

THE RELATION OF FEAR OF FAILURE, PROCRASTINATION AND SELF-EFFICACY  
TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN COLLEGE FOR FIRST AND NON FIRST-GENERATION  
STUDENTS IN A PRIVATE NON-SELECTIVE INSTITUTION

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## ABSTRACT

First-generation students enroll in college expecting to be the first in their families to obtain a bachelor's degree, yet historically; the number of these students who graduate with four-year degrees is much lower than their non first-generation peers (Nunez & Cuccara-Alamin; Choy, 2001; Glenn, 2008). Limited research exists on the psychological/motivational factors on this sub-population of students (McGregor, Mayleben, Buzzanga, Davis, & Becker, 1991; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak & Terenzini, 2004). This quantitative study researched fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy of first and non first-generation students to determine if there were differences between the two groups. Gender, ethnicity and income level of students were included in the study to determine what, if any role these variables had on the levels of fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy of students. Lastly, fear of failure, procrastination, self-efficacy, gender, generational status, ethnicity, and income were entered into a multiple regression analysis to determine what factors, if any, impacted a student's college success as measured by academic GPA.

The study found no significant differences on fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy between first and non first-generation students, except on one sub-scale of fear of failure in which first-generation freshmen students were more fearful of having an unknown future than their peers. However, fear of failure appears to be prevalent in various degrees among all the college students in this study. Gender differences for fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy were significant. The study found that females have significantly more fear of failure than males, males procrastinate at significantly higher levels than do females, and females have more academic self-efficacy than do males. A multiple regression analysis indicated that gender,

procrastination, self-efficacy, and ethnicity are predictive of academic success. Females and Caucasian students received higher first-semester GPA's than did males and minority students. Procrastination is negatively associated with GPA, and self-efficacy is positively associated with GPA.

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## CHAPTER I:

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Introduction to the Problem**

“It was just that I was afraid,” declared Carlos, describing the academic experience of his first semester English composition course at Lakeshore Community College (Cox, 2009, p. 67). Acknowledging that his first assignment was extremely anxiety producing and that fear initially paralyzed his efforts to proceed, Carlos eventually attempted the writing of his essay and received a passing grade. Unfortunately for many college students, fear of failure may be such an overwhelming experience that they sabotage their own academic success (Thompson, 1999; Birney, Burdick, & Teevan, 1969; Conroy & Elliot, 2004; Sokolowska, 2009; Elliott & Thrash, 2004). Jennifer, a second Lakeshore student, described her first semester college experience:

I called my mom up, and I was like, “I quit! Yeah, I quit here.” She was like, ‘How do you plan on living?’ I told her, “I don’t know. I don’t know how I plan on living. I don’t care.” And she said, “Jenn, it can’t be that bad and I was like, “you want to hear what the hell I have to do?” And I went syllabus-by-syllabus, day by day. (Cox, 2009, p. 64-65)

Transitioning from high school to college is a stressful event for most students, but for those doubtful of their ability to succeed and afraid of failure, the experience is extremely anxiety provoking (Bui, 2002; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). Unfortunately, some students give up before attempting their coursework and leave college within the first several weeks; others who are fearful of failure but decide to stay in school, find ways to navigate through the college experience without realizing their full potential as student scholars. As access to higher education increases, so do the number of students entering college academically underprepared and unconfident in their ability to succeed (Engstrom & Tinto,

2008). The phenomenon is a national dilemma not only impacting students, but faculty, staff, and administrators in higher education. Stand in any university hallway long enough to overhear faculty conversing about their undergraduate students and the topic inevitably turns to the frustration of motivating and teaching those who come to college lacking the skills, internal motivation, and confidence to succeed. In the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Smallwood (2005) detailed data from the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, indicating that more than 40% of professors believe their students are underprepared and lack the basic skills to do college level work. In addition, 56% of the professors surveyed stated that working with underprepared students was a source of stress.

Students who come to college lacking confidence, motivation, and/or basic academic skills seem to have two options available. On the one hand, they may fully engage in their studies, working hard to succeed. Should these students do well, they build academic self-efficacy, the belief that they have what it takes to succeed (Bandura, 1977). On the other hand, students who enter college underprepared risk the possibility of failure from lack of ability (Beery, 1975). Rather than risk failure, they may opt instead to undermine or sabotage their chance for success by exhibiting behaviors such as procrastinating. If a student procrastinates to the point of failure, he or she possesses a ready-made excuse for failure; the failure is attributed to something other than lack of ability (Berry, 1975). According to Cox (2009), “the loss or failure that could prove most debilitating to the ego is the one that definitively proves that the student is not college material” (p. 57). If students decide not to try, they need not accept the risk that accompanies hard work, the risk that they may not succeed.

To date, limited empirical research exists on the phenomenon of fear of failure and the impact it may have on underprepared college students, particularly in the sub-population of first-

generation students. First-generation students who are the first in their families to attend or graduate from college tend to enroll in college lacking adequate academic preparation and confidence in their ability to succeed (Bui, 2002; Penrose, 2002). It is possible that fear of failure may be an obstacle to the academic success of first-generation students: however no research exists to support this supposition. Cox's (2009) qualitative study at a community college is one of only two studies found in the literature to suggest that fear of failure may be problematic for underprepared students, but the study did not specifically target first-generation students. Khanh Bui (2002) conducted a study at a large four-year public institution finding a significant difference between first-generation and non first-generation students on the survey statement, "I am afraid of failing in college." Bui's study established a primary basis for further investigation; however, research has yet to empirically determine if fear of failure is more prevalent among first-generation students, nor whether it has any effect on a student's academic success.

Additionally, the studies on fear of failure have been at two- and four-year public colleges and according to the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), the number of first-generation students choosing private institutions over public has trended higher in recent years (Hurtado, Pryor, Korn, & Saenz, 2007). Moreover, according to Astin and Lee (1972), studies are extremely limited on students who choose to attend small, private colleges with limited resources, which they termed 'invisible colleges.' For these reasons, this study investigated the effects of fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy, in first and non-first generation students at a small, private, 'invisible' university in southeastern United States. The purpose of this study was to determine if fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy are significantly different in first and non first-generation students and whether the variables are correlated with

academic success. A quantitative study was conducted with approximately 237 first and non-first generation students.

The remainder of this chapter will describe the background to the problem, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the definition of terms, limitations, the organization of the study, and the conclusion.

### **Background of the Problem**

For approximately the first 100 years of American higher education, colleges and universities focused on recruiting and educating young Caucasian males from wealthy families, those aspiring to join the ranks of the educated elite. The purpose of higher education in the colonial era consisted of grooming young men as leaders in society (Cross, 1974). Overall, college-bound men were well prepared for higher education. Much has changed in American higher education over the last three and a half centuries. The federal Morrill Acts in 1862 and 1890, awarded land to each state to sell for the purposes of establishing mechanical and agricultural land-grant colleges, thereby expanding the availability of higher education to a wider audience of students (Stephens, 2001). The purpose of higher education in the United States was changing with an ever-growing belief that “every American citizen is entitled to receive some form of higher education” (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976, p. 64).

In 1944, the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act, commonly known as the GI Bill, paved the way for thousands of returning World War I soldiers to enroll in institutions of higher education. In the academic year 1949-1950, college enrollment increased to 2.7 million students, an increase of 80% in one decade (Thelin, 2004). In addition, as a result of the civil rights and women’s movement in the 1960s, the United States government initiated several policy measures to increase access to higher education (Pyror, Hurtado, Saenz, Santos, & Korn, 2007.) The

period from 1945 to 1975 has been termed the “most tumultuous in the history of American higher education” (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2005, p. 61). The new students transformed the landscape of higher education; new learners of the seventies included ethnic minorities, women, and low-achieving Caucasians, the majority of which were first-generation students (Cross, 1974).

Seeking a better life for themselves, a new population of students, many of whom were the first in their families to attend college, sought education for gainful employment, increased income and social mobility (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2005). Gradually growing numbers of first-generation college students began swelling the classrooms in all levels of higher education: two-year public, four-year public and private institutions (Belcastro, 2009).

As increasing numbers of first-generation students entered college, the landscape of higher education changed. With the passing of the Federal Higher Education Act in 1965, the government initiated support services for low-income, ethnic minority and first-generation students with the goal of helping students to transition from high school to college (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). Because many first-generation students scored in the bottom third on national academic tests, programs were put in place for remediation (Stephens, 2001).

Although the opportunity for first-generation students to attend college has increased over the years, opportunity is no guarantee of success (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). In a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, Glenn (2008) discussed the plight of first-generation students by referring to a College Board study of over 1.1 million students. The study found that first-generation students matriculating into four-year colleges graduated at a rate of 44.9% while their non first-generation peers graduated at a rate of 59%. Additional statistics are just as disturbing. According to Choy (2001), freshman first-generation students are twice as likely as their peers to

leave college before the sophomore year. The same study found that when combining the cohorts of freshman and sophomores together, first-generation students are 8.5 times as likely to leave college before their junior year, as are their peers whose parents graduated from college.

According to the Center for Institutional Research Project (CIRP), Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Santos, and Korn (2007) found the gap between first-generation students and their counterparts is widening rather than decreasing in terms of average high school GPA, the amount of time spent studying, self-ratings of writing and math ability, and academic self-confidence. In a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, Glenn (2009) recounted that even when differences in high-school preparation have been taken into account, first-generation college students are still less likely than their peers to earn baccalaureate degrees.

The first to identify the ‘new students’ to higher education, Cross (1974) speculated that first-generation students did not have positive elementary and high school experiences, suggesting that they were accustomed to low achievement. For the large majority of ‘new students’ to higher education accustomed to average or below average achievement, the threat of failure may be great. When presented with tasks of intermediate difficulty, failure threatened personalities make the decision to fail by not trying at all (Cross, 1974). “When you set out to fail, one thing is certain – you can’t be disappointed” (Cross, 1974, p. 24).

The academic success of first-generation students depends on a multitude of variables and is not as simplistic as a single construct such as fear of failure. There are countless societal, cultural, socio-economic, familial, and personality variables that impact the success in college for this sub-population of students. With full acknowledgement that the issue of academic success of first-generation students is indeed complex, the primary goal of this study was to

understand what, if, if any, the correlation of fear of failure has to the academic success for these students.

### **Problem Statement**

Even as United States President Barack Obama is calling for increased access to college for all Americans coupled with federal programming to increase college graduation rates, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Bushong, 2009) reported that national retention rates for freshmen students have declined to their lowest percentage since 1989. College students known as first-generation are possibly the most researched sub-population in higher education in the past forty years, and yet, retention and graduation rates for these students still lag far behind those of their non first-generation peers (American Council for Education, 2004; Choy, 2001; Nunez & Cuccara-Alamin, 1998). A comparison of three-year persistence rates between first-and non first-generation students indicates a 15% gap, (73% and 88% respectively) (Warburton, Bulgarin, & Nunez, 2001). First-generation students who have the additional risk factor of low-income status are nearly four times as prone to not return for their second year of college (Engle & Tinto, 2008) suggesting that for many of these students, college may merely be a “revolving door” (p. 47). The hopes and dreams of becoming a college graduate are often not realized for first-generation students.

In the midst of abundant literature on the external demographic factors of first-generation students, little research has been done on the internal, psycho-social characteristics of these students (McGregor, Mayleben, Buzzanga, Davis, & Becker, 1991; Wang & Castaneda-Sound, 2008; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Belcastro, 2009). Very limited research has been conducted on the motivational construct of fear of failure in first-generation

students (Rothblum 1990). Furthermore, it is not yet known whether fear of failure is correlated with subsequent academic success in college for first-generation students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to research internal motivational characteristics of first and non-first generation college students, specifically fear of failure and self-efficacy. Additionally, because the behavior of procrastination is highly correlated with fear of failure, (Rothblum, 1990), the study also assessed procrastination behaviors. According to Chemers, Hu, and Garcia (2001), the “psychological orientations that students bring to the transition of university life are critical to their success in the new setting” (p. 62); however, limited research exists on these factors in first-generation students (McGregor et al., 1991). This quantitative study first sought to understand if there were differences between first and non first-generation students (independent variables) on three variables, fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy (dependent variables).

In the second part of this study, the variables of gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status of student participants were related with the factors of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy to determine what, if any, relationship exists. Finally, this study related the variables of fear of failure, procrastination, self-efficacy, generational status, ethnicity, gender, and income to the academic success of the study’s participants at Southeastern. Academic success was measured by the fall end of semester cumulative GPA.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Are there significant differences between first and non first-generation college students on the factors of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy;

- a. Do first-generation students experience higher levels of fear of failure than non-first-generation students;
  - b. Do first-generation students procrastinate on academic tasks at higher rates than non first-generation students;
  - c. Do non first-generation students have higher levels of self-efficacy than first-generation students;
2. Does gender relate significantly to the factors of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy of college students;
- a. Are there significant differences between males and females on the variable of fear of failure;
  - b. Are there significant differences between males and females on the variable of procrastination;
  - c. Are there significant differences between males and females on the variable of self-efficacy;
3. Does ethnicity relate significantly to the factors of fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy of college students;
- a. Are there significant differences among ethnic groups on the variable of fear of failure;
  - b. Are there significant differences among ethnic groups on the variable of procrastination;
  - c. Are there significant differences among ethnic groups on the variable of self-efficacy;

4. Does socio-economic status relate significantly to the factors of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy of college students;
  - a. Are there significant differences among groups of students in various income levels on the variable of fear of failure;
  - b. Are there significant differences among groups of students in various income level brackets on the variable of procrastination;
  - c. Are there significant differences among groups of students in various income level brackets on the variable of self-efficacy;
5. Are there significant differences between freshmen and sophomore students on the variables of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy; and
6. How do the factors of fear of failure, procrastination, self-efficacy, income, generational status, ethnicity, and gender relate with academic success of college students as measured by end of semester cumulative GPA?

### **Significance of the Study**

As access to higher education increases and the population of the United States increases in diversity, additional opportunities will arise for first-generation students to attend four-year institutions (NCES, 2006). Enrollment into four-year institutions is projected to continue increasing through 2021 with full-time enrollment rising more quickly than part-time enrollment (NCES, 2013). The baccalaureate degree is quickly replacing the high school diploma as a minimum requirement for employment in a variety of settings (Pryor et al., 2007). Data gathered from the CIRP survey indicate a changing trend in the last decade of the number of first-generation students choosing four-year institutions over two-year community colleges (Pryor et

al., 2007). Over the last three decades degree aspirations of first-generation students have also risen with more first-generation students aiming for graduate education.

Mounting inequality exists between first-generation student's aspirations and the reality of outcomes. The information we have gathered over the last forty years on first-generation students informs practice and policy in higher education, and yet, retention and graduation in college for this population lags behind students whose parents attended and graduated from college. Because limited research exists on the psycho-social characteristics of this population, the present study provides answers to a gap in the literature and can inform policy and practice to help first-generation students succeed.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms and definitions will be utilized throughout the present study.

**First-generation Student:** A student for whom neither parent nor guardian graduated with a four-year bachelor's degree (U. S. Department of Education, 1996).

**Non First-generation Student:** A student for whom at least one parent or guardian graduated with a four-year bachelor's degree (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

**Fear of Failure:** "dispositional tendency to avoid failure in achievement settings, because the humiliation and embarrassment of failure is perceived to be overwhelming" (Elliott & Thrash, 2004, p. 958).

**Procrastination:** "the act of needlessly delaying tasks to the point of experiencing subjective discomfort" (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984, p. 503).

**Self-efficacy:** the belief in one's ability to manage and carry out actions that will produce positive outcomes (Bandura, 1977).

Achievement Motivation: motivation for achievement is the consequence of an emotional tension between striving for success and circumventing failure (Atkinson & Feather, 1966).

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of the present study included the following:

1. The study examined first and non first-generation students at Southeastern Christian, a private university; therefore the results are not generalizable to a larger college student population at two and four-year public schools;
2. The study surveyed college students in the general education class entitled *Personal Wholeness* at Southeastern. Given that this course is a new general education requirement at Southeastern, the results may not be generalizable to the larger population of first and non first-generation students who have not taken *Personal Wholeness* at SCU or to the larger college student population at other schools.
3. The study used self-reported data; therefore, there was a risk that students may not report data honestly.
4. Given that Southeastern is a predominately white institution, the number of ethnic minority study participants is extremely low (25 African-American, 10 Hispanic/Other). Therefore the results of the study regarding ethnicity may not be accurate.

### **Summary**

As access to higher education increases, so do the numbers of students entering college academically underprepared and unsure of their ability to succeed (NCES, 2006; Nunez, 2000). Among those students who are at high risk for departure after their first year of college are first-

generation students, who are apt to feel less confident than their peers about succeeding academically (Bui, 2002; Cox, 2009). As previously mentioned, first-generation students in their freshmen and sophomore years of college are 8.5 times more likely to drop out than their counterparts who have at least one parent who graduated from college (Hurtado, 2007). Although researchers have studied first-generation students for over forty years, only a small number of studies have been done on the psycho-social characteristics of this population (McGregor et al., 1998, Belcastro, 2009). This study provides an important gap in the literature by focusing on the motivational construct fear of failure, as well as procrastination and self-efficacy in both first and non first-generation college students and determining if those factors are related to academic success in college.

### **Organization of the Study**

The organization of the study is as follows. Chapter I introduced the background of the problem, problem statement, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions, definition of terms, and limitations. Chapter II will discuss the conceptual framework of the study as well as present a detailed overview of relevant literature. Chapter III introduces the methodological design for the study, clarifies participants, gives an overview of Southeastern Christian University, and discusses data collection and data analysis procedures. Chapter IV presents the results of the study, and Chapter V will discuss the study findings and make recommendations for higher education practitioners as well as areas for future research.

CHAPTER II:  
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

**Introduction**

Chapter II presents the conceptual framework upon which this study was conducted, briefly introducing the concepts of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy. These concepts will be integrated into the conceptual framework through the theory of self-worth protection (Beery, 1975; Thompson, 1999, Conroy, 2001). Following the discussion and illustration of the conceptual framework, a more detailed explanation of each of the variables used in the study will be presented. Research literature related to self-efficacy including social-cognitive aspects of self-efficacy, increasing and building self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy related to college students will be discussed.

Next, literature on fear of failure will be fully explained, as both a motivational construct and a cognitive process. The affective consequences for students with high levels of fear of failure will be presented. Research literature on procrastination and the relationship to fear of failure will be discussed. Finally, a review of the extant literature on first-generation students will be presented followed by a discussion on the necessity and justification for studying first-generation students in light of the variables, fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy.

**Conceptual Framework**

The framework for this study consists of several well-known concepts: a) fear of failure (Beery, 1975; Thompson, 1999; Conroy, 2004); b) self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997); and c) procrastination (Rothblum, 1984). The concepts for the framework are incorporated into the

conceptual model through the cornerstone theory of self-worth protection developed by Beery (1975), Covington and Beery (1976) and further elaborated upon by Covington and Omelich, (1991) and Thompson (1999).

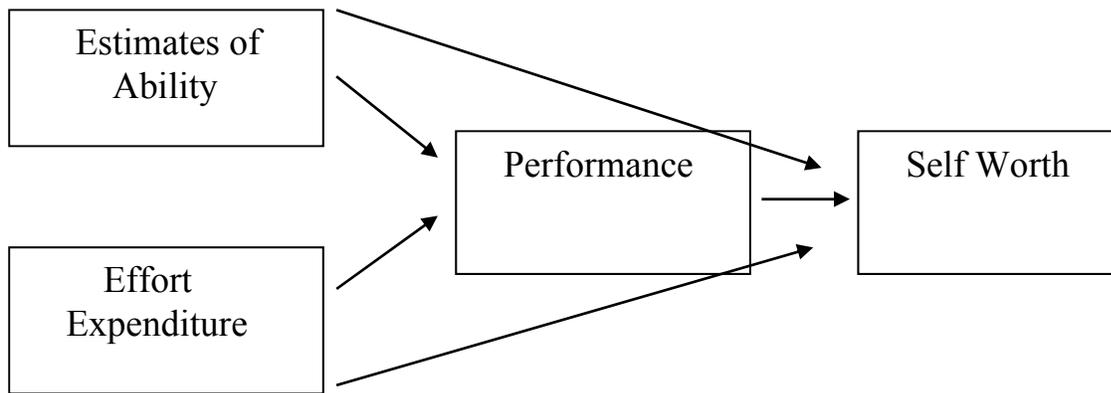
### **Self-Worth Theory**

Self-worth theory of protection posits that as an individual competes successfully with others' self esteem and self worth increase. Lack of achievement is to be avoided so that self worth may be protected. According to self-worth theory, first-generation students who are the first in their families to attend and/or graduate from college may be taking great risks through the pursuance of a higher education degree. Because no one in their family has graduated from college, first-generation students must face the academic and social challenges of college chiefly on their own, often lacking the benefit of a supportive familial network their non first-generation peers enjoy. If they succeed, their families will be proud. If they should fail, they risk disappointment of their family members as well as a possible significant loss to their self-esteem and self-worth.

In America's achievement-driven society, many individuals measure their self worth on what they are able to achieve (Covington & Omelich, 1991). Ability and one's perception of ability is broadly alleged as the primary cause of success (Covington, Spratt, & Omelich, 1980). Perceptions of inability are to be avoided. In his seminal work on self-worth and academic achievement, Beery (1975) discusses the dilemma faced by many students:

If individuals believe that they must possess an extremely high level of ability to be okay, to be worthwhile, and that anything less is tantamount to stupidity and makes them worthless, then any kind of evaluative situation is, naturally, going to be extremely threatening. They must either do a supreme job or else have a good excuse, some attributional focus rather than limited ability. So given these internalized assumptions, their natural response, their most readily available coping response, is to make sure that they have such an excuse ready in advance, to make sure that their limitations in performance do not reflect on their ability. (p. 200)

Beery (1975) has suggested that this internal dynamic is subtle and dangerous because it may occur without recognition to the individual as well as to school administrators, such as college support personnel. Because ability and hard work are valued in our society and particularly in higher education institutions, some students would prefer to underachieve on purpose through self-handicapping and procrastinating, and “endure the pangs of guilt rather than the humiliation of incompetence” (Covington, 1984, p. 11). Figure 1 depicts Covington’s visual representation of self worth.



*Figure 1.* Covington’s theory of self-worth. This operates under the assumption that there are several causes impacting an individual’s sense of worth: performance level, self-estimates of ability, and effort expenditure.

As an individual performs well, he/she builds a sense of self-worth indicated by the arrow from performance to self worth in Figure 1. Secondly, the arrow from ability directly to self-worth implies that perceptions of ability can influence self worth even in the absence of performance. Without performance though, perceptions of ability will not endure. Students must eventually perform adequately to sustain a sense of self worth. Lastly, effort is highly valued in the American school system and students who try hard, even though they may not have stellar performances, are recognized by teachers for their efforts.

The theory of self-worth, the foundation of the conceptual framework for this study, helps to further paint the picture for first-generation students who may come to college with low self-efficacy beliefs about their ability to perform academic tasks. If low self-efficacy leads a student to self-sabotage their academic success through procrastination, then it is unlikely that the student will perform adequately. Students who consistently underperform academically will suffer from a low sense of self-worth in college and may not persist. Covington and Omelich's (1982) study found that feelings of self-regard or worth were dependent on perceived ability and achievement. The researchers concluded that "by the time individuals (especially college students) reach young adulthood, they base concepts of their worth on self-perceptions of competency" (p. 9).

Effort then, is a "double-edge sword" in which students are forced to choose between trying hard and risking humiliation or not trying hard and preserving self-worth (Covington, 1984 pp. 10). The fear of humiliation and shame associated with trying and not succeeding leads some students to underachieve. In the conceptual framework for this study, self worth is the foundational theory, fear of failure is the primary concept, and self-efficacy and procrastination are secondary concepts that further complement the conceptual framework. The following paragraphs briefly discuss the concepts of fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy and their connections to self-worth protection theory.

**Fear of failure.** No one enjoys the experience of failure. Depending on the consequences of the failure and the dispositional tendencies of the individual involved, failure may be seen as an opportunity for growth and development (Axelton, 1998; Diller, 1995). According to Alfi, Assor, and Katz (2004), students are more likely to be prepared for future life challenges when their parents and teachers allow them to temporarily fail, but subsequently use

the opportunity to teach coping skills. While individuals can benefit from failure, for some people, the fear of failure is so threatening and anxiety producing, that any evaluative situation is cause for distress (Covington, 1984).

Fear of failure is often viewed as a “dispositional tendency to avoid failure in achievement settings” because the humiliation and embarrassment from failure are perceived to be overwhelming (Elliott & Thrash, 2004, p. 958). Unfortunately, students with a propensity towards fear of failure often take on maladaptive behaviors, such as expending little or low effort on academic tasks, consequently setting themselves up for the very thing they fear: failure (Covington, 1984).

Beery (1975) was one of the earliest educational researchers conducting case studies on fear of failure at the University of Berkeley. He found fear of failure to be quite common among college students. Beery stated that

If a person states an aspiration below his or her level of assured success, the person can't lose; any score will seem a success. Students can study too little. They can study too late. They can study inefficiently, using poor study habits or trusting to luck (reading only half the material, for example, and hoping the exam will not cover anything else). They can in fact, find themselves victimized by unconscious blocks, such as physical symptoms that strike while they are studying or thinking about studying. Or more frequently, they are distracted, they daydream, they remember something that needs to be done right now. (p. 198).

Withdrawing from attempts at academic work enables some students to attribute failure to a lack of effort rather than ability, thereby protecting the self worth (Cox, 2009; Beery, 1975; Thompson, 1999). In their seminal work, motivational theorists (Murray, 1938; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953) hypothesized that motivation for achievement is the consequence of an emotional tension between striving for success and circumventing failure. The researchers labeled the motivation for circumventing failure, fear of failure. For some students, possessing a fear of failure manifests itself in perfectionist tendencies (Beery, 1975). In

other students, fear of failure creates the potential for behaviors that sabotage their academic success (Rothblum, 1990). These students appear to lack self-confidence in academic settings, so rather than risk the shame and embarrassment of failing; they often find excuses to underperform (Beery, 1975). For students with a strong fear of failure, one way to preserve self-esteem and self-worth is to procrastinate on academic tasks (Beery, 1975).

**Procrastination.** Procrastination is one way that students self-handicap and undermine their efforts to succeed in college (Rothblum, 1984; Covington & Omelich, 1979; Martin & Marsh, 2001; Senecal, Koestner, & Vallerand, 1995; Schouwenburg, 1992; Urda & Midgley, 2001; Day, Mensink, & O’Sullivan, 2000; Ferrari, Keane, Wolf, & Beck, 1998). Procrastination defined by Tuckman (1991) is a “tendency to put off or completely avoid an activity under one’s control” (p. 474). Solomon and Rothblum (1984) have suggested an additional element to the definition of procrastination defining it as “the act of needlessly delaying tasks to the point of experiencing subjective discomfort” (p. 503). Procrastinating behaviors may include such activities as waiting until the hour before an exam to study or writing a twenty-page research paper the night before it is due. In the short-term, procrastination may relieve a student of the shame and embarrassment of failure (Covington, 1992; Tice, 1991). Unfortunately, protecting oneself from short-term shame and embarrassment through procrastinating on academic tasks often leads to lower levels of performance and possible failure (Urda & Midgley, 2001).

Solomon and Rothblum (1984) developed a schematic to represent the pathway for students who procrastinate due to a fear of failure. Students with a high level of fear of failure encounter anxiety as a task deadline approaches. As a way of relieving anxiety, the student procrastinates on the task, thereby reinforcing avoidance behavior. As students procrastinate, they internalize negative self-beliefs, which in turn increase anxiety (see Figure 2).

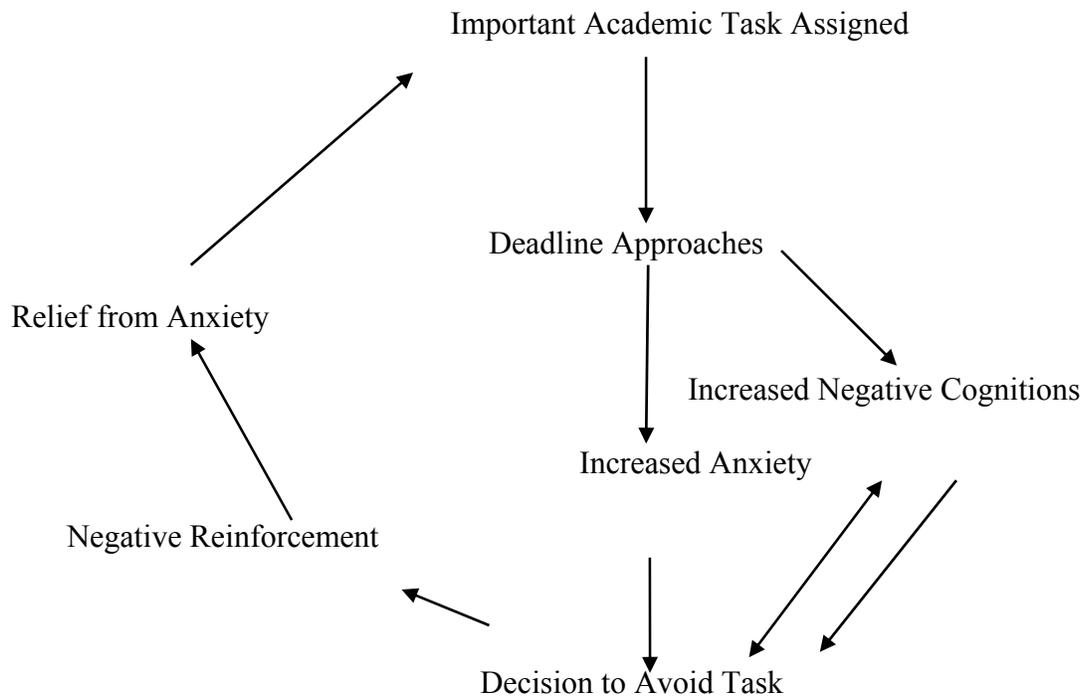


Figure 2. Solomon and Rothblum’s Avoidance Diagram of Procrastination

Solomon and Rothblum’s visual aid describes the interplay of affective, cognitive and behavioral aspects of students with high levels of fear of failure. Students with high levels of fear of failure, when faced with an important academic assignment in college, develop extreme anxiety as the assignment deadline approaches. Anxiety reinforces the student’s low self-efficacy, and the decision is made to avoid the assignment altogether. Anxiety relief is short-lived for this student, as the negative ramification for avoiding the assignment, failure, reinforces the student’s belief that he or she does not have what it takes to be successful in college.

**Self-efficacy.** College students, like Carlos in Cox’s (2009) study, who try in spite of fear of failure and are successful in their attempts, build self-efficacy, the belief that they can perform the necessary tasks to produce positive outcomes (Bandura, 1977). The qualities of self-efficacy and self-esteem lead students to persevere when faced with academic obstacles, even in situations where the risk of failure is evident (Newton, Khanna, & Thompson, 2008). Students

who believe they possess the organizational skills and cognitive ability to perform academic tasks are much more likely to maintain motivation needed to sustain academic effort (Bandura, 1977; McFarlin, Baumeister, & Blascovich, 1984; Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

According to Caraway, Tucker, Rienke, and Hall (2003), an inverse correlation exists between self-efficacy and fear of failure. As self-efficacy increases, fear of failure decreases. Likewise, as fear of failure increases, self-efficacy decreases. Conceptually then, a student with a high level of fear of failure may have a tendency to procrastinate more on academic tasks, while a student with low fear of failure, and high self-efficacy would tend to procrastinate less on academic tasks. Procrastination has been inversely correlated with academic self-efficacy in college students (Klassen, Krawchuk, & Rajani, 2008).

The conceptual model developed for this study and illustrated in Figures 3 and 4 provides a framework for which to assess the study variables for both first and non first-generation college students.

### Conceptual Model

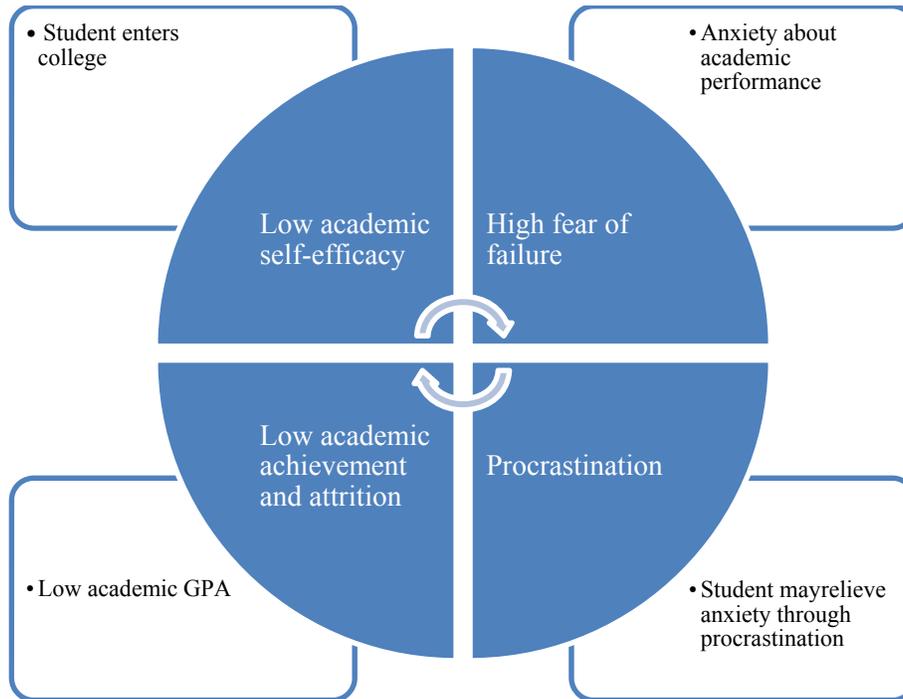
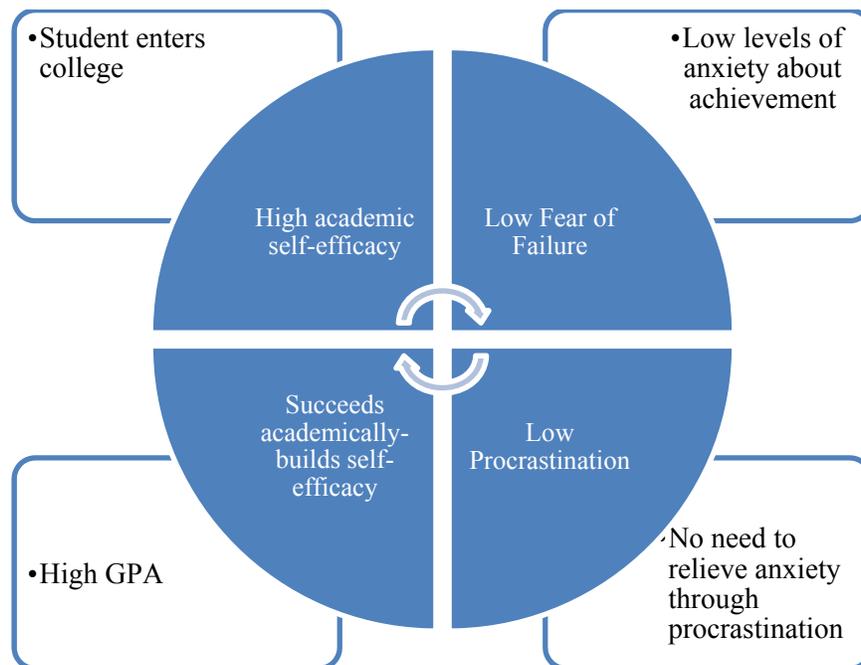


Figure 3. College Student with High Fear of Failure and Low Academic Self-Efficacy

The conceptual model for this study focuses on an individual college student’s beliefs about his or her ability or lack thereof to be successful in college. In Figure 3, a student enters college with low academic self-efficacy. As he or she is challenged by the rigor of college courses, anxiety about performance increases. If the student with low academic self-efficacy and high fear of failure does not seek out and find academic support, the temptation to relieve anxiety through procrastination is an option. The relief is only temporary, as procrastination makes it more difficult to succeed academically. The model provides a conceptual framework in which the study variables may be related to one another. The framework is not meant to indicate causality of one variable to another; for example, the model does not indicate that fear of failure leads to or causes procrastination in students.



*Figure 4.* College Student with Low Fear of Failure and High Academic Self-Efficacy

In Figure 4, a student comes to college fairly confident in his or her ability to succeed. Having academic self-efficacy, this student meets academic challenges with persistence. When faced with academic set-backs, this student seeks out support systems and manages his or her anxiety about performance by studying hard. If the student is successful, academic self-efficacy continues to increase. This student is more likely to obtain good grades in college and persist. The conceptual model for this study provides a framework for how the variables fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy are interrelated in this study. The model also hypothesizes what may be occurring in the college experience of first-generation students, and provides a basis for the research questions examined in the present study. The following section provides a more thorough discussion regarding the research literature on self-efficacy.

## **Self-Efficacy**

Bandura (1977; 1986; 1997) explained self-efficacy as the belief in one's ability to manage and carry out actions that will produce positive outcomes. Self-efficacy impacts all areas of an individual's life: decision-making, perseverance in difficult situations, thought patterns, and stress levels (Caraway, Tucker, Reinke, & Hall, 2003; Bandura 1991). Self-efficacy affects the way an individual thinks, behaves, and feels (Caraway et al., 2003). The subsequent subsections highlight the extant research in the following categories: 1) social-cognitive aspects of self-efficacy; 2) increasing and building self-efficacy; 3) academic self-efficacy; and 4) academic self-efficacy and college students.

### **Social-Cognitive Aspects of Self-Efficacy**

According to the social-cognitive theory of Bandura (1977), individuals are apt to engage in activities in which they deem themselves likely to succeed, whereas they tend to avoid intimidating situations in which they feel they lack coping skills. By engaging in activities initially deemed threatening and consequently succeeding, people counteract their fears and gain a sense of mastery, thereby increasing self-efficacy. Motivation is partially embedded in cognitive actions; thinking and believing that one is capable of successful performances produces a source of motivation for acting upon those thoughts and beliefs.

As a construct of human motivation, self-efficacy has been shown to be malleable (Cervone & Peake, 1986). The researchers in this study found they were able to increase or decrease self-efficacy by randomly assigning high or low performance numbers to a participant. If the participant received a high score on performance, they persisted with the activity longer; those receiving low performance scores persisted at lower levels. In another study, Zimmerman

(2000) also found self-efficacy in students to be responsive to slight changes in their academic performance.

### **Building and Increasing Self-Efficacy**

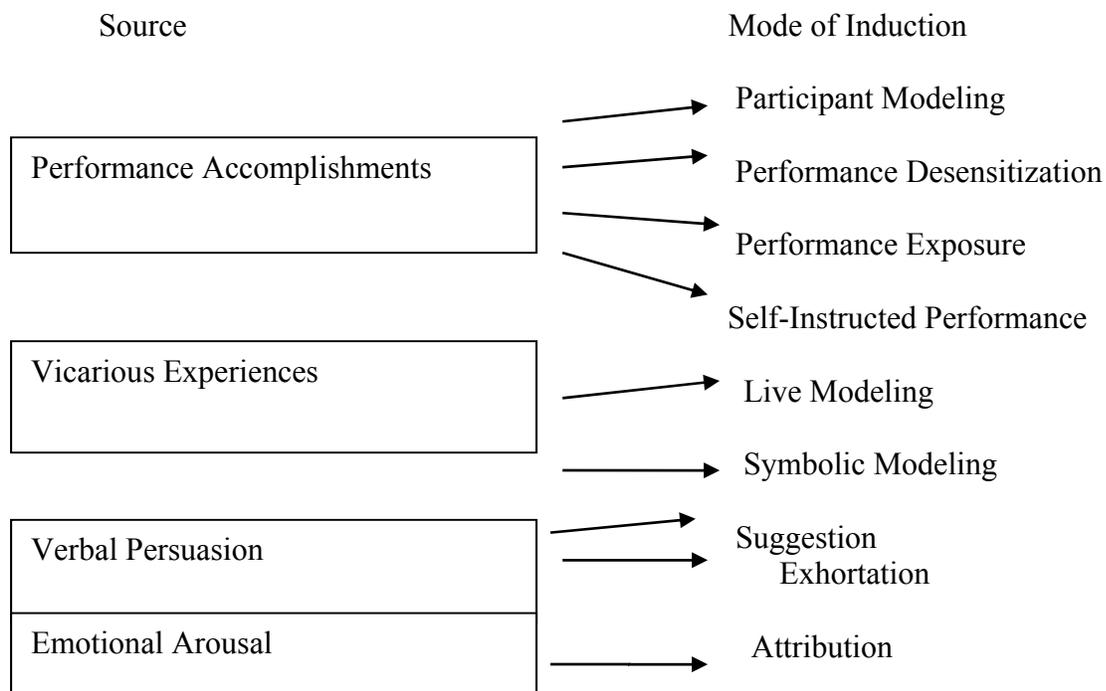
According to Bandura's theory, self-efficacy is dependent on four key factors:

1) performance mastery; 2) vicarious experience; 3) verbal influence; and 4) physiological states. Bandura's (1977) conceptual model of building self-efficacy focuses on the interrelation of one successfully performing an action, receiving vicarious experiences through the modeling of others, receiving verbal rewards, encouragement and influence by others, and the physiological state of being that one experiences before, during or after a successful performance. Figure 1 shows the source of each of these influences on self-efficacy. Of the four factors contributing to self-efficacy, mastering a performance is the most crucial. Being successful raises one's expectations that he/she can master a task, whereas failure decreases the expectation. Bandura suggests that the timing of success or failure is critical to self-efficacy. If early attempts at mastery are successful, self-efficacy expectations are increased and future failures may not have a strong negative impact. If early attempts at mastery are unsuccessful, it is less likely that self-efficacy will increase.

While successfully accomplishing a task alone is highly effective in increasing self-efficacy, vicarious experiences are also effective. As a child watches his or her parents successfully master a task, they are likely to believe they are also capable of successful performance. Verbal persuasion is often used at attempts to increase self-efficacy. While parental or peer verbal encouragement may be used to increase self-efficacy, this alone is not enough to increase one's belief of self mastery. Verbal persuasion accompanied by the appropriate environmental conditions will increase the likelihood of success.

Finally, the fourth method of increasing self-efficacy is found through physiological states or emotional arousal accompanying task performance. While positive emotions such as excitement and joy over one's accomplishment encourage self-efficacy, frightening or anxiety producing states are likely to negatively impact one's belief about performance. Emotions of anxiety and fearful thoughts can be paralyzing. Through the avoidance of frightening activities, an individual does not acquire coping skills necessary for successful mastery.

### Efficacy Expectations



*Figure 5.* Bandura's model of self-efficacy (1977).

Bandura's graphic aids us in understanding how individuals build a sense of self-confidence and efficacy in academic endeavors.

**Academic self-efficacy.** Whereas self-efficacy is a multi-component construct that changes depending on the environment and situation, academic self-efficacy is measured by a student's belief in his/her ability to perform academic tasks, such as writing research papers, managing and organizing time, and studying for exams (Zimmerman, 2000; Bandura, 1986, Pajares, 1996). A college student may possess general self-efficacy, believing in the capability to master general life situations, but possess low self-efficacy in academic settings. While there may be overlap between social self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy, Hall, Smith, and Chia (2008) have suggested that academic self-efficacy is situation specific and must be measured as such. As mentioned earlier, self-efficacy can be responsive to slight changes in the academic performance of students (Zimmerman, 2000). A student who improves in academic performance will also tend to increase his/her academic self-efficacy.

**Academic self-efficacy and college students.** Believing in one's capability to organize and successfully achieve in academic settings determines the amount of effort and energy expended, as well as the capacity to persevere in the face of challenge and possible failure (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001). Self-efficacy has been correlated with student persistence in college, motivation, and achievement in academic settings (Bandura, 1986; Zimmerman, 1989; Schunk, 1984; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991). Academic self-efficacy has also been positively correlated with increased grade point average as well as persistence in college (Lent, Brown, & Larkin 1984, 1989; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992; Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005; Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Bong, 2001). In addition, self-efficacy is positively correlated with an increase in the number of hours a student studies, as well as how satisfied students are with college life (Torres & Solberg, 2001; DeWitz & Walsh, 2002).

Lastly, self-efficacy is positively correlated with purpose in life in college students (DeWitz, Woolsey, & Walsh, 2009).

Even though self-efficacy is malleable and may be increased, people with extremely low self-efficacy may not initiate or attempt coping behavior at all, thereby reinforcing the self-belief of inadequacy (Bandura, 1977). Believing that one will not succeed sets the stage for “self debilitating expectations and fears” (Bandura, 1977, p. 194). Students with low levels of self-efficacy may perceive academically rigorous challenges as too threatening, giving up early or avoiding the task altogether (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are less likely to perceive academic challenges as anxiety-producing threats and are less likely to experience fear of failure (Betz & Hackett, 1983).

### **Fear of Failure**

Regardless of whether one is on the football field, theatrical stage, tennis court, or college classroom, the desire to avoid failure is a motivating factor for performance (Elliot & Thrash, 2004). Fear of failure has a host of negative consequences including amount of effort expended, task persistence, achievement, and motivation (Birney, Burdick, & Teevan, 1969; Heckhausen, 1975; Atkinson & Feather, 1966). According to Elliot and Church (1997), individuals motivated to avoid failure adopt avoidance-based strategies and goals. The following sub-sections will discuss fear of failure from four perspectives: a) psycho-social (parental influence); b) need achievement motivation; c) cognitive aspects; and d) behavioral outcomes. Because first-generation students are more likely to be female and a significant proportion of first-generation students are ethnic minorities (Nunez & Cuccara-Alamin, 1998), the following discussion on fear of failure includes sub-sections on gender and ethnicity.

## **Psycho-Social Perspective/Parental Influences of Fear of Failure**

Although limited in scale compared to other interpretations of fear of failure (Rothblum, 1990), the parental influence on fear of failure is an appropriate place to begin our discussion as it offers understanding of the phenomenon through looking at the experiences of children with their parents. Early childhood experiences are viewed by some as critical in the development of a propensity towards fear of failure (Covington, 1984), although there is scant research on the origins of fear of failure (Elliot & Thrash, 2004).

Parents who raise children with consistent clear rules of conduct and allow their children to explore the world with freedom are more likely to instill in them the need for success (Winterbottom, 1953); while parents who are consistently punitive when their children fail but are noncommittal when their children succeed tend to raise children with a propensity towards fear of failure (Teevan & Fischer, 1967; Teevan, 1983). Excessively high parental expectations have also been linked to fear of failure in children (Argyle & Robinson, 1962). Singh (1992) found a link between the pessimistic personalities of mothers and fear of failure in their children.

Elliot and Thrash (2004) found a significant positive correlation between parental fear of failure and fear of failure in their children, indicating that the construct of fear of failure may be transmitted from one generation to the next. In the study of 149 undergraduates and their parents, Elliot and Thrash found that students whose parents feared failure were more likely to fear failure themselves and to avoid performance goals in the classroom.

Furthermore, conflicting parental messages regarding success have been implicated in subsequent fear of failure in male college students (Hendon, 1972). Children who receive conflicting messages from parents may fail as a means of coping with the inconsistency “with father’s who are afraid of their son’s potency, and with mothers who constrict them, these

students are victims of families that have encouraged them to pursue goals they did not really want them to achieve” (Henden, 1972, p. 134).

### **Fear of Failure as Need Achievement Motivation**

In America’s achievement-driven society, students find themselves wedged between the contradictory needs of achieving success and avoiding failure (Birney, Burdick, & Teevan, 1969). Whereas teachers promote achievement through encouraging effort and rewarding acts of endeavor, the decision is left up to students as to how much effort to expend on academic tasks. The risk is great. Students who apply significant effort to academic tasks and are found lacking risk shame and embarrassment. Students who expend moderate or low amounts of academic effort have a ready-made excuse for low achievement or failure.

The American work ethic, espoused by parents and teachers alike, rewards students for trying even when they are found lacking (Covington & Omelich, 1979). Wiener (1972, 1974) found that students who expended effort in academic settings were “rewarded more in success and punished less in failure than those who do not try” (cited in Covington & Omelich, 1979, p. 169).

According to McClelland et al. (1953), the need to achieve is a stable dispositional tendency found in success-oriented people, whereas the need to avoid failure is a dispositional tendency found in failure-threatened people. Historically, fear of failure as an established personality trait stems from problems such as “anxiety, guilt, shame, and feelings of inferiority” (Birney, Burdick, & Teevan, 1969, p. 2). Theorists Atkinson and Feather (1966) present an image of the person who avoids failure at all costs:

He is dominated by the threat of failure, and so resists activities in which his competence might be evaluated against a standard or the competence of others. When forced into achievement-oriented activities, he is most threatened by what the other fellow considers the greatest challenge. He will defend himself by under-taking activities in which success

is virtually assured or activities which offer so little chance of success that the appearance of trying to do a very difficult thing more than compensates for repeated and minimally embarrassing failures. Given opportunity to quit an activity that entails evaluation of his performance for some other kind of activity, he is quick to take it. (p. 369-70)

Need achievement motivation proposed by McClelland and associates (1953) suggests that persons are predisposed to adopt either a need to achieve or a need to avoid failure. The predisposition drives a student's subsequent behavior in academic settings. Similar to McClelland et al.'s theory, Atkinson and Feather (1966) view hope of success and fear of failure as motives to strive for success or avoid failure. In situations when fear of failure surpasses any hope of success, individuals opt for tasks that are easy enough for success or too difficult for mastery, thereby easing anxiety. Whereas McClelland et al. proposed the need to achieve and fear of failure as a stable personality disposition, others view fear of failure through a cognitive-based lens (Weiner, 1972, 1974, 1985, 2010; Covington & Omelich, 1991). Human perception, reflection and thinking about success and failure are factors impacting fear of failure.

### **Fear of Failure: Cognitive Perspective (Attribution/Explanatory Theory)**

According to Peterson and Seligman (1984) "attributional style is a cognitive variable that reflects the habitual manner in which people explain the causes of events that befall them" (p. 347). Furthermore attributional or explanatory style impacts the manner in which students assess their academic performances (Szabo, 2006). Weiner (1972, 1974, 1982, 1985, 2010) developed a cognitive model in which an individual's attributions for the cause of success or failure are key. An individual's emotions, expectancy about outcomes, and performance for achievement tasks are the result of one's prior achievement attributions (i.e., success or failure is attributed to luck, ability, effort, or task difficulty) (Weiner, 1971). Two of these attributes are internal to the person (ability and effort) whereas, two are external to the individual (luck and task difficulty). Weiner's model (1979, 1985, 2010) included three dimensions upon which an

individual's attributed his/her success or failure: 1) locus of control (internal-external); 2) stability (stable-unstable); and 3) controllability (controllable-uncontrollable).

An individual with internal locus of control believes he/she is responsible for events and outcomes, whereas an individual with external locus of control believes that others are responsible for events and occurrences. Stability refers to whether a person believes the causes for success or failure are stable or unstable (i.e. will they change over time). Controllability refers to whether a person believes he/she has control or no control over outcomes. According to Weiner (1985), an individual who attributes failure to his/her ability believes that failure is internal, stable, and uncontrollable. Individuals who believe that all failure is attributed to their lack of ability, that their lack of ability is stable over time, and that they have no control over changing the outcome may develop "learned helplessness" (Dweck, 1975).

### **Learned Helplessness and Goal Orientation**

Dweck (1975) and Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale (1978) have posited that some students when faced with difficult academic challenges believe a more difficult challenge is evidence of their lower ability. These students give up before attempting the task. Dweck termed this phenomenon as learned helplessness. These faulty belief patterns are a sign of low self-efficacy rather than concrete intellectual ability (Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Belief patterns are also associated with different goal orientations towards learning. Students who have mastery goal orientations learn for the sheer joy of learning. They enjoy the process of learning and their desire is to learn new knowledge and/or skills for self-fulfillment while students with performance goal orientations, on the other hand, are focused on the learning outcomes: grades, rewards, recognition, and pleasing others (Elliot & Dweck, 1988). Dweck's work with

elementary-aged school children has found that students strong in performance goal orientation also tend to be those who give up easily if the task is too difficult.

Eppler and Harju (1997) studied traditional and non-traditional college-aged students to test Dweck's model of achievement motivation and goal orientation. The researchers found that non-traditional students were oriented more towards learning goals than traditional college-aged students, and that academic GPA was positively correlated with strong learning goal orientation. The least academically successful students in this study were those who rated both learning and performance goals as low.

**Performance and learning goal orientation.** Elliot and McGregor (2001) further expanded goal orientation into four sub-categories: performance-approach, performance-avoidance, mastery-approach, and mastery-avoidance. The researchers interpret goal adoption as developing from one's belief about competence (i.e., self-efficacy). If a student believes they have what it takes to master a learning task, they approach the task with confidence—mastery approach. Conversely, if a student has any concerns that they may not master the task at hand and tends to worry a great deal about mastery, they may avoid attempts at mastery. Mastery-avoidance is correlated with perfectionism and fear of failure (Elliot & McGregor, 2001). Students who are more motivated to seek rewards in terms of grades and/or recognition from others for their academic performance are motivated to accomplish the task- performance-approach, or to avoid the task if concerned they will not succeed- performance-avoidance. McGregor and Elliot (2001) found correlations of fear of failure with mastery-avoidance, performance-approach and performance-avoidance goal orientation. Motivation for achievement is a complex phenomenon and there are many internal and external factors that contribute to an individual's self-efficacy for academic work.

**Approach-avoidance theory.** Using cognitive theory to explain the phenomenon of approach/avoidance motivation (Covington & Omelich, 1991) espoused a four-quadrant model in which students are motivated to behave in one of four ways as shown in Figure 6. Success-oriented students (top-right quadrant) are highly motivated towards success and approach academic tasks full of optimism. They persist when challenged without undue emotional stress and use appropriate coping skills should they have academic setbacks. Over-strivers (top left quadrant) also have a high need to succeed but are burdened with the need to avoid failure. Approaching tasks with perfectionist tendencies, these students go to great lengths to avoid failure. Anxious and stressed, they may suffer from emotional burnout. Failure-accepters (bottom right quadrant) are reluctant to approach tasks but also appear apathetic and unconcerned about academics. Plagued by an academic history of setbacks and failures, these students are resigned to under-achieve. Finally, failure-avoiders (bottom-left quadrant) are motivated to avoid failure by choosing behaviors that self-sabotage their academic success. By setting low goals, procrastinating on tasks, and withdrawing, these students are able to blame failure on external factors rather than their own efforts. Researchers term these behaviors self-handicapping activities.

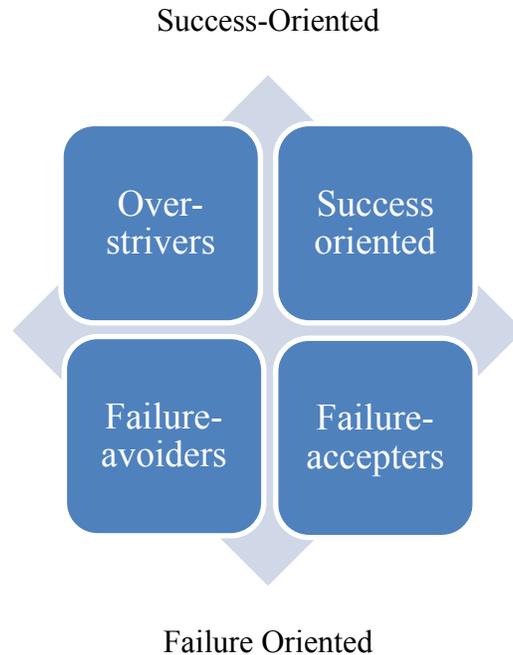


Figure 6. Quadrant chart of achievement motivation. (Covington & Omelich, 1991)

Covington and Omelich's diagram provides further interpretation regarding students who may be prone to either accept failure as inevitable (failure accepters), or those students who because of anxiety and fear, self-handicap and procrastinate in academic tasks, attempting to avoid failure (failure-avoiders). The graphic provides a means to categorize and explain the subset of students motivated to avoid failure as well as students who have learned through previous failures to give up before they try.

### **Gender and Ethnicity in Fear of Failure**

Since women and ethnic minorities compose a significant majority of first-generation students (Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Santos, & Korn, 2007; Nunez & Cuccara-Alamin, 1998), considering gender and ethnic differences in the construct of fear of failure may provide additional insight into this study. Although the literature is extremely limited, the few studies conducted will inform the discussion.

## **Gender and Fear of Failure**

According to Rothblum (1990), women tend to doubt the worth of successful achievement when a significant relationship may suffer. Rothblum stated,

Women generally report more fear of failure, and behave in ways that express more fear of failure, than do men. What is fearful about failure seems to be the expected interpersonal consequences (such as fear of rejection) rather than the specific academic performance. Individuals who score high on fear of failure are cooperative and socially rather than personally oriented. (p. 533)

Further, Rothblum suggests that the psychodynamic theories of fear of failure have their origins “specifically from the perspective of female development” (p. 499). Purportedly, mothers who are ambivalent about their daughter’s independence and achievement, create situations where their daughters may associate achievement with a loss of parental approval and/or abandonment (Kanefield, 1985). Females may associate academic mastery with anxiety and loss of love.

One factor accounting for female achievement patterns, according to Stein and Bailey (1973), is the feminine sex role stereotype. Women may perceive achievement as more suitable for men. Typical feminine sex role characteristics such as dependency and non-assertiveness may be thought of as contradicting high achievement in women. Parents, especially mothers, may offset these sex role stereotypes by encouraging their daughter’s independence and high achievement. Stein and Bailey (1973) alleged that females are more like to develop high achievement motivation if their mothers are employed, and if they encourage independence and achievement behavior in their daughters.

A few studies conducted on gender differences following academic success or failure indicate that females tend to attribute their success to chance and their failure to poor aptitude, whereas males attribute success to ability and skill and their failure to luck (Levine, Reis, Sue, & Turner, 1976). Rothblum (1990) acknowledges that the majority of achievement motivation

research was conducted following World War II, when the cultural focus was clearly on achievement and career success. In recent decades, very few studies have been conducted on fear of failure and the research looking at gender differences is limited.

In a study on achievement guilt and shame proneness, Thompson, Sharp, and Alexander (2008) found that women have higher scores than men on both factors. According to Lutwak and Ferrari (1997), shame-prone individuals are characterized by low self-efficacy, avoidance of social situations, and critical self thoughts. Given that studies have shown shame to be the core emotion of fear of failure (McGregor & Elliot, 2005) one would expect that women would tend to score higher on measures of fear of failure. Shame as the core emotion of fear of failure will be further discussed in a subsequent section.

### **Ethnicity and Fear of Failure**

There are very few studies on fear of failure and ethnicity (Rothblum, 1990). A study by Gurin and Epps (1975) found while African American males who displayed a fear of failure consequently had lower grades than their African American males who did not exhibit fear of failure, the same did not hold true for African American females. The study also indicated that African American males and females with fear of failure had lower career aspirations than their counterparts. In a qualitative study by Phillips (2002), African Americans who attended a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) experienced fear of failure associated with disappointing and embarrassing their family members. This finding could have significance for the present study given that Southeastern Christian is a Predominately White Institution with approximately 10% of the traditional student population being African American. Shafer (2004) found that 87% of black undergraduates in 2001 enrolled in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

## **Consequences of Fear of Failure**

Whether fear of failure is considered to be a stable personality trait, or is viewed more through a contextual and cognitive lens, the outcomes for an individual experiencing fear of failure can be devastating. Over time, individuals with fear of failure experience lower levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Caraway, Tucker, Reinke, & Hall, 2003). Often insidious, fear of failure may have negative affective, cognitive and behavioral consequences. The following subsections highlight research in the areas of affective consequences for fear of failure with shame as the core emotion, as well as both cognitive and behavioral consequences for fear of failure, which includes the research on self-handicapping.

### **Affective Consequences of Fear of Failure**

Depression, anxiety and lower levels of self-esteem are highly correlated with fear of failure (Schouwenburg, 1992, Solomon, 1984). Conroy, Poczwardowski, and Henschen (2004) identified five negative affective consequences of failure: 1) shame and embarrassment, 2) low self-esteem, 3) fear of important others losing interest, 4) fear of upsetting others, and 5) experiencing uncertainty about the future. When individuals believe and think that there is a chance for failure and that failure will have aversive affective consequences, for example, shame and embarrassment and/or upsetting others, they are motivated to avoid the situation (Lazarus, 1991; Conroy & Elliot, 2004). The impending shame, not the failure per se, is the motivating factor for avoidance (Birney, et al., 1969; Atkinson, 1957). Shame is a tremendously painful experience causing one to devalue the self (Lewis, 1992). If shame occurs in front of a public audience, the self is exposed and an individual fears abandonment (Andrews, 1995).

## **Shame as the Core Affective Emotion of Fear of Failure**

Shame according to Mascolo and Fischer (1995) is an emotional experience that all individuals seek to avoid. Research on the experience of shame indicates that as individuals are feeling shameful, they will move the eyes downward, and slump over as if to avoid making eye contact with others (Keltner & Harker, 1998). Shame has been linked with the urge to “get away from, or at minimum, visually avoid the context in which the shame was evoked” (McGregor & Elliott, 2005, p. 219).

When individuals experience shame, they may sense that they have fallen short of their ‘best self,’ and they have failed to live up to their own, as well as other’s expectations (Lewis, 1971). A demoralizing emotion, shame may be devastating to the self (Lewis, 1992). Individuals may fear loss of important relationships or abandonment as a result of the shame experience (Barrett, 1995). McGregor and Elliott (2005) were the first researchers to empirically study the link between shame and fear of failure. Their recent research indicates that shame is the core emotion of fear of failure, and these findings impact not only achievement based outcomes but impact an individual’s psychological health. In a study of interpersonal interactions, Covert, Tangney, Maddux, and Heleno (2003), found that individuals who are prone to experience shame also had lower levels of self-efficacy.

The state anxiety and shame produced in individuals with fear of failure is a motivating factor for avoidance behavior (Conroy & Elliott, 2004; Senecal, Koestner, & Vallerand, 1995; Urdan & Midgley, 2001). Through self-protection and avoidance, individuals maintain the cognitive beliefs they have established regarding who they are or who they desire to be.

## **Cognitive and Behavioral Consequences of Fear of Failure**

Unfortunately for some students, the need to avoid failure and subsequent shame and embarrassment is powerful enough that they withdraw from academic tasks to the point of failure. This reinforces the associated anxiety and fearfulness and creates a “vicious cycle” (Urduan & Midgley, 2001). Students begin to think and believe that they are incapable of success. Fear of failure then undermines self-efficacy and may prevent students from attempting situations in which they would have the opportunity to build their academic self-concept.

An individual highly motivated to avoid failing who subsequently fails, internalizes the belief that he/she is in danger of upsetting others and being abandoned. This individual may experience acute anxiety in test-related situations (Elliot & Thrash, 2004). Fear of failure has been highly correlated with performance and test anxiety, as well as a lack of self confidence in academic settings (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984).

In academic settings, withdrawing effort is manifested in a variety of ways. Purposely staying up too late the night before a test, listening to loud music while working on a task, and socializing with friends rather than studying for an exam are a few of the ways that students may avoid the shame and embarrassment of failure. Students who sabotage their success can be said to self-handicap; behaving in such a way that excuses their under-performance (Urduan & Midgley, 2001).

### **Self-Handicapping–Behavioral Consequence**

Self-handicapping involves creating barriers to successful performance on tests and tasks considered by the individual as important (Covington, 1992; Tice, 1991). Covington (1992) defined self-handicapping as “the creation of some impediment to one’s performance –either imagined or real – so that the individual has a ready excuse for potential failure” (p. 85). Berglas

and Jones (1978) defined self-handicapping as “any action or choice of performance setting that enhances the opportunity to externalize, or excuse failure, thus enabling the individual to avoid or discount negative implications of a performance” (p. 202). Students who self-handicap create hindrances to successful performance through active behavior, such as getting drunk the night before a test, failing to study for a major exam or studying the wrong material (Urda & Midgley, 2004). Other self-handicapping behaviors and dispositions may include sleeping very little, feigning illness before or during a test, moodiness, and drug use.

Through self-handicapping, students are able to re-direct the cause of their failure away from ability and competence towards a ready-made excuse (Martin, Marsh, & Debus, 2001). Evidence exists that self-handicapping provides a way of protecting self-esteem and self-worth as well as providing a strategy devised to influence other’s perceptions (Urda & Midgley, 2004). In one study by Feick and Rhodewalt (1997), students who were told they performed poorly on an exam felt better about themselves if they self-handicapped. Self-handicapping is correlated with low self-esteem and students who are able to manipulate other’s perceptions of their ability by utilizing avoidance strategies, often use adjectives such as “lazy” or “stupid” to describe themselves (Covington, 1992; Ferrari, 1991). Researchers have concluded that self-handicapping is a means by which individuals attempt to manipulate other’s opinions but not the opinion of oneself (Covington, 1992; Strube, 1986). Self-handicappers are more concerned with how they appear to others and the shame surrounding the act of failing, rather than the actual act of failing (Urda & Midgley, 2004). While there are many ways to self-handicap, procrastination is a primary method used by students with a strong fear of failure (Covington & Omelich, 1984). Therefore, the present study focused on one aspect of self-handicapping and utilize Rothblum’s (1984) instrument to test for procrastination. The subsequent section discusses relevant literature

on procrastination among college students and provides research relating gender and ethnicity to procrastination.

### **Procrastination**

Prevalent among college students, Senecal, Koestner, and Vallerand (1995) suggested that procrastination normally involves “delaying the start of a task until one experiences distress about not having performed the activity earlier” (p. 607). The distress associated with procrastination distinguishes it from simply deciding to do a task later than one had originally planned (Haycock, McCarthy, & Skay, 1998).

Burka and Yuen (1983) proposed that procrastination is a serious problem in the general population, and that individuals who procrastinate may experience regret, irritation, and self-blame. According to Solomon and Rothblum (1984), about 50% of people procrastinate on a regular basis, while the procrastination rate for college students is between 75-95% (Ellis & Knaus, 1977). Fifty-two percent of college students cited procrastination as being a top concern and a moderate to high need problem for which they needed help (Day, Mensink, & O’Sullivan, 2000). According to Solomon and Rothblum (1984), procrastination occurs almost equally in males and females. Senecal et al. (1995) reported that students tend to procrastinate more on term papers than on daily assignments. Researchers have determined that procrastination is heavily linked with perfectionism, task aversion and an excessive fear of failure (Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein, & Mosher, 1991; Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Moreover, procrastination has been connected with anxiety, depression and low self-esteem (Rothblum et al., 1986).

## **Gender and Procrastination**

According to Haycock et al. (1998), research in the area of gender and procrastination is mixed. While some studies have found no differences between males and females on the tendency to procrastinate (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Effert & Ferrari, 1989), Rothblum and Solomon (1985) did find that females experience more anxiety and lower self-efficacy due to procrastination than did males. Paludi and Frankell-Hauser's (1986) qualitative study with women indicated that procrastination is a primary way that women who are afraid of failure protect their self-worth. The study's limitations include that the majority of the women were Caucasian. More research is needed in order to compare the variables of procrastination with gender and ethnicity.

## **Ethnicity and Procrastination**

Unfortunately, there is very limited research on procrastination in various ethnic groups. In one of the only studies found on this topic, Davis (1999) conducted an analysis of the effect of culture as defined by ethnicity (African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian) on the level of procrastination in high school students. No significant differences were found. Further research in this area is needed in order to determine if any ethnic differences exist on procrastination at the college level.

Covering the research literature on the concepts of self-efficacy, fear of failure, and procrastination, we turn our attention now to the topic of first-generation students. The discussion will cover the following sub-topics: demographic data, academic outcomes, first-generation students in four-year colleges, first-generation students in private colleges, psychosocial factors and parental influences and support.

## **First-Generation Students—What We Know**

The profile of first-generation college students has changed in the last forty years. According to Merritt (2012), in the 1960s, first-generation students tended to be Caucasian, working-class children of European immigrants, today they come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and a wide variety of socio-economic levels. Defined in the literature as students for whom neither parent attended college, (Bilson & Terry, 1982; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996; Ishitani, 2006), first-generation students are also commonly defined as those for whom neither parent nor guardian graduated from college with a bachelor's degree (Choy, 2001; Prospero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). For the purposes of this study, first-generation students are defined as those for whom neither parent nor guardian graduated with a bachelor's degree. Non first-generation students are defined as those for whom at least one parent or guardian graduated from college with a bachelor's degree.

Today first-generation students are more likely to be female, ethnic minority, come from low-income families, and enroll in college part-time (York-Anderson & Bowman, 1991). In addition, they are more likely to have taken a less rigorous high school curriculum than their counterparts; therefore, they tend to come to college with lower levels of academic preparation than their non first-generation peers (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996).

### **Academic Outcomes for First-Generation Students**

Comprising approximately 34% of students in four-year institutions and 53% of students in two-year institutions, first-generation students encounter obstacles unlike their non first-generation peers (Choy, 2001). First-generation students tend to have lower high school GPAs and SAT/ACT scores (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998, Riehl, 1994; Inmann & Mayes, 1999). According to Warburton, Bugarin, and Nunez (2001), the average SAT score is 858 points for

first-generation students, while for their counterparts, the average score is 1011. They are more prone to need remedial courses than non first-generation students. Chen (2005) found that 55% of first-generation students took remedial courses in college, while only 27% of their non first-generation peers needed remediation. In comparison to their peers, Terenzini et al. (1996) found that first-generation college students studied fewer hours per week and completed fewer credit hours per semester. Riehl (1994) found that first-generation student's first-semester college GPA was substantially lower than their counterparts.

### **First-Generation Students in Four-Year Institutions**

While the majority of first-generation students begin their college career at two-year public institutions, they are more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree if they matriculate into a four-year institution (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999; 2000). More than 40% of first-generation students who began college in four-year institutions in the academic year 1989-90, graduated with a bachelor's degree in four years, while less than 10% who started the same year at two-year institutions had obtained a bachelor's degree in four years. Recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that college enrollment is expected to increase by 15% between fall 2010 and fall 2021, opening up the pathway for greater numbers of first-generation students to seek four-year degrees (NCES, 2013).

### **First-Generation Students in Private Four-Year Institutions**

Data from the 2005 CIRP Freshmen Survey were used to explore the characteristics of first-generation students who matriculated into private institutions. Although public institutions have typically enrolled greater numbers of first-generation students as compared to private colleges and universities, the gap between the two has narrowed in recent years (Hurtado, 2007). First-generation students attending private universities are more likely to choose the institution

because of smaller size and because they receive financial assistance. In addition they are more likely to have family income levels of over \$40,000, have attended either a religious or private high school and more likely to have earned good grades in high school than their first-generation peers attending public colleges.

### **First-Generation Psycho-Social Factors**

Because they are apt to be less academically prepared, first-generation students tend to possess less confidence in their ability to succeed than their counterparts (Nunez, 2000; Grimes & David, 1999). Terenzini et al. (1996) found that first-generation students encounter a more difficult transition from high school to college than their peers. Because of their unfamiliarity with the college culture, they confront anxieties and difficulties at a higher level than do their peers whose parents attended and graduated from college. Students whose parents have no knowledge of college attendance are more likely to experience “feelings of confusion and trauma” as they enter college (Rendon, Garcia, & Person, 2004, p. 17).

As a sub-population, first-generation students are more likely to come to college with lower self esteem and lower self-efficacy than their peers (First-Generation, 2001). In describing the experience of transitioning to college from high school, one Hispanic first-generation student relayed his feelings this way:

I was discouraged toward the end of high school. I realized I could have done better. I was too caught up in other things. I thought those things would get me what I wanted – happiness...[When applying to college] I was thinking, “My college counselor will do it; my mom will help; or there is always my brother, he knows.” But my brother has his family; my mother has her obligations; and the college counselor has to take care of the whole senior class. There was nobody there telling me what to do or how to do it. I expected to fail. Two weeks and I was out. I didn’t think I could study. I didn’t think could learn. (Jalomo & Rendon, 2004, p. 39)

## **Parental Influences and Support**

Much has been written in recent decades regarding first-generation students and their perceptions of family support for college. Parents who lack the experience of attending and/or persevering through college are at a disadvantage when the time comes for their children to begin the college admissions process (Brooks & Terry, 1988; Zalaquett, 1999). In addition, parents of first-generation students are not able to provide advice about what classes to take and which study strategies to use to be successful (Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Willett, 1989). While some studies have indicated that first-generation students perceive less family support for their education compared to their peers (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996; Billson & Terry, 1982), a study by Hand and Payne (2008) pointed out that family ties and emotional support are extremely important for the academic success of first-generation students. In a study of students of color, the majority of which were first-generation students, Rendon, Garcia, and Person (2004) found that African-American students usually have strong ties and connectivity to their families of origin and worry that failure will bring disgrace.

In London's (1989) qualitative study of first-generation students, the researcher found that students who are the first in their families to go to college often feel conflicted about their new role as a college student and face stressful emotional challenges as they leave their families. According to London (1992), first-generation students "live on the margins" between two cultures (p.7). London describes the experience as "never quite wanting or willing to break with the past, even if permitted to do so, and never fully accepted, because of prejudice in the culture where they seek a place (p.7). Terenzini et al. (1994) found that for first-generation students, going to college meant "breaking, not continuing a family tradition" (p. 63).

Boundary spanning, (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991), is the term used to describe the ways in which students transition from high school to college. For non first-generation students, the transition is “smoother because of shared values and beliefs” (g. 229). According to Piorkowski (1983), first-generation students suffer from the emotional conflict of what could be termed ‘survivor guilt.’ Because they were the first in their families to be able to attend college, first-generation students in Piorkowski’s study withdrew effort in an attempt to relieve their guilt. Given the multitude of obstacles facing first-generation students today, both in terms of academic underpreparedness and family/social obligations, it would not be surprising to find that these students have lower self-efficacy beliefs and/or greater levels of fear of failure than their non first-generation peers. The subsequent paragraphs will discuss the research literature relating first-generation students to self-efficacy, fear of failure and procrastination, and submit that further investigation on this topic is logical and necessary.

### **First-Generation Students–Self Efficacy, Fear of Failure, and Procrastination**

In one of the earliest studies on the internal motivational characteristics of first-generation students, McGregor, Maybelen, Buzzanga, Davis, and Becker (1991) found that compared to their peers whose parents graduated from college, first generation students had less self-esteem, but similar levels of self-efficacy, believing themselves as capable as their counterparts to perform academically. Vuong, Brown-Welty, and Tracz (2010) recently completed one of the only studies found in the literature, comparing self-efficacy and academic success for first-generation college sophomore students. The researchers found that non first-generation students academically outperformed their first-generation peers, and also found that self-efficacy does affect academic success, but they found no significant differences in self-efficacy between the two groups. These findings contradict those of other researchers.

Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols (2007) found that first-generation students come to college with lower levels of self-efficacy than their non first-generation peers. Additionally, Wang and Casteneda-Sound (2008) found ethnic minorities, many of whom were first-generation students had less self-efficacy than their white counterparts. Although Pajares and Schunk (2001) found that self-efficacy in the general college student population can act as a mediating influence between previous academic performance and ability in college, this appears not to be the case for first-generation students in their study. The researchers hypothesized that self-efficacy would mediate the negative associations between first-generation status and college grade point average. The findings of the study indicated that regardless of the confidence first-generation students had in their ability to succeed, they still underperformed academically compared to their non first-generation peers.

First-generation students may be at a disadvantage because their parents are unable to provide parental modeling of college-attending behaviors. In addition, first-generation students may not receive parental encouragement or support for academic college tasks. Therefore, they must attempt mastery of college academic tasks without the key self-efficacy variables of modeling and encouragement. If they are successful early in the semester of their freshmen year, the likelihood of building self-efficacy increases. If they are not successful early, anxiety and frustration may inhibit future attempts at successful performance.

Although scholars are advocating for additional studies on the motivational/affective factors of first-generation students (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Belcastro, 2009), to date a limited number of empirical studies have been conducted. The internal construct of fear of failure, and the role that it may play in undermining the success of first-generation students, has of yet to be researched thoroughly. In earlier decades, researchers found negative

consequences for fear of failure; low persistence on tasks, lowered task effort, and decreased motivation (Birney, Burdick & Teevan, 1969; Atkinson & Feather, 1966; Heckhausen, 1975), but in recent decades, there have been no studies found in the literature on the relationship between fear of failure and academic success for college students, particularly, first-generation. This study will provide this important gap in the literature.

### **Summary**

First-generation students come to college with much to prove. The first in their families to enroll or graduate from college, these students are ground breakers. As mentioned previously in the discussion, going to college for first-generation students, represents a severance or fracture of their family tradition (Terenzini et al., 1996). Living on the margins (London, 1992), first-generation students desire to maintain close relationships with their families and make them proud of their accomplishments while struggling to develop a new identity.

For first-generation students, a primary reason for enrolling into college is because their parents wanted them to go (Pryor et al., 2007). According to the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), only 30.9% of women in 1976 reported that they enrolled in college because their parents wanted them to go, whereas in 2006, the percentage had risen to 48%. For men, the percentages increased from 29% in 1976 to 43.3% in 2006 (Pryor et al., 2007).

Although parental encouragement is seen as an important motivator for first-generation students to attend college, parents of these students are most likely at a loss once their son or daughter begin to face first-semester academic challenges (Jalomo, 1995). Tracey and Sedlacek (1985) found that for ethnic minorities, many of whom are first-generation, non-cognitive variables, such as self-esteem and a positive self-concept as well as being surrounded by supportive individuals, are as important for success as are cognitive variables, such as high school GPA or

SAT scores. Faced with the reality of performing college-level work, first-generation students, who lack the benefit of parental knowledge about what it takes to be successful in college, may well struggle with their new role (Jalomo, 1995).

According to Goffman (1952), when a student enters college, he or she takes on a new social role, acquiring a new self-concept. Individuals with new social roles must redefine themselves as people worthy of that role. In a qualitative study by Cox (2009), the researcher found that students, many of whom were first-generation, were afraid of failing at the new role of college student. They found various strategies to avoid the humiliation and embarrassment. Four strategies were employed by the students in Cox's study: 1) postponing matriculation; 2) scaling down their coursework by dropping courses mid-semester; 3) avoiding assessment; and 4) redefining success. For students who do not postpone matriculation or scale down, the most obvious way to protect self-worth is through avoiding assessment through procrastination. Because first-generation students lack prior knowledge of what it means to take on the role of college-student (Willett, 1989; Richardson & Skinner, 1992), and are entering an environment unlike anyone in their family has known (Rendon, Garcia, & Person, 2004), conceptually, they may be more at risk for adopting mal-adaptive self-protective strategies.

Rendon (2004) suggests that first-generation ethnic minority students face even more blatant obstacles in college in the form of "cultural assaults from some students who view them as less competent individuals who do not really belong in college" (p. 15). Students of color must negotiate their various worlds of work, family, community and college in developing the self-confidence to combat racial stereotyping (Rendon, 1994; Jalomo, 1995). Students of color may be extremely anxious about being perceived as less competent than their peers (Jalomo, 1995).

For first-generation students, entering institutions of higher education represents a “great disequilibrium” (Rendon, 1996, p. 19).

### **Conclusion**

If in fact, first-generation students come to college with high levels of fear of failure and self-doubt about their ability to succeed academically, then self-sabotaging behaviors, such as procrastination, may be viewed as the best means of protecting the self-worth. In the midst of the many obstacles facing first-generation students upon entering college, it would not be surprising that this sub-population devises various self-protective strategies in order to maintain a sense of self. This chapter reviewed the literature about how students who are afraid of failure might sabotage their academic success. The chapter further discussed the need to avoid failure through procrastination and the differences between building a sense of self-efficacy and fear of failure. The conceptual framework was presented highlighting the variables in the study. This study sought to examine the affective, cognitive, and behavioral constructs of fear of failure, self-efficacy, and procrastination in first and non first-generation students and to discover if fear of failure may be a key factor in the puzzle of why first-generation students as a sub-population of college students continues to academically underperform relative to their peers.

## CHAPTER III:

### METHODS

#### **Introduction**

This study examined the internal motivational factors of fear of failure, self-efficacy, and procrastination in first and non first-generation college students at a private liberal arts institution in the southeast region of the United States. The limited research on fear of failure and first-generation students to date has been conducted at two and four-year public institutions; therefore the present study of first-generation students at a private university provided an additional venue through which to view the issues of academic success and retention of first and non first-generation students. This chapter highlights the methodology used, research questions, instrumentation, participants, site selection, data collection procedures and analysis.

#### **Research Design**

A cross-sectional research design was used for this quantitative study. Cross-sectional research studies focus on describing the characteristics of a population or the differences between two or more populations at one point in time (Busk, 2005). Few studies exist on the variable of fear of failure, and the majority of those studies are qualitative in nature, therefore the researcher chose a cross-sectional quantitative study in order to determine if significant differences exist between first and non first-generation students. Study participants were administered a survey instrument approximately midway through the fall semester and results presented a ‘snapshot’ of their attitudes, beliefs, and feelings at a particular point in time. The primary investigator had direct access to students through a general education required course

which she directed; therefore, the targeted population survey participation was noted to be high which will be discussed below in the section entitled Participants/Site Selection. The general education course, entitled Personal Wholeness met once per week for 50 minutes.

Approximately mid-way through the fall semester, instructors in Personal Wholeness administered the study survey during class time. Students were informed that the study was voluntary. One student declined to participate.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Are there significant differences between first and non first-generation college students on the factors of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy;
  - a. Do first-generation students experience higher levels of fear of failure than non-first-generation students;
  - b. Do first-generation students procrastinate on academic tasks at higher rates than non first-generation students;
  - c. Do non first-generation students have higher levels of self-efficacy than first-generation students;
2. Does gender relate significantly to the factors of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy of college students;
  - a. Are there significant differences between males and females on the variable of fear of failure;
  - b. Are there significant differences between males and females on the variable of procrastination;

- c. Are there significant differences between males and females on the variable of self-efficacy;
3. Does ethnicity relate significantly to the factors of fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy of college students;
  - a. Are there significant differences among ethnic groups on the variable of fear of failure;
  - b. Are there significant differences among ethnic groups on the variable of procrastination;
  - c. Are there significant differences among ethnic groups on the variable of self-efficacy;
4. Does socio-economic status relate significantly to the factors of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy of college students;
  - a. Are there significant differences among groups of students in various income levels on the variable of fear of failure;
  - b. Are there significant differences among groups of students in various income level brackets on the variable of procrastination;
  - c. Are there significant differences among groups of students in various income level brackets on the variable of self-efficacy;
5. Are there significant differences between freshmen and sophomore students on the variables of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy; and
6. How do the factors of fear of failure, procrastination, self-efficacy, income, generational status, ethnicity, and gender relate with academic success of college students as measured by end of semester cumulative GPA?

## **Participants/Site Selection**

Participants of this study included 237 traditional students at Southeastern Christian University, ([pseudonym]) a private, non-selective, liberal arts university in southeastern United States. As previously mentioned there is limited research available on the motivational characteristics of first-generation students and the majority of studies found by the researcher were conducted at two and four-year public institutions. This study sought to add to the extant literature by conducting the research at a private institution. As Astin and Lee (1972) suggested, non-selective private colleges tend to be under-researched and worthy to be studied. A significant proportion of higher educational institutions in the United States are “relatively little-known private colleges” (Astin & Lee, p. 1). The research investigator for this study found no previous studies on fear of failure at any private, non-selective institutions. Southeastern Christian University (SCU) therefore was a suitable site for this study not only because it is private and non-selective, but also because anecdotal evidence indicated both faculty and staff were concerned about the lack of college preparedness in the students who matriculate into SCU (Personal Communication, I. Riddings, Provost, 2010). In addition to anecdotal evidence, administrators at Southeastern Christian noted that the ten-year retention rate average of 68% was well below the national average for private colleges. Furthermore, Southeastern did not track first-generation students; therefore, the data collected could be utilized to inform university policy makers.

### **Southeastern Christian University**

Southeastern Christian University (SCU) is located in a small Southern town midway between Charlotte, North Carolina, and Atlanta, Georgia. The majority of SCU’s 581 traditional students are from South and North Carolina, but students also come from 24 states, with a

majority of out of state students enrolling from Indiana, Texas, Florida, and Michigan. Fourteen countries are represented in the traditional student population with the majority of international students attending Southeastern to play collegiate NAIA Division I sports. The traditional student population includes both residential and commuting students. In addition, Southeastern boasts of a viable adult and graduate studies program with five satellite campuses across the state. The university offers 47 areas of study, with distinctive programs in elementary education and business.

Demographically, Southeastern is a predominantly white institution (PWI), with approximately 85% of the traditional student body being Caucasian. Students of color make up approximately 10-15% of the traditional student population, with admissions counselors diligently attempting to increase the diversity of the campus. Fifty-six percent of the traditional study body are female and 44% are male.

The primary campus which houses the traditional student population sits on 200 acres of beautifully landscaped rolling hills in what is known as the ‘foothills’ of the Appalachian mountains. Southeastern Christian, begun in 1906 as a small Bible college is proud of the rich heritage it holds as being one of the first church-affiliated universities to support women in ministry. In addition, the university is proud of the fact that its church affiliation supported the rights of African-Americans and Caucasian church-goers to worship together. Marketing literature points out that Southeastern is distinctly Christian in its approach to education and that students will be exposed to a Christian worldview.

Southeastern Christian recently hired a new president, Dr. T. Koss, who is student focused and enrollment driven. In conversations with faculty and staff, the researcher found that the majority believe the hiring of Dr. Koss has been an extremely positive move for the

university. Next to enrollment growth, one of the primary issues for the campus appears to be the continued admittance of underprepared students (personal communication, Academic Council meeting minutes, February 2012). Because the university is non-selective in admissions policies, many of Southeastern students are underprepared for college-level work. The average SAT composite score for reading and math in 2010 was 1005. Whereas the minimum admission score on the SAT is 860, SCU admits students conditionally with SAT scores as low as 750. Students may be admitted to SCU with a high school GPA of 2.0. Students who have less than a 2.0 in high school may be admitted conditionally on the approval of the Admissions Committee. Anecdotal evidence from faculty indicate that they believe many of SCU's students need remedial instruction to prepare them for the rigor of college-level work.

A major public research university is located ten minutes from Southeastern Christian but given that Southeastern is "distinctly Christian," the two universities are not in competition for the same students according to the president (personal communication, President T. Koss, 2012).

### **Data Collection**

Because the university did not identify first-generation status through the admissions process, a demographic questionnaire accompanied the survey instrument asking students to identify their parent's and/or guardian's level of education, as well as their gender and ethnicity. (Appendix B). First-generation status was defined as those students for whom neither parent nor guardian graduated from college with a bachelor's degree. Non first-generation status was defined as those students for whom at least one parent or guardian graduated from college with a bachelor's degree. To protect confidentiality, students did not put their names on the survey, but were identified through their SCU ID number.

Students were given the opportunity to voluntarily participate in this study through the general education required course entitled Personal Wholeness. As the Director of the Personal Wholeness program, the researcher had direct access to students as well as the 15 faculty members teaching the course. During a fall Personal Wholeness faculty meeting, the researcher familiarized faculty teaching the course with the survey instrument and gave instructions for administration of the survey. Approximately mid-way through the fall semester, an email regarding the survey was sent to all freshman and sophomore students. Students were informed that the survey consisted of items related to procrastination in college and beliefs regarding their ability to succeed in an academic environment. Students who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study were entered into a drawing for a Droid 2 cell phone with Bluetooth. The expected response rate was between 75 - 80% given the fact that the survey was administered during class time. Layne, DeCristoforo, and McGinty (1999) found that surveys given in class had higher response rates than those given on-line, 60.6% versus 47.8%. With the drawing for a free Droid cellphone, the response rate was expected to be high. Biner and Barton (1990) found that incentives appear to work through creating a sense of obligation to take the survey.

### **Instrumentation**

A total of three instruments were used for the 91 question survey: Conroy's Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI), Rothblum's Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS), and Solberg's College Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI). Additionally students were asked to complete a short demographic inventory (see Appendix B), indicating their generational status (first or non first-generation), gender and ethnicity. The survey instruments are found in Appendix A and are described below.

### **Fear of Failure Instrument**

Conroy's (2003) Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory, (PFAI) (Appendix A1) measures the strength of an individual's beliefs in five areas of failing. The 25-item measure utilizes a five-item Likert scale to evaluate five first-order beliefs about the consequences of failing, and one higher order factor yielding scores on a general fear of failure. The first-order scales include (a) fears of experiencing shame and embarrassment; (b) fear of devaluing one's self-estimate; (c) fear of having an uncertain future; (d) fear of important others losing interest; and (e) fear of upsetting important others. Students rated themselves on how often they believe each statement is true on statements such as "When I am failing, important others are disappointed" and "When I am failing, I worry about what others think about me." The range of scoring consisted of 0 (Do not believe at all), to 4 (Believe 100% of the time). According to Conroy (2003), the scores on these five first-order factors are moderately to strongly correlated with one another and common variance represents a general fear of failure. General fear of failure may be interpreted as the strength of a person's belief that failure is associated with negative consequences. According to Conroy et al., (2003), PFAI scores have exhibited factorial variance, internal consistency, external validity, and predictive validity across groups and across time.

### **Procrastination Instrument**

Procrastination was assessed through Solomon and Rothblum's (1984) Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS) (see Appendix A2). The 44-item instrument consists of two parts: 1) assessing the frequency of academic procrastination and the impact of procrastination on anxiety; and 2) assessment of cognitive/behavioral reasons for procrastination. Part one consists of a five-point Likert-scale rating in which participants are to assess the

frequency of procrastination in six different areas: (a) writing a term paper; (b) studying for an exam; (c) keeping up with weekly reading assignments; (d) performing administrative tasks; (e) attending meetings; and (f) performing general academic tasks. Participants are to rate the extent that they procrastinate on each item and to rate the extent to which procrastination is a problem for them.

Part two of the PASS describes a procrastination scenario and asks participants to rate on a five-point Likert scale, the possible reasons for procrastination among 13 different variables: evaluation anxiety, perfectionism, difficulty making decisions, dependency and help-seeking, aversiveness of the task and low frustration tolerance, low self-esteem, laziness, lack of assertion, fear of success, poor time management, rebellion against control, risk taking, and peer influence. Participants are given a scenario, for example, delaying the writing of a term paper, and asked to rate each statement (two statements for each of the above 13 variables) as to how much it mirrors the reason they procrastinated on writing of a term paper.

The PASS was initially investigated with 323 university students (101 males) and (222 females). The PASS shows concurrent validity with significant correlations to the Beck Depression Inventory, Ellis Scale of Irrational Cognitions, and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

### **Self-Efficacy Instrument**

Self-efficacy was measured utilizing the College Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI) (see Appendix A3) created by Solberg, O'Brien, Villareal, Kennel, and Davis (1993). The inventory measures a student's confidence that he or she can complete the tasks required in college to be successful. The inventory is composed of three subscales totaling 20 items: 1) eight items measuