creswell, 2008) guided the planning and execution of this study. The predictor variables, social self-efficacy and learning environment, were measured by the Perceived Social Self-Efficacy Scale (PSSE) and the Sense of Belonging Scale-Revised (SBSR) respectively; the criterion variable, willingness to seek academic help, was measured by the Motives for Tutorial Support-Seeking Questionnaire (MTSSQ). The demographic characteristics which consisted of self-reported age, gender, ethnicity, status as first generation college student, number of academic credit hours, prior degree, geographical location, cumulative grade point average (GPA), primary language, and hours of paid work, comprised the demographic variables and addition predictor variables; they were measured using the Questionnaire Form that was developed by the researcher.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to determine the answer to the following research question:

What combination of, social self-efficacy, learning environment, and demographic characteristics (self-reported age, gender, ethnicity, status as first generation college student, number of academic credit hours, prior degree, geographical location, cumulative grade point average (GPA), primary language, and hours of paid work), English as primary language, and hours of paid work) best predicts willingness to seek academic help in preclinical baccalaureate nursing students?

Implicit in the research question were the three following sub-questions that were used to structure the data analysis:

1. What is the level of willingness to seek academic help reported by preclinical baccalaureate nursing students?
2. What amount of variance do the three sets of predictor variables of demographic characteristics, social self-efficacy, and learning environment contribute separately to the criterion variable, willingness to seek academic help?
3. What amount of variance do the three sets of predictor variables of demographic characteristics, social self-efficacy, and learning environment contribute together to the criterion variable, willingness to seek academic help?

The results of the analyses discussed in this chapter are organized in three sections:

Descriptive Analysis, Prediction of Willingness to Seek Academic Help, and Additional Analysis.

Descriptive Analysis

The Descriptive Analysis section describes the characteristics of the participants and the measures used to examine the degree of influence that social self-efficacy, learning environment, and demographic variables exerted upon participants' willingness to seek academic help.

Description of the Participants.

Of the 347 possible participants, 123 preclinical nursing students participated in the study with 121 of these surveys completed and analyzed. As illustrated in Table 1, over ninety percent of the participants were women (n=109) whereas only 9.9% (n = 12) were men. The participants ranged in age from 19 to 58 years with a mean age of 30.69 years and a median age of 28 years (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Variables' Frequencies and Percentages: Gender and Age

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender				
Male	12	9.9	9.9	9.9
Female	109	90.1	90.1	100.0
Total	121	100.0	100.0	
Age				
18 - 22	29	24.0	25.2	25.2
23 - 28	33	27.3	28.7	53.9
29 - 37	27	22.3	23.5	77.4
38+	26	21.5	22.6	100.0
Total	115	95.0	100.0	
Missing	6	5.0		
Total	121	100.0		

The ethnic/racial composition of the participants was diverse with seven ethnic/racial groups represented. Only two groups, White/European-Americans and Asian

Americans had numbers of participants that exceeded ten percent, with 62.8% and 10.7% respectively. Among the remaining ethnic/racial groups, the percentage of participants ranged from a 1.7% up to 5.8% (see Table 2).

Table 2

Demographic Variables' Frequencies and Percentages: Ethnic/Racial Groups

Ethnic/Racial Groups	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Asian American	13	10.7	10.8	10.8
Black/African American	2	1.7	1.7	12.5
White/European American	76	62.8	63.3	75.8
Bi/Multi-Racial	4	3.3	3.3	79.2
Latino/Hispanic	7	5.8	5.8	85.0
Alaska Native/American Indian	7	5.8	5.8	90.8
Filipino	6	5.0	5.0	95.8
Other	5	4.1	4.2	100.0
Total	120	99.2	100.0	
Missing	1	0.8		
Total	121	100.0		

When compared to the students enrolled at the study site from which the participants were recruited, participants were not that dissimilar in terms of percentage of males and ethnic minority students enrolled. Males comprise approximately 13% of the students enrolled at the study site and ethnic minority students make up approximately 31%. These percentages have remained constant from 2009 to the present.

In Table 3, the remaining categorical demographic variables are described in terms of their frequencies and percentages. Participants were asked to indicate whether either of their parents graduated from a 4-year college, a measure used to identify whether a participant was a first generational college student. Among those participants, almost half (n=58) had parents who had not completed a four year degree and, as such, could be described as first generational college students.

Forty-three percent of the participants (n=52) had completed an associate or higher academic degree. Almost 20% held a baccalaureate or higher academic degree. Participants were almost equally divided in describing their upbringing as urban (52.9%) or rural (47.1%). Most participants (89.1%) identified English as their primary language (see Table 3).

Table 3

Demographic Variables Frequencies and Percentages: English Primary Language, Geographical Location, First Generation, and Prior Academic Degree

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Primary Language				
Yes	108	89.3	89.3	89.3
No	13	10.7	10.7	
Total	121	100.0	100.0	
Geographical Location				
Rural	57	47.1	47.1	47.1
Urban	64	52.9	52.9	100.0
Total	121	100.0	100.0	

Table 3, continued

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
First Generation				
Yes	58	47.9	48.7	48.7
No	61	50.4	51.3	100.0
Total	119	98.3	100.0	
Missing	2	1.7		
Total	121			
Prior Degree				
2-year Degree	28	23.1	23.1	80.2
4-year Degree or more	24	19.9	19.9	100.0
No degree	69	57	57	
Total	121	100.0	100.0	

Participants also reported their current grade point average, average number of hours worked per week, and number of completed academic credit hours. The summary statistics from these data analyses are displayed in Table 4. The demographic variable, completed academic credit hours, does not appear in Table 4. Twenty percent of the participants did not answer the question that assessed this variable or they responded to the question with the written statement, “I don’t know.” Because 80% of the data were missing, the decision was made to omit this demographic variable from the analysis.

The mean self-reported grade point average (GPA) was 3.43 with a standard deviation of .31 suggests a fairly homogeneous group of participants in terms of their earned grades with few GPAs below 3.0. There was greater variability in the responses to

number of paid hours worked per week, ranging from no hours worked per week up to 60 hours worked per week. The average number of hours worked was 18 hours per week.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Grade Point Average and Hours Worked

Demographic Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Grade Point Average	117	3.43	.31	2.5 – 4.0
Hours Worked	116	18.06	16.16	0 – 60

Description of the Measures

This section describes the descriptive analyses of each of the major variables investigated in this study: social self-efficacy, learning environment, and willingness to seek academic help. The main variables in this study were measured using the scores derived from three scales: the Perceived Social Self-Efficacy Scale (PSSE), the Sense of Belonging Scale – Revised (SBSR), and the Motives for Tutorial Support-Seeking Questionnaire (MTSSQ). Both the SBSR and the MTSSQ are multi-dimensional, consisting of subscales. Scores on the PSSE, SBSR, and the MTSSQ were derived by summing all the items in the subscales that comprised each scale. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze participants' responses on PSSE, SBSR, MTSSQ, and the subscales on the SBSR and MTSSQ.

Perceived Social Self-Efficacy Scale (PSSE). The Perceived Social Self-Efficacy scale measured the variable of social self-efficacy, a major predictor variable investigated in this study. To determine the degree of social self-efficacy evident among the participants, descriptive analyses were done on the 20 items that comprise the

Perceived Social Self-Efficacy Scale (PSSE). Table 5 presents the results of these descriptive analyses. The scores ranged from 36 to 125 out of a possible range of 25 – 125 and were slightly skewed towards the right (-.11). This skewed pattern suggests that the scores cluster towards the upper range which reveals that, in general, participants had a fairly high degree of social self-efficacy ($M = 88.74$, $SD = 19.35$).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Social Self-Efficacy Scale

Measure	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Range	Possible Scale Range
Social Self-Efficacy Scale (PSSE)	118	88.75	19.35	-.11	36 - 125	25 - 125

Sense of Belonging Scale-Revised (SBSR). The Sense of Belonging Scale-Revised (SBSR) was used to measure learning environment, one of the main predictor variable investigated in this study. The SBSR is comprised of four subscales: perceived peer support subscale, perceived classroom comfort subscale, perceived isolation subscale, and perceived faculty support subscale. The sum of the subscale scores comprises a participant's composite score on the SBSR. The possible range for the scores on the SBSR is 26 to 130. To determine the level of support that participants perceived in their learning environments, descriptive analyses were done on the composite score on the Sense of Belonging Scale (SBSR). These statistics and subscale statistics are displayed in Table 6.

The descriptive statistics revealed that the scores were minimally skewed (-.08) which suggest that scores were normally distributed among participants ($M = 95.49$, $SD = 17.00$). The distribution of scores presents a somewhat similar pattern as that seen in

participants' scores on the Perceived Social Self-Efficacy scale (PSSE), that is, in the upper range and a fairly high degree of sense of belonging. The descriptive statistics for the subscales revealed a pattern indicating that participants generally perceive their classroom environment as comforting, their peers and faculty as supportive, and themselves as not feeling isolated.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Sense of Belonging Scale – Revised Scale and Subscales

Measures	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Range	Possible Scale Range
Sense of Belonging Scale – Revised (SBSR)	112	95.49	17.00	-.08	50 - 130	26 - 130
Classroom Comfort Subscale	119	14.94	4.34	-.72	4 - 20	4 - 20
Peer Support Subscale	117	31.20	7.09	-.66	10 - 40	8 - 40
Isolation Subscale	119	14.54	3.76	.23	6 - 20	4 - 20
Faculty Support Subscale	117	34.54	7.90	-.23	13 - 50	10 - 50

Willingness to Seek Academic Help. The Motives for Tutorial Support-Seeking Questionnaire (MTSSQ) measured the criterion variable, willingness to seek academic help. Three subscales comprise the MTSSQ: expectancy for success subscale, locus of control subscale, and academic worry subscale. Each subscale is designed to capture a distinct motivational orientation. The descriptive analyses of the MTSSQ and its subscales with the possible range of scores from 20 to 120 are displayed in Table 7. The descriptive statistics on the MTSSQ indicate scores that on the average were moderately high ($M = 74.25$, $SD = 10.09$) and evenly distributed among the participants

(skewness = -.19). The scores on the subscales revealed a pattern among participants that would be described as generally expecting to be successful, having a high degree of internality (locus of control), and only moderately worrying about their academic ability.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Motivation to Seek Academic Help Scale and Subscales

Measures	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Range	Possible Scale Range
Motivation to Seek Help Scale (MTSSQ)	112	74.25	10.09	-.19	53.95	20 - 120
Expectancy for Success Subscale	119	30.10	5.50	-.43	10 - 42	7 - 42
Locus of Control Subscale	117	30.54	4.54	-1.57	11 - 36	6 - 36
Academic Worry Subscale	116	24.71	7.12	-.44	9 - 40	7 - 42

As noted, the PSSE, SBSR, and the MTSSQ scores revealed a similar skewness pattern, each displaying a negative, but very low skew statistic. This pattern suggests that the scores are slightly skewed towards the upper end of the range of scores. The skewed pattern further suggests that the scores on each scale are normally distributed among the participants. However, skewness patterns are a crude assessment of normality since extreme scores may affect the value. A visual inspection of the histograms and boxplots was conducted to check for extreme values on the PSSE, SBSR and the MTSSQ. The tails of the histograms were well aligned with no perceptible breaks in data points which generally indicate scores that are well aligned. The boxplots revealed no outliers.

To validate whether the scores on the Perceived Social Self-Efficacy scale (PSSE), the Sense of Belonging scale – Revised (SBSR), and the Motives for Tutorial Support-Seeking Questionnaire (MTSSQ) were normally distributed, the Kolmogorov-Smirnova test of normality was computed; the results appear in Table 8. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic for each scale was not statistically significant ($p > .05$) which indicated that the scores on the MTSSQ, SBSR, and PSSE were normally distributed (Pallant, 2010) among participants in this study.

Table 8

Test of Normality for Study Measures

Measures	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Social Self-Efficacy Scale (PSSE)	.05	112	.20*
Sense of Belonging Scale-Revised (SBSR)	.05	112	.20*
Motivation to Seek Help Scale (MTSSQ)	.05	112	.20*

Note. *This is a lower bound of the true significance.

To assess the reliability of the three scales used in this study, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient, an internal consistency measure, was computed for each scale and subscale, as shown in Table 9. The Perceived Social Self-Efficacy Scale (PSSE) produced a Cronbach's alpha of .96 which is in the range of the reported value that appears in the literature ($\alpha = .91$). With these participants, the Sense of Belonging Scale (SBSR) yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .92, which is also close to the .94 that Hoffman, et al. (2002-2003) reported in their initial studies. The Motives for Tutorial Support-Seeking Questionnaire (MTSSQ) generated a Cronbach's alpha of .73 which was significantly lower than the .95 reported in the previous studies that have used this scale (Ofori, 2006). Even though the

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the MTSSQ was noticeably lower than what was expected, Cronbach's alpha coefficients at 0.70 and above are acceptable indicators of internal consistency reliability (Cohen, Manio, & Morrison, 2007).

Table 9

Reliability Estimates: Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) Coefficients for Study Measures

Scales	<i>N</i>	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	Number of Items
Social Self-Efficacy Scale (PSSE)	118	.96	25
Sense of Belonging Scale (SBSR)	112	.92	26
Classroom Comfort Subscale	119	.94	4
Peer Support Subscale	117	.89	8
Isolation Subscale	119	.83	4
Faculty Support Subscale	117	.89	10
Motivation to Seek Help Academic Help Scale (MTSSQ)	105	.73	20
Expectancy for Success Subscale	119	.81	7
Locus of Control Subscale	117	.82	6
Academic Worry Subscale	116	.78	7

Prediction of Willingness to Seek Academic Help

This section presents the results of the quantitative analysis carried out to answer the research question posed in this study. The research question seeks to identify the set of variables that offers the best prediction of willingness to seek academic help. With a question of this nature, multiple regression was the appropriate statistical procedure to

use. The results of these analyses are presented in two phases: phase one consisted of reviewing correlational matrices to check for bivariate relationships and multicollinearity among variables and phase two focused on interpreting the multiple regression findings.

Phase One

In phase one, the first set of analyses consisted of reviewing the separate correlation coefficients to determine the degree to which the main predictor variables, social self-efficacy, as measured by the Perceived Social Self-Efficacy scale (PSSE) and learning environment, as measured by the Sense of Belonging scale - Revised (SBSR), correlated with each other and with the criterion variable, willingness to seek academic help, as measured by the Motives for Support Seeking Questionnaire (MTSSQ). A two-tailed Pearson correlation analysis was conducted and the results are displayed in Table 10. The analysis revealed statistically significant negative, but weak, correlation between social self-efficacy and willingness to seek academic help, ($r = -.19, p = .05$). These unexpected findings indicate that as social self-efficacy increases, willingness to seek academic help decreases.

A similarly weak, but negative significant relationship was revealed between learning environment and willingness to seek academic help which suggests that positive perceptions of the learning environment are associated with less willingness to seek academic help ($r = -.27, p = .03$). In addition, social self-efficacy and learning environment, both predictor variables, shared a very strong positive relationship ($r = .62, p = .001$) which indicates that lower levels of social self-efficacy are associated with negative perceptions of the learning environment.

With all three bivariate correlations of social self-efficacy, learning environment, and willingness to seek academic help presenting as statistically significant, a partial correlation was then computed. Because of the strong correlation between social self-efficacy and learning environment ($r = .62, p = .001$), it is important to know the degree to which the shared influence of social self-efficacy and learning environment contributes to the statistically significant relationship between learning environment and motivation to seek academic help.

Table 10

Correlation: Social Self-efficacy, Learning Environment, and Willingness to Seek Academic Help

		Social Self-Efficacy	Learning Environments	Willingness to Seek Academic Help
Social Self-Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.62**	-.20*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.04
	N	118	111	110
Learning Environments	Pearson Correlation	.62**	1	-.32
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.00		.00
	N	111	112	106
Willingness to Seek Academic Help	Pearson Correlation	-.19*	-.32**	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.04	.00	
	N	110	106	112

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

A partial correlation was used to examine the relationship between learning environment and motivation to seek academic help while controlling for social

self-efficacy. Table 11 displays the results of the partial correlation analysis. As depicted in Table 11, the partial correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant small zero-order (Pearson) correlation ($r = -.32, p = .001$) between learning environment and willingness to seek academic help with high levels of learning environment associated with lower levels of willingness to seek academic help.

After the effects of social self-efficacy were removed, an inspection of the zero-order correlation ($r = -.25, p = .01$) indicated that controlling for social self-efficacy had the effect of reducing the strength of the relationship between the learning environment and willingness to seek academic help. This suggests that the relationship between willingness to seek academic help and learning environment is partially due to the influence of social self-efficacy.

According to the conceptual model and the literature reviewed, various demographic factors were theorized to influence academic help-seeking. The demographic factors included gender, first generation status, geographical location, prior education, ethnicity/race, primary language, age, cumulative grade point average, and paid work. Before analyzing the data, the variables ethnicity/race and prior education were collapsed. Ethnicity/race was collapsed from nine categories into two categories, White and non-White; prior education was collapsed from three categories into two categories, college degree and no college degree. Ethnicity/race was collapsed because several of the variable categories held very few participants which would have limited the choice of statistical analyses. Prior education was collapsed into two categories because of the 69 participants who reported not having a college degree, 87% (60) reported having some college; only 9 participants reported high school as highest degree earned.

Table 11

Partial Correlations: Social Self-Efficacy, Learning Environment, and Willingness to Seek Academic Help

Control Variables			Willingness to Seek Academic Help	Learning Environment	Social Self- Efficacy
-none-	Willingness to Seek Academic Help	Correlation	1.000	-.32	-.20
		Sig (2-tailed)		.001	.04
		df	0	104	108
	Learning Environment	Correlation	-.32	1.000	.62
		Sig (2-tailed)	.001		.000
		df	104	0	109
	Social Self- Efficacy Scale	Correlation	-.20	.62	1.000
		Sig (2-tailed)	.038	.000	
		df	108	109	0
Social Self- Efficacy	Willingness to Seek Academic Help	Correlation	1.000	-.25	
		Sig (2-tailed)		.009	
		df	0	103	
	Learning Environment	Correlation	-.25	1.000	
		Sig (2-tailed)	.01		
		df	103	0	

Chi-square tests for independence were conducted to examine the relationship between the categorical demographic variables, which included gender, first generation status, geographical location, prior education, ethnicity/race, and primary language. The chi-square tests for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) revealed that there were statistically significant relationships between first generation status and geographic location, $X^2(1, n = 119) p = .004, \phi = -.26$ and between first generation status and ethnicity, $X^2(1, n = 113) p = .001, \phi = -.34$. These findings suggest that having parents who have not attained a college degree is associated with being non-White and having a history of rural origins. Although both correlations were negative, the relationship between first generation status and ethnicity was stronger than the relationship between first generation status and geographical location.

Having parents who did not attain a college degree was also associated with a primary language other than English, as indicated by the statistically significant weak, positive correlation between first generation status and primary language, $X^2(1, n = 119) p = .019, \phi = .22$. However, primary language was negatively associated with ethnicity, $X^2(1, n = 115) p = .001, \phi = -.45$, which indicated that reporting English as one's primary language was associated with being White.

To determine whether there were statistically significant differences in participants' scores on their willingness to seek academic help, social self-efficacy, and learning environment, a series of independent-samples T-tests were conducted with respect to each of the following categorical demographic variables: gender, first generation status, geographical location, prior education, ethnicity/race, and primary language. The t-tests analyses revealed four statistically significant findings.

There was a statistically significant difference in willingness to seek academic help scores for male participants ($M = 66.64$, $SD = 9.41$) and female participants ($M = 75.08$, $SD = 8.88$); female participants were more likely to seek academic help than male participants; $t(110) = -2.98$, $p = .004$. Gender also influenced participants' perception of their learning environment. Male participants ($M = 106.91$, $SD = 14.86$) perceived their learning environment as more supportive than did female participants ($M = 94.25$, $SD = 16.82$); $t(110) = -2.36$, $p = .018$. However, the male group ($n = 12$) and female group (109) were notably unequal in size. The T-tests analyses further revealed a statistically significant difference in the willingness to seek academic help scores of White participants and non-White participants; $t(104) = -1.99$, $p = .05$. Non-white participants ($M = 76.94$, $SD = 8.59$) were more likely to seek academic help than White participants ($M = 73.29$, $SD = 9.15$). In terms of social self-efficacy scores, participants who reported English as their primary language ($M = 78.23$, $SD = 18.04$) achieved higher scores than participants who did not report English as their primary language ($M = 90.05$, $SD = 19.19$); $t(116) = -2.11$, $p = .04$).

Independent samples T-tests were also conducted to determine whether participants' age, grade point average, and hours worked differed based on gender, first generation status, geographical location, prior education, ethnicity/race, and primary language. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between participants' ages based on prior education. Participants who had completed an academic degree ($M = 34.04$, $SD = 9.33$) were more likely to be older than participants who had not completed a similar degree ($M = 28.11$, $SD = 9.21$); $t(113) = -3.41$, $p = .001$. No additional statistically significant findings were revealed among the T-tests conducted.

As illustrated in Table 12, statistically significant correlations were found among the continuous demographic variables (age, grade point average (GPA), and hours worked), the predictor variables (social self-efficacy and learning environments) and the criterion variable (willingness to seek academic help) in this study.

Table 12

Bivariate Correlations: Continuous Demographic Variables, Learning Environments, Social Self-efficacy, and Willingness to Seek Academic Help

	Age	GPA	Hours Worked	Learning Environment	Social Self-Efficacy	Seek Academic Help
Age	1.00					
GPA	.17	1.00				
Hours Worked	-.20*	-.14	1.00			
Learning Environment	.08	-.04	-.13	1.00		
Social Self-efficacy	.24**	-.11	-.05	.62**	1.00	
Willingness to Seek Academic Help	-.16	-.04	-.12	-.32**	-.20*	1.00

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Age was also positively correlated with social self-efficacy ($r = .24, p = .01$) and negatively correlated with hours worked ($r = -.20, p = .05$). The association between age and prior education was moderately strong (eta squared = .09) whereas the relationship between age and social self-efficacy and hours worked is weak ($r = .30$). Interpreted, these findings reveal that older students report higher levels of social self-efficacy and

education, but engage in fewer hours of paid work than younger students. None of the bivariate correlations between the remaining variables reached statistical significance.

A preliminary estimation of multicollinearity was conducted by reviewing the strength of the correlation coefficients. None of the predictor variables was highly correlated ($r = .9$ and above) which suggests that multicollinearity was an unlikely issue in this data. A definitive test of multicollinearity was run in phase two that follows.

Phase Two

In phase two of the analyses, statistical regression analysis procedures were performed on the data to investigate the capacity of social self-efficacy, learning environment, and demographic variables to predict participants' willingness to seek academic help. Multiple regression analysis is a class of multivariate statistical procedures that is used to determine the correlation between a criterion (dependent) variable and a set of predictor (independent) variables as well as an estimate of the relative importance of the predictor variables in influencing the criterion variables (Gillis & Jackson, 2002).

In preparation for conducting regression analysis, data were screened for normality, multicollinearity, adequate sample size, and missing data. According to Pallant (2010), pairwise deletion should be used to address missing data. In using this method, the available cases for analysis were reduced from 121 cases to 105 cases. The a priori power analysis indicated that a minimum of 123 participants was required to achieve statistical power sufficient to minimize the likelihood of committing a Type II error.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the assumption of normality was tested by examining the Normal Probability Plot (P-P) of the regression standardized residuals. The residual

points fall along a straight line which indicates no major deviations and a reasonable assumption of normality (Pallant, 2010). Tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF), the definitive tests of multicollinearity, were computed. Tolerance values were greater than .10 (.564, .856, .893) and variance inflation factors (VIF) were less than 10 (1.11, 1.16, 1.77), suggesting that the multicollinearity assumption was not violated.

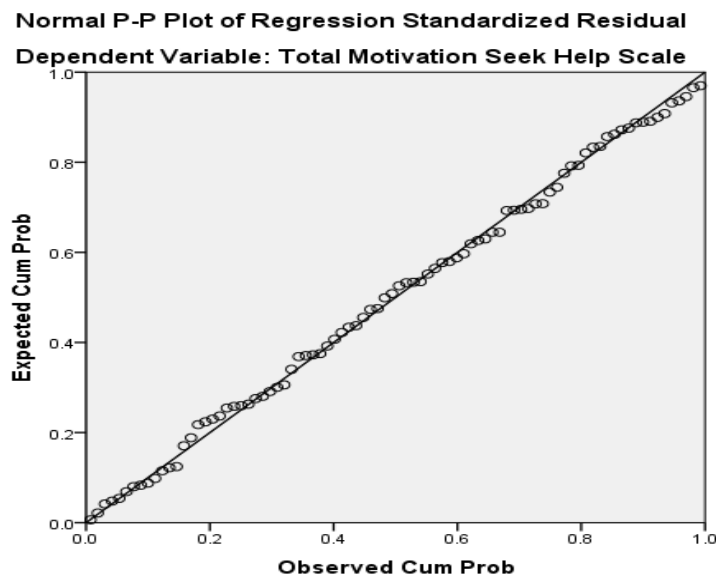


Figure 2. Normal Probability Plot of Standardized Residuals

The hierarchical method of multiple regression was chosen as the statistical approach to addressing the research question because it allows variables to be entered in steps based a predetermined order established by the researcher. According to the theoretical framework of this study, behavior (willingness to seek academic help) is influenced by person-related variables (social-self-efficacy) and environment-related variables (learning environment). Based on the study's conceptual model, person-related variables may be influenced by demographic variables. Following this line of reasoning, the 11 demographic variables (age, ethnicity/race, gender, first generation status, geographic location, primary language, prior education, grade point average (GPA), and

hours worked per week) were entered in Step 1. Social self-efficacy, the person-related variable, was entered in Step 2, and learning environment, the environment-related variable, was entered in Step 3.

As noted in Table 13, at Step 1, 16% of the variance in participants' scores on willingness to seek academic help was explained by Step 1 model. After entering social self-efficacy at Step 2, the total variance explained increased to 17%, revealing a 1% change in R -square. Even though the Step 2 model only contributed 1% to explaining the variance in willingness to seek academic help scores, the full model at Step 3 was statistically significant, $F(9,96) = 2.22$, $p = .027$ (see Table 14).

Table 13

Model Summary: Variance in Willingness to Seek Academic Help for Variables Predicting Willingness to Seek Academic Help (N = 105)

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error R^2	Change Statistics				
					R^2 Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	.40	.16	.08	8.85	.16	2.05	9	96	.041
2	.42	.17	.09	8.83	.01	1.33	1	95	.252
3	.49	.24	.15	8.50	.07	8.54	1	94	.004

After entering learning environment at Step 3, the variance explained by the model increased significantly, as evidenced by a 7% change in R -square that was over and above the variance explained at Step 2. The addition of learning environment had a greater influence on the amount of explained variance in participants' willingness to seek academic help scores than did social self-efficacy. Learning environment explained an additional 7% of the variance after controlling for social self-efficacy and demographics,

R squared change = .07, F change (1,95) = 8.54, p = .004. However, Model 3, which included demographics, social self-efficacy, and learning environment, explained the most variance in participants' willingness to seek academic help. Although all three models were determined to be statistically significant, as indicated in Table 14, the addition of learning environment raised the statistical significance from p = .043 (Model 2) to p = .004 (Model 3), attesting to its influence as further revealed in the review of the regression's beta values displayed in Table 15.

Table 14

ANOVA Table: Variance in Willingness to Seek Academic Help for Variables Predicting Willingness to Seek Academic Help (N 105)

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1442.93	8	160.77	2.05	.041**
	Residual	7517.80	97	78.31		
	Total	8964.73	105			
2	Regression	1550.73	9	155.07	1.99	.043**
	Residual	7414.00	965	78.04		
	Total	8964.73	105			
3	Regression	2128.81	10	197.07	2.73	.004**
	Residual	6835.91	95	72.31		
	Total	8964.73	105			

Note. * p < .05 ** p < .01

Table 15

Summary of Three - Step Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Willingness to Seek Academic Help (N = 105)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	<i>SE</i> _B	β	B	<i>SE</i> _B	β	B	<i>SE</i> _B	β
Gender	-8.4	3.0	-.27**	7.8	3.0	-.25**	-6.2	3.0	-.20*
First Generation	-1.7	1.9	-.09	1.8	1.9	.10	-2.0	1.9	-.11
Geographical Location	.12	1.8	.01	.11	1.8	.01	-.88	1.8	-.05
Prior Education	-.44	1.9	-.02	-.50	1.8	-.03	-1.3	1.8	-.07
Ethnicity	3.9	2.2	.20	3.6	2.3	.18	3.5	2.1	.18
Language	2.2	3.2	.07	2.5	3.2	.08	2.5	3.1	.09
Age	-.13	.10	-.14	-.11	.10	-.12	-.14	.10	-.15
GPA	-.17	2.8	-.01	-.73	2.9	-.03	-.47	2.8	-.02
Hours Worked	-.08	.06	-.13	-.08	.06	-.14	-.11	.05	-.19*
Social Self-efficacy				.06	.05	-.12	.05	.06	.10
Learning Environment							-.19	.07	-.36**
<i>R</i> ²		.16			.17			.24	
<i>F</i> change in <i>R</i> ²		.01**			.32			.005**	

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

The review of the beta values derived from the regression analysis provides the basis for determining the unique influence that each variable made to predicting participants' willingness to seek academic help scores. As noted in Table 15, only a few variables reached statistical significance.

In Model 3, which explained most of the variance at 24%, the only predictor variables that made a unique statistically significant contribution to predicting willingness to seek academic help scores were gender, hours worked, and learning environment ($p < .05$). This means that gender, hours worked, and learning environment made the strongest unique contribution to explaining willingness to seek academic help when all remaining variables were controlled for.

According to their beta values displayed in Table 15 learning environment ($\beta = -.36$) had the strongest influence when compared with gender ($\beta = -.20$), and hours worked ($\beta = -.19$). To determine how much learning environment, gender, and hours worked contributed to the total variance in willingness to seek academic help scores, the part correlation coefficient of each variable was squared. The results revealed that learning environment uniquely contributed 7 percent to the explanation of variance in willingness to seek academic help, whereas gender and hours worked contributed 4 percent and 3 percent respectively.

Additional Analyses

Because learning environment exerted the greatest influence on predicting willingness to seek academic help, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was computed to determine which of the four components of learning environment, as measured by the Sense of Belonging (SOBS) subscales, had the greatest influence on

willingness to seek academic help. Willingness to seek academic help was regressed on Isolation, Peer Support, Faculty Support, and Classroom Comfort subscales in that order.

Table 16 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 16

Model Summary: Variance in Willingness to Seek Academic Help by Sense of Belonging Subscales (N = 105)

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	Std. Error <i>R</i> ²	Change Statistics				
					<i>R</i> ² Change	<i>F</i> Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. Change
1	.28	.08	.07	8.91	.078	9.05	1	107	.003
2	.28	.08	.06	8.95	.002	.19	1	106	.668
3	.34	.12	.09	8.81	.037	4.39	1	105	.039
4	.36	.13	.10	8.80	.012	1.45	1	104	.231

The Step 4 model, the full model, accounts for 13% of the variance in willingness to seek academic help, but the addition of Isolation at Step 4 did not result in a statistically significant change in *R*-squared. However, Step 4 model was statistically significant ($F(4,104) = 3.84, p = .006$). None of the beta values associated with the predictor variables (perceived isolation, peer support, faculty support, and classroom comfort) in the Step 4 model reached statistical significance. However, in the Step 4 model, perceived isolation ($\beta = -.244, p = .06$) and perceived faculty support measures ($\beta = -.171, p = .09$) were the only variables to approach statistical significance.

As an exploratory effort, additional analyses were performed to examine whether geographical location, a measure of participants' backgrounds, would influence willingness to seek academic help. Only the major predictor variables, social self-efficacy

and learning environment, and the demographic variables that had shown a statistically significant correlation with the criterion variable, willingness to seek academic help, were entered into the regression procedure. Gender, ethnicity, social self-efficacy, and learning environment comprised the predictor variables. The three-step hierarchical multiple regression approach that was followed in the initial analysis of the research question was used to address this question. Table 17 depicts the models that were derived when urban participants' scores on the criterion variable, motivation to seek academic help, were regressed on the predictor variables of gender and ethnicity, social self-efficacy, and learning environment. In the urban models, depicted in Table 17, the demographics that were entered at Step 1 accounted for 22% of the variance in willingness to seek academic help. With the addition of social self-efficacy at Step 2, and learning environment at Step 3, the total variance explained remained static at 22%; the change in R -squared at Step 2 and Step 3 was not statistically significant; however, the change in R -squared at Step 1 was ($p = .002$), as was Step 1 model ($F(2,50) = 6.97, p = .002$) as shown in Table 18.

Table 17

Model Summary: Variance in Willingness to Seek Academic Help by Urban Geographical Location

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error R^2	Change Statistics				
					R^2 Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	.47	.22	.19	8.88	.21	6.97	2	50	.002
2	.47	.22	.17	8.97	.00	.00	1	49	.968
3	.47	.22	.16	9.05	.00	.14	1	48	.711

Table 18

ANOVA Table. Variance in Willingness to Seek Academic Help by Urban Geographical Location (N = 52)

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1099.565	2	549.782	6.972	.002
	Residual	3943.007	50	78.860		
	Total	5042.572	52			
2	Regression	1099.697	3	366.566	4.555	.007**
	Residual	3942.875	49	80.467		
	Total	5042.572	52			
3	Regression	1111.077	4	277.769	3.391	.016*
	Residual	3931.495	48	81.906		
	Total	5042.572	52			

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

In the urban models, the ANOVA results illustrated in Table 18 indicate that all three of the models were statistically significant, but as previously noted, social self-efficacy contributed minimally to the explained variance. In fact, in the urban model, only gender ($\beta = -.381$, $p = .004$) significantly contributed to explaining the variance in willingness to seek academic help.

Among rural participants, Model 3, as depicted in Table 19, accounted for 22% of the variance in willingness to seek academic help. When social self-efficacy was added at Step 2, a statistically significant change in R -squared did not occur. Notably,

with the addition of learning environment at Step 3, a 14% increase occurred in R -squared which was statistically significant ($p = .006$). The change in R -squared that was precipitated by the addition of learning environment in the Step 3 model was twice that created when social self-efficacy was added to the model at Step 2.

Table 19

Model Summary: Variance in Willingness to Seek Academic Help by Rural Geographical Location

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error R^2	Change Statistics				
					R^2 Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	.14	.02	-.02	8.64081	.02	.44	2	48	.645
2	.29	.09	.03	8.42696	.07	3.467	1	47	.069
3	.47	.22	.16	7.85177	.14	8.14	1	46	.006

As noted in Table 20, only Model 3 was statistically significant. This was a different outcome when compared with the urban participants wherein all three models were statistically significant (see Table 18). Among the three rural models, it is important to note that in the Step 3 model, the only variable to achieve statistical significance was learning environment ($\beta = -.478$). The latter finding indicates that learning environment provided a unique and statistically significant contribution to rural participants' scores on willingness to seek academic help ($F(4, 46) = 3.30, p = .018$). Conversely, the influence of social self-efficacy on rural participants' scores on willingness to seek academic help was not statistically significant ($F(3, 46) = 1.47, p = .24$ (see Table 20).

Table 20

ANOVA Table: Variance in Willingness to Seek Academic Help by Rural Geographical Location (N = 50)

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
1	Regression	66.147	2	33.073	.443	.645
	Residual	3583.853	48	74.664		
	Total	3650.000	50			
2	Regression	312.358	3	104.119	1.466	.236
	Residual	3337.642	47	71.014		
	Total	3650.000	50			
3	Regression	814.085	4	203.521	3.301	.018**
	Residual	2835.915	46	61.650		
	Total	3650.000	50			

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Summary

In summary, the participants were primarily female, white, and almost 50% were over 29 years of age. Approximately 50% of the participants were first generation college students and 20% had completed a four year degree. Almost 50% of participants self-identified as having a rural background.

Data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics for each of the demographic variables and descriptive measures of the major predictor variables of social self-efficacy, learning environment, and willingness to seek academic help. Fairly high degree of social

self-efficacy and learning environment support were reported by participants. Moderately high scores were revealed on the MTSSQ, indicating that participants were generally willing to seek academic help as expressed by their high degree of internality, high expectations of being successful and only moderate worry about their academic ability.

Phase one analyses revealed statistically significant, but weak negative correlations of the predictor variables, social self-efficacy and learning environment, with the criterion variable, willingness to seek academic help. A small negative correlation between gender and willingness to seek academic help and a small positive correlation between ethnicity and willingness to seek academic help was revealed.

In Phase two, hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to answer the research question. The full model consisting of demographic variables, social self-efficacy and learning environment was statistically significant, with hours worked, gender, and learning environment contributing significantly to the amount of explained variance in willingness to seek academic help.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Academic help-seeking has been identified as an adaptive strategy that fosters self-regulated learning and academic success when it is used to improve students' understanding and increase their capabilities. When students' understanding and capabilities are insufficient to resolve academic challenges, the expectation is that they will reach out to others for help; to do otherwise is counterintuitive and seemingly irrational. Yet, these seemingly irrational acts of not seeking academic help when the help is needed unfold with great regularity on college campuses. It is an enigma as to why students do not seek help when help is needed; it is this enigma that provided the context and the impetus for this study.

In this study, the influence of social self-efficacy and learning environments on willingness to seek academic help in preclinical baccalaureate nursing students was examined. The variables in this study were conceptualized within the social cognitive theory which purports that behavioral patterns are derived from the reciprocal interaction of person-related factors, environment related factors, and behavior. These elements are reflected in the overarching question which directed this study:

What combination of social self-efficacy, learning environment, and demographic variables (self-reported age, gender, ethnicity, status as first generation college student, number of academic credit hours, prior degree, geographical location, cumulative grade point average (GPA), primary language, and hours of paid

work) best predicts willingness to seek academic help in preclinical baccalaureate nursing students?

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings from this study. Discussions of the findings are organized into five sections: Interpretation of Preliminary Findings, Interpretation of Main Findings, Limitations of the Study, Conclusions, and Recommendations for Nursing Education and Future Research.

Interpretation of Preliminary Findings

Demographics

Ethnic/racial minority students comprised approximately 33% of the participants in this study which is comparable to the percentage of ethnic/racial minority students enrolled in prelicensure RN baccalaureate programs (33%) at the national level (National League for Nursing, 2011). In terms of age, 44% of participants in this study were over 30 years of age whereas only 14% of students enrolled in baccalaureate programs nationwide are over the age of 30.

Not surprisingly, a positive, statistically significant correlation between age and prior education was revealed. Over 20% of the participants held a bachelor degree or higher. This is consistent with the national trend that is seeing an increase in the number of second degree students entering traditional and accelerated prelicensure registered nursing programs (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2012). Because many of the second degree students were older, they were likely more financially stable than younger students, which might explain why older participants in this study worked less hours per week than younger participants.

Where gender was concerned, most of the participants were females (90%). This is not an unexpected finding since females currently make up approximately 86% of the

students enrolled in baccalaureate programs (National League for Nursing, 2011) and 90% of the nursing workforce (Landivar, 2013).

Almost one-half of the participants identified as being first generation college students. This finding exceeds national estimates which place the percentage at 30% among students enrolled at 4-year institutions (Tym, McMillion, Baron, & Webster, 2004). However, when other factors were compared, first generation participants in this study compared similarly to national findings. Nationally, 36% of first generation students are non-White, whereas 16% are White: also, they are more likely to be non-native English-speaking (Chen & Carroll, 2005). In this current study wherein first generation student status correlates negatively with geographical location and ethnicity and positively with language, a profile similar to the national profile emerged. Therefore, first generation participants in this study were more likely to be non-White and non-native English-speaking, and were from a rural background.

Even without the barriers that ethnicity, language, and rurality may present, first generation students already have significant barriers to overcome. They have been described as being less prepared academically when entering college, more socially and culturally isolated, incurring less family and financial support, and experiencing a more difficult college adjustment than non-first generational college students (Chen & Carroll, 2005). First generational students often need help and must be willing seek help, in order to overcome these barriers to achieve their academic goals. Although scores on the willingness to seek academic help among first generation participants in this study were higher than non-first generation participants, the difference between the scores of the two groups was not statistically significant.

Social Self-Efficacy

Social self-efficacy, defined as confidence in one's ability to initiate and maintain social interactions (Anderson & Betz, 2001), was positively correlated with the demographic variables age and language. At the root of social self-efficacy is confidence. Obviously, the number of social interactions experienced over time increases with age. With increased experience at initiating and maintaining social interactions, confidence is likely to increase.

The fact that participants who were non-native English speakers would have lower social self-efficacy scores is not unexpected. A phenomenological study of the experiences of non-native English speaking students revealed much needed insight into what it means to negotiate two linguistic systems, often resulting in anxiety, decreased confidence, and a loss of self-esteem (Halic, Greenberg, & Paulus, 2009).

A strong positive correlation between social self-efficacy and learning environment was revealed. A possible explanation for this finding may be attributed to the underlying nature of social self-efficacy. Social self-efficacy engenders confidence in one's ability to interact socially with others. It is likely that students who are high in social self-efficacy naturally attract others to them and are then able to maintain these relationships. In doing so, students' high in social self-efficacy create a supportive network of others, thereby creating the supportive learning environment. Hence, as social self-efficacy increases, students' perception of learning environment as supportive also increases.

Social self-efficacy was negatively correlated with willingness to seek academic help. No previous studies were found that examined this relationship, but a related

construct, shyness, was found to be associated with help-seeking avoidant behaviors (DePaulo, Dull, Greenberg, & Swain, 1989; Horsch, 2006). Because seeking help is a social process, it was expected that a positive relationship would exist between social self-efficacy and willingness to seek help such that as social self-efficacy increased, willingness to seek academic help would also increase; instead, an inverse relationship was revealed. It is possible that because seeking academic help involves admitting one's inadequacy to self and others (Nelson-LeGall, 1981; 1985), persons who are highly confident in their social skills are less willing to seek help because to do so would challenge their overall sense of confidence, thereby, threatening their self-esteem (Lee, 2002; Nelson-LeGall, 1981; 1985).

Learning Environment

Learning environment was positively correlated with the demographic variable of gender. Male participants perceived the learning environment as more supportive than females. A possible explanation for this might be that females and males may have different expectations of social support. Another possible explanation for this might be that faculty, staff, and peers, most of whom are female, may be making a concerted effort to be inclusive of males and may, in fact, be overextending themselves in their efforts.

A statistically significant inverse relationship between learning environment and willingness to seek academic help was revealed. This seemingly contradictory result may be due to the participants' perception of support. The Sense of Belonging Scale (SBSR), used to measure learning environment in this study, is designed to elicit participants' perceptions of those aspects of the academic environment that foster valued involvement and social support. It may be that when students feel more supported in their learning

environments, they feel that their needs are met or they feel confident that they can get their needs met. Under these conditions, it would be expected that willingness to seek help would decrease simply because there is no need to seek help.

Cramer's model of help-seeking lends support for this explanation. According to Cramer's model (1999), willingness to seek help is a function of four factors: attitudes towards counseling, available social support, distress, and self-concealment. Willingness to seek help increases when attitudes toward counseling are positive and when emotional distress is high. Hence, when students perceive that their learning environments are not supportive, indicating that their needs are not being or cannot be met, emotional distress ensues and their willingness to seek help increases.

Willingness to Seek Academic Help

Among the nine demographic variables, only two variables, gender and ethnicity, achieved statistical significance when correlated with willingness to seek academic help. In terms of gender, male participants were less willing than female participants to seek academic help. This result corroborated the findings of the studies that have examined the influence of gender on academic help seeking (Alexitch, 1997; Nadler, 1991; Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998). In contrast to previous findings (Ofori, 2005; Ofori & Charlton, 2002), the results of this study did not demonstrate a significant relationship between age and willingness to seek academic help. Older students were no more willing than younger students to seek academic help.

Overall, participants in this study exhibited moderate levels of willingness to seek academic help. Fifty percent of the participants scored at or below the 50th percentile with most of the scores clustering around the mean ($M = 74.25$). Twenty-five percent of the

participants, however, scored higher than the 75% percentile on the Motives for Tutorial Support Seeking Questionnaire (MTSSQ). No norms currently exist for the MTSSQ, but its reliability was established for this study and in the original publication on the psychometric properties of the scale (Ofori, 2005).

As a composite scale, the MTSSQ subscales provided a closer look into motives that fueled the participants' willingness to seek help. Scores on the expectancy for success subscale revealed that participants in this study held fairly high expectations that they would do well in their nursing courses. Participants' expectancy beliefs about the likelihood of their academic success in nursing school can be a motivating force in fueling their persistence and shaping their performance. According to expectancy-value theory, the expectancy one holds about how well one is able to accomplish a task and the value placed on that task, determines the choices one makes and how persistent one is in pursuing the desired outcome. Ofori and Charlton (2002) confirmed this premise in their study that investigated factors influencing nursing students' academic performance.

Participants' responses on the locus of control subscale provided another perspective into the motivational factors that contribute to participants' willingness to seek academic help. Over 65% of participants' responses fell above the 50th percentile. This finding indicates that participants were strong in internality, a locus of control belief that asserts that outcomes are under the control and attributable to one's efforts. The supposition is that students who hold an internality belief will engage in those academic behaviors, such as help-seeking, that will likely produce the desired learning outcome.

Responses to the academic worry subscale revealed that most participants did not worry about whether they would be able to cope with the academic demands of the

nursing program. Fewer than 25% gave responses indicating that they agreed slightly, agreed somewhat, or agreed very much with statements suggesting that they would have academic worries in nursing school.

Interpretation of Main Findings

The three-step hierarchical regression analysis was run to address the research question. The three steps were comprised of the demographic variables entered at Step 1, social self-efficacy entered at Step 2, and learning environment entered at Step 3. Each model accounted for a statistically significant amount of the variance in willingness to seek academic help. However, it was Model 3 ($R^2 = 24\%$) that accounted for the most variance in predicting willingness to seek academic help. This finding indicates that demographic factors, social self-efficacy, and learning environment interacted to influence willingness to seek academic help.

Of the nine predictor variables that entered the regression analysis, gender, hours worked, and learning environment made the strongest unique contribution to explaining the variance in willingness to seek academic help. The unique contribution of these three variables is the sole effect that each variable exerts when the overlapping influence of all predictor variables are statistically removed.

The small effect that social self-efficacy had on R^2 when it was added to the model at step 2 was somewhat surprising. This suggests that social self-efficacy may be exerting a mediating effect; evidence to that effect was seen in the results of the partial correlation that was conducted on learning environment, social self-efficacy, and willingness to seek academic help. If social self-efficacy is a mediator, what this is saying is that the relationship between learning environment and willingness to seek help

is influenced by variations in levels of social self-efficacy. This is quite plausible as it has been previously shown in this study that as social self-efficacy increases, learning environment support increases, and willingness to seek academic help decreases.

Additional exploratory analyses were conducted to further examine the influence of learning environment on willingness to seek academic help. The four subscales of the Sense of Belonging scale (SBSR), measuring learning environment, were subjected to hierarchical regression analysis. Although none of the regression models or beta values that were revealed from the analysis was statistically significant, scores on the Perceived Isolation subscale and the Faculty Support subscale approached significance. However, as a practical matter, knowing which aspects of the learning environment have the greatest influence on facilitating help-seeking behaviors allows for a more targeted use of resources.

The influence of geographical location on willingness to seek academic help was also explored. The major predictor variables of social self-efficacy and learning environment and those demographic variables significantly correlated with willingness to seek academic help, gender and ethnicity, were subjected to regression analysis. An interesting finding was that geographical location, described as either rural or urban, resulted in different predictive models. Both models explained 22% of the variance in participants' willingness to seek academic help. However, among urban participants, gender was the only variable that made a statistically significant contribution to explaining the variance in willingness to seek academic help. For rural participants, learning environment was the only variable that made a unique and statistically significant contribution to explaining the variance in academic help-seeking. This finding

is important in that it illustrates how different groups of students may require different approaches when designing strategies that encourage timely help-seeking.

Conclusions

Based on the interpretation of the findings, the following conclusions can be drawn from this study:

1. Males perceived the learning environment as more supportive than females.
2. Non-Whites were more willing to seek academic help than Whites.
3. As levels of social self-efficacy increased, willingness to seek academic help decreased.
4. As perception of learning environment support increased, willingness to seek academic help decreased.
5. Demographic, intrapersonal and environmental factors accounted for a small, but significant amount of the variance in willingness to seek academic help.

Gender, hours worked, and learning environment were the three variables that solely made a statistically significant contribution to explaining the amount of explained variance achieved by the regression model.

Limitations

As with any research study, interpretations of the findings must be considered in light of the study's limitations. One of the limitations of this study was that preclinical nursing students who were recruited into the study were drawn from one university. It is possible that there may be distinct differences between students enrolled at the study site and those enrolled in other baccalaureate nursing programs. Because invitations to participate in the study were sent to all nursing students whose names appeared in the

preclinical baccalaureate database, probability sampling was not undertaken. These features of the study limit whether the finding can be generalized to baccalaureate nursing students enrolled in nursing programs in other localities.

Other limitations of the study were related to the size of the sample available for analysis. Because the male and female groups were very unequal in size, it is possible that gender may have been found to have a statistically significant effect where none existed. Even though a respectable response rate of 35.5% was achieved and the recruited sample met a priori power analysis recommendations, because of missing data, not all cases were available for analysis. With weakened power, the multiple regression analyses may not have been sensitive enough to uncover statistically significant findings.

Recommendations

Nursing Education

Recommendations for nursing education are indicated. The first recommendation is that nurse educators, in a broad sense, need to know who the students are that are being served by their nursing programs. An understanding of the demographic factors that put some students at greater risk of needing academic help would provide nurse educators with the knowledge and readiness to intervene. While this approach is a viable strategy, it puts the onus entirely on the nurse educator.

Academic help-seeking is an adaptive self-regulated learning strategy. As aspiring members of a profession that requires lifelong learning, help-seeking is an invaluable learning strategy. It is not enough to encourage students to get help; students need to know how to seek help. Ensuring that students know the when, where, who, what and how of help-seeking is essential. Plans for achieving this outcome may include such

strategies as distributing program and university handbooks that provide information on university and school resources, as well as implementing intrusive advising.

Help-seeking as an adaptive learning strategy may be brought into the classroom through simulations that demonstrate how to seek help in various role capacities.

Instructional group activities may be planned that build on collaborative learning and require paired or group members to depend on one another. Learning activities of this nature provide students with opportunities to ask for help. Including reflective debriefings as a routine component of collaborative and group activities can help students explore what it feels like to ask for help. Faculty should model appropriate help-seeking behavior and use narratives from their own practice to illustrate how they have used help-seeking to meet their learning and professional needs.

Most importantly, nursing programs should strive to create a culture of support. As revealed in this study, the learning environment, as measured by a sense of belonging, was an important factor in participants' willingness to seek academic help. When students feel as though they belong and are a valued member of a learning community, trust is fostered. When trust is fostered, the veils of social stigma, embarrassment, and discomfort which serve as barriers to seeking help begin to fall. This means that faculty, students, and staff must be socialized to the norms of what it means to be a supportive and learner-centered nursing program. This message needs to permeate all facets of the program. Policies should be developed, implemented, and evaluated in terms of how they promote student success and whether they are fairly and equitably applied; places and spaces should by design encourage informal gatherings for studying, dialoguing, and

socializing; and students should be encouraged to offer support to their school and campus organizations.

Future Research

Future help-seeking research should be directed towards more studies that examine help-seeking as a social interactive process. Most studies to date have explored help-seeking as an individual act by focusing primarily on persons' cognitive and motivational orientations. Even though this current study continues in this trend, by choosing predictor variables that, by nature, have a social dimension, a small incursion was made into the social aspects of help-seeking.

Encouraging help-seeking research to move ahead in advancing our understanding of the social aspects of help-seeking is timely. More instruction is being moved into the online environment where opportunities exist to explore how help-seeking is expressed in virtual spaces and whether our current understanding of help-seeking in face to face settings have explanatory power in these virtual classrooms. The use of online instructional technology, which can provide a degree of anonymity to the help-seeking process, has the potential to overcome the stigma of seeking help, one of the major social barriers.

Another future research path that needs pursuing is that of informal help-seeking. When help is needed to address a health issue, ample evidence exists that persons most often seek out informal avenues of help initially. Do we know whether a similar process of prioritizing of avenues of help exist for academic issues? If so, who are these sources of help and how are they accessed and chosen? What determines persons' preferences for

formal or informal help? There are answers to these questions and research can provide those answers, which raises a related recommendation.

The quantitative paradigm continues to be the prevailing model for framing help-seeking research; very few qualitative studies appear in this literature. To go forward, help-seeking research needs to have the benefit of the holistic meaning that the perspective of persons seeking help can provide. Help-seeking is a complex process that masquerades as a simple one. Qualitative studies offer invaluable insight into complex phenomena when revealed have the potential to uncover unknown truths that could generate new streams of research.

The final recommendation addresses the challenge experienced in delving into an expansive area of research. The help-seeking literature is vast and crosses many disciplines. Against this backdrop of an ever expanding body of research, more attention needs be given to synthesizing and framing what is already known. Identifying common paths of understanding that have developed in different disciplines and synthesizing these findings would move help-seeking research forward by making the gaps in what is already known more apparent and richer through the cross-fertilization of ideas.

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APPENDIX A
STUDY SITE APPROVAL



3211 Providence Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99508-4614
T 907.786.4550 • F 907.786.4558

School of Nursing
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

April 26, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

As director of the School of Nursing, University of Alaska Anchorage, I authorize Ms. Bernice W. Carmon to conduct her research study entitled, *Willingness to Seek Academic Help in Preclinical Nursing Students: The Influence of Social Self-efficacy and Learning Environment*. She may use the names and addresses of baccalaureate preclinical nursing students as listed in the database of the school. This database is maintained by Ms. Jessica Salas, program assistant, who will be emailing, mailing, and receiving the returned surveys for Ms. Carmon. This ensures the confidentiality of the students' names and addresses, as well as the anonymity of their responses.

I give my permission for Ms. Carmon to access the student names and addresses through Ms. Salas as outlined above. I support Ms. Carmon's dissertation research and believe that the outcomes of her research will benefit our future students and ultimately, our nursing programs. If I can be of any other assistance, or if you have any questions, please contact me at 786-4571.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Berner".

Barbara Berner, EdD, APRN, FNP-BC, FAANP Director, School of Nursing

APPENDIX B
STUDY SITE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



3211 Providence Drive
 Anchorage, Alaska 99508-4614
 T 907.786.1099, F 907.786.1791
www.uaa.alaska.edu/research/ric

DATE: May 3, 2012

TO: Bernice Carmon
 FROM: University of Alaska Anchorage IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [333203-2] Willingness to Seek Academic Help in Preclinical Nursing
 Students: The Influence of Social self-efficacy and Learning Environment

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: May 3, 2012

Your Institutional Review Board (IRB) proposal meets the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services requirements for the protection of human research subjects (45 CFR 46 as amended/revised) as being exempt from full Board review. In keeping with the usual policies and procedures of the IRB, your research project is approved with suggested revisions. Thank you for a copy of these revisions.

Therefore, you have permission to begin data collection for your study. If this study goes beyond one year from the date of this submission, you will need to submit a Progress Report for approval to continue the research and please submit a Final Report at the end of your project.

Please report promptly proposed changes in the research protocol for IRB review and approval.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to extend my best wishes for success in accomplishing the objectives of your study.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kelly McLain'.

Kelly McLain, M.A.

Research Compliance Administrator, Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX C

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO



Institutional Review Board

June 11, 2012


TO: Gary Heise
School of Sport and Exercise Science

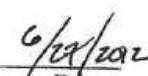
FROM: The Office of Sponsored Programs

RE: Exempt Review of *Willingness to Seek Academic Help: The Influence of Social Self-efficacy and Learning Environment*, submitted by Bernice W. Carmon (Research Advisor: Faye Hummel)

The above proposal is being submitted to you for exemption review. When approved, return the proposal to Sherry May in the Office of Sponsored Programs.

I recommend approval.


Signature of Co-Chair


Date

The above referenced prospectus has been reviewed for compliance with HHS guidelines for ethical principles in human subjects research. The decision of the Institutional Review Board is that the project is exempt from further review.

IT IS THE ADVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY THE STUDENT OF THIS STATUS.

Comments: email - 6/25/2012

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT

**Title: Willingness to Seek Academic Help:
The Influence of Social Self-efficacy and Learning Environment**

Bernice W. Carmon, MPH, MS
Associate Professor
University of Alaska Anchorage
(UNCO)bwcarmon@uaa.alaska.edu
(907) 786-4572

Faye Hummel, RN, PhD
Faculty Chair, College of Nursing
University of Northern Colorado
Faye.hummel@UNCO.edu
(970) 351-1697

Description: As a pre-clinical baccalaureate nursing student at the University of Alaska Anchorage, you are invited to participate in a study I am conducting as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Northern Colorado. The purpose of the study is to describe nursing students' willingness to seek academic help. Participation consists of completing a survey that will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Returning or submitting the completed survey implies your informed consent. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. There are no consequences for choosing not to participate in this study.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality of your identity will be maintained; your name will only be seen by the School of Nursing program assistant who emailed this survey. Your name or any other identifying information will not be used in presentations, reports, or articles. Your identifying information cannot be connected to your responses. The computer data will be destroyed after three years. Results will be in my public dissertation at University of Northern Colorado.

Risks/Benefits: There are no known risks or direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, information from this study may lead to more effective strategies to facilitate students' academic success. Participants who fully complete the survey will have the option of entering their names in a lottery to receive one of four \$50.00 gift certificates to the UAA bookstore. After you have completed all of the survey questions, you will be directed to a separate page where you will be asked to enter your name and email. One week after data collection is completed, an online random number generator will be used to select four names to win the gift certificates. Winners will be notified using the email address provided.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions about this research, please use the contact information provided above to contact me or my doctoral committee chair, Dr. Faye Hummel. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Dianne Toebe, Compliance Officer at the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at the University of Alaska Anchorage at 907-786-1099.

Thank you,
Bernice W. Carmon, RN, MS, MPH

APPENDIX E**MOTIVES FOR TUTORIAL SUPPORT-SEEKING QUESTIONNAIRE (MTSSQ)**

Motives for Tutorial Support-Seeking Questionnaire (MTSSQ) - Original

Directions: Please tick the appropriate box to show how closely the items describe your beliefs about this course.

Agree Very Much	Agree Somewhat	Agree Slightly	Disagree Slightly	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Very Much
6	5	4	3	2	1

1. I do not expect to fail any of the courses here at first attempt ®.
2. I am convinced that my grades will depend on how well or badly I do in the assessments.
3. I don't think it is worthwhile worrying about academic problems ®.
4. I worry about coping with the academic demands of this course.
5. I expect it will be easy to average about 70% on course here ®.
6. Often I lie awake worrying about academic work I think I won't be able to do.
7. I should do really well in the courses here ®.
8. The kinds of grades I will get depend on how capable I am of preparing myself for the assessments.
9. I am usually the 'worrying' type when it comes to starting a course of study.
10. I expect very high grades in the courses here ®.
11. The grades I get in my assignments will be closely related to what I do.
12. I am used to getting high grades on courses and I expect the same here ®.
13. Sometimes I worry about whether I'll be able to cope with the courses here.
14. In general I believe that if one is competent and works hard one will get good results in one's studies.
15. Compared to other students, I expect to do very well in the courses here ®.
16. My own effort is the only decisive thing in the kinds of grades I'll get in my assessments.
17. Fear of failure is something that worries me a great deal.
18. I expect my grades to be among the top 1% of students' grades ®.
19. I worry more about coping with the academic demands of this course than most students do.
20. I am convinced that the old adage, "you reap what you sow" is very true to academic life.

® = reverse scoring

Motives for Tutorial Support-Seeking Questionnaire (MTSSQ) - Adapted

Directions: Please read each statement carefully. Using the following scale, indicate how accurately the statements describe your beliefs.

Agree Very Much	Agree Somewhat	Agree Slightly	Disagree Slightly	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Very Much
6	5	4	3	2	1

1. I do not expect to fail any of the *nursing* courses here on the first attempt ®¹.
2. I am convinced that my grades will depend on how well or badly I do in the *exams and assignments*².
3. I don't think it is worthwhile worrying about academic problems ®.
4. I worry about coping with the academic demands of *the nursing* courses.
5. I expect it will be easy to average about 75% on course *assignments and exams* ®.
6. Often I lie awake worrying about academic work I think I won't be able to do.
7. I should do really well in the *nursing* courses here ®.
8. The kinds of grades I will get depend on how capable I am of preparing myself for the *exams and assignments*.
9. I am usually the 'worrying' type when it comes to starting a course of study.
10. I expect very high grades in the *nursing* courses here ®.
11. The grades I get in my assignments will be closely related to what I do.
12. I am used to getting high grades on courses and I expect the same in *the nursing courses* here ®.
13. Sometimes I worry about whether I'll be able to cope with the *nursing* courses here.
14. In general I believe that if one is competent and works hard one will get good results in one's studies.
15. Compared to other students, I expect to do very well in the *nursing* courses here ®.
16. My own effort is the only decisive thing in the kinds of grades I'll get in *my exams and assignments*.
17. Fear of failure is something that worries me a great deal.
18. I expect my grades to be among the top 1% of students' grades ®.
19. I worry more about coping with the academic demands of *the nursing* courses than most students do.
20. I am convinced that the old adage, "you reap what you sow" is very true to academic life.

¹ The symbol '®' indicates reverse scoring; it did not appear in the survey that participants completed.

² Words and phrases in italics indicate where the original instrument was adapted for use with this population. Italicized words and phrases did not appear in the survey that participants completed.

APPENDIX F**PERMISSION TO USE THE MOTIVES FOR TUTORIAL SUPPORT-SEEKING
QUESTIONNAIRE**

-----Original Message-----

From: Richard Ofori [mailto:rofori@googlemail.com]

Sent: Monday, April 11, 2011 6:31 AM

To: BERNICE CARMON

Subject: Re: Dr. Richard Ofori - Permission to Use Research Instrument - MTSSQ

Yes, Bernice, I am Dr. Richard Ofori and I hereby give you permission to use the MTSSQ.

Cheers,

Dr. Richard Ofori
Director of Research
University of Education, Winneba
Winneba,
Ghana
West Africa

On 4/11/11, BERNICE CARMON <afbwc@uaa.alaska.edu> wrote:

> I am trying to locate Dr. Richard Ofori, formerly on the faculty of
> the University of Salford, Manchester UK.

>

> I am a doctoral student at the University of Northern Colorado in the
> United States. I am preparing my dissertation proposal and I would
> like permission to use an instrument Dr. Ofori developed, the 'Motives
> for Tutorial Support-seeking Questionnaire' that was published in
> Nursing Education Today in 2006.

>

> If you are the author of the MTSSQ, I am requesting permission to use
> your instrument in my doctoral research.

>

> If you are not the author of the MTSSQ, please let me know by
> responding to this email

>

> Thank you for any assistance you are able to provide.

>

> Bernice W. Carmon
> afbwc@uaa.alaska.edu
> University of Alaska Anchorage
> 3211 Providence Drive
> Anchorage, Alaska 99508

APPENDIX G**PERCEIVED SOCIAL SELF-EFFICACY SCALE (PSSE)**

Perceived Social Self-Efficacy Scale

Directions: Please read each statement carefully. Using the following scale, decide how much confidence you have that you could perform each of these activities successfully.

No Confidence at All	Little Confidence	Moderate Confidence	Much Confidence	Complete Confidence
1	2	3	4	5

1. Start a conversation with someone you don't know very well.
2. Express your opinion to a group of people discussing a subject that is of interest to you.
3. Work on a school, work, community or other project with people you don't know very well.
4. Help to make someone you've recently met feel comfortable with your group of friends.
5. Share with a group of people an interesting experience you once had.
6. Put yourself in a new and different social situation.
7. Volunteer to help organize an event.
8. Ask a group of people who are planning to engage in a social activity (e.g. go to a movie) if you can join them.
9. Get invited to a party that is being given by a prominent or popular individual.
10. Volunteer to help lead a group or organization.
11. Keep your side of the conversation.
12. Be involved in group activities.
13. Find someone to spend a weekend afternoon with.
14. Express your feelings to another person.
15. Find someone to go to lunch with.
16. Ask someone out on a date.
17. Go to a party or social function where you probably won't know anyone.
18. Ask someone for help when you need it.
19. Make friends with a member of your peer group.
20. Join a lunch or dinner table where people are already sitting and talking.
21. Make friends in a group where everyone else knows each other.
22. Ask someone out after s/he was busy the first time you asked.
23. Get a date to a dance that your friends are going to.
24. Call someone you've met and would like to know better.
25. Ask a potential friend out for coffee.

APPENDIX H

PERMISSION TO USE THE PERCEIVED SOCIAL SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

From: [Betz, Nancy](#)
To: [Bernice W. Carmon](#)
Subject: RE: Permission to Use the "Social Self-efficacy Scale (Smith & Betz, 2000)
Date: Tuesday, April 24, 2012 12:04:35 PM
Attachments: [SocialSE.doc](#)
[SMITHBETZJCP2002.pdf](#)
[Lin_Shu-Ping_and_Betz_2009.pdf](#)

Hi here you go, plus 2 additional papers I have coauthored using the scale
 Best wishes
 NB

From: Bernice W Carmon [mailto:bwcarmon@uaa.alaska.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, April 24, 2012 3:49 PM
To: Betz, Nancy
Subject: [SPAM] Permission to Use the 'Social Self-efficacy Scale (Smith & Betz, 2000)
Importance: Low

April 20, 2012

Dr. Betz:

I am writing to request written permission to use the **Social Self-Efficacy Scale** (Smith & Betz, 2000) in my doctoral research.

I would also appreciate receiving a copy of the most current version of the Social Self-Efficacy Scale (SSES) and instructions for administering and scoring the scale.

I would also like to receive any additional information regarding the SSES that you think would be helpful.

My research is being supervised by my dissertation chair, Faye Hummel, Ph. D., Professor, College of Nursing, University of Northern Colorado.

Thank you for your help and prompt attention to my request.

Bernice W. Carmon, RN, MPH, MS
 Doctoral Student - UNCO

APPENDIX I**SENSE OF BELONGING SCALE – REVISED (SBSR)**

Sense of Belonging Scale – REVISED

Directions: Please read each statement carefully. Based on your experience at UAA, use the following scale to rate your agreement with each statement.

Completely Untrue	Mostly Untrue	Equally True and Untrue	Mostly True	Completely True
1	2	3	4	5

1. I have met with classmates outside of class to study for an exam.
2. If I miss class, I know students who I could get notes from.
3. I discuss events which happened outside of class with my classmates.
4. I have discussed personal matters with students who I met in class.
5. I could contact another student from class if I had a question.
6. Other students are helpful in reminding me when assignments are due or when tests are approaching.
7. I have developed personal relationships with other students in class.
8. I invite people I know from class to do things socially.
9. I feel comfortable contributing to class discussions.
10. I feel comfortable asking a question in class.
11. I feel comfortable volunteering ideas or opinions in class.
12. Speaking in class is easy because I feel comfortable.
13. It is difficult to meet other students in class.
14. No one in my classes knows anything personal about me.
15. I rarely talk to other students in my class.
16. I know very few people in my class.
17. I feel comfortable talking about a problem with faculty.
18. I feel comfortable asking a teacher for help if I do not understand course-related material.
19. I feel that a faculty member would be sensitive to my difficulties if I shared them.
20. I feel comfortable socializing with a faculty member outside of class.
21. I feel that a faculty member would be sympathetic if I was upset.
22. I feel that a faculty member would take the time to talk to me if I needed help.
23. If I had a reason, I would feel comfortable seeking help from a faculty member outside of class time (office hours, etc.)
24. I feel comfortable seeking help from a teacher before or after class.
25. I feel that a faculty member really tried to understand my problem when I talked about it.
26. I feel comfortable asking a teacher for help with a personal problem.

APPENDIX J**PERMISSION TO USE SENSE OF BELONGING SCALE**

From: [Kandice Salomone](#)
To: [BERNICE CARMON](#)
Cc: ["Morrow, Jennifer Ann"](#)
Subject: RE: Permission to Use the "Sense of Belonging Scale" (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow & Salomone, 2002)
Date: Thursday, January 26, 2012 9:11:00 AM

Dear Bernice,

Dr. Morrow is correct. That's the beauty of academic research. I look forward to your results and the context in which you use the scale.

All best,
Kandice

Kandice L. Salomone, Ph.D. | Associate Dean |
 The College of Arts and Sciences
 Syracuse University
 329 Hall of Languages | Syracuse, New York 13244
 t: 315.443.9396 f: 315.443.9397 e: salomone@syr.edu

From: Morrow, Jennifer Ann [mailto:jamorrow@utk.edu]
Sent: Thursday, January 26, 2012 1:05 PM
To: BERNICE CARMON; Kandice Salomone
Subject: RE: Permission to Use the 'Sense of Belonging Scale' (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow & Salomone, 2002)

Bernice,

You don't need anyone's permission to use the Sense of Belonging scale, it is freely available in the article (see attached). I've also attached a revision of the scale coding (we now use 4 subscales instead of 5).

Good luck with your research.

Dr. Morrow

APPENDIX K

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

**Willingness to Seek Academic Help in Preclinical Nursing Students:
The Influence of Social Self-efficacy and Learning Environment**

Recruitment Letter

Date

Re: Participation in research study

Dear Pre-clinical Nursing Student,

My name is Bernice Carmon and I am a doctoral student at the University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) and a member of the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) School of Nursing faculty. I invite you to participate in the research study I am conducting as part of my doctoral studies at UNCO. My study is designed to help faculty gain a better understanding of how likely students are to seek help when they experience academic challenges. With a better understanding of students' help-seeking behavior, faculty might be able to design more effective ways to help students be successful in the nursing program.

Your participation would consist of completing a 10 – 15 minute survey online. The School of Nursing program assistant, Ms. Jessica Salas, has control of all student information and she is assisting me with my study by emailing you to ask if you will participate in my research study.

Contact people are listed for you on the consent form, if you have any questions or concerns. Click on the link below to give your consent and complete the survey. Your return of the survey will imply that you have read the consent and that you consent to participate in this study.

Your decision to take part or not to take part in this study will not affect any services you receive at the School of Nursing, including progression into the clinical nursing courses.

As a thank you for your participation, when you have fully completed the survey, you will have the option of entering your name in a lottery to receive one of four \$50.00 gift certificates to the UAA bookstore. Your name will be separated from your survey and entered into the lottery for the drawing which will occur within two weeks after data collection ends.

Sincerely,

Bernice W. Carmon, RN, MS, MPH

[Insert Survey Link Here]

APPENDIX L
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FORM

Demographic/Biographical Form

1. Age (in years) _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Race/Ethnicity

____Asian American	____Latino/Hispanic
____Black/African American	____Alaska Native/American Indian
____White/European American	____Pacific Islander
____Bi/Multi-Racial	____Filipino
____Other _____	
4. Did either of your parents graduate from a 4-year college?
____Yes ____No
5. How many college credit hours have you completed? _____
6. Highest degree earned _____
7. Do you consider your upbringing more rural or urban?
____Rural
____Urban
8. Cumulative grade point average (GPA) _____
9. Average hours of paid work per week while attending college _____
10. Is English your primary language?
____Yes ____No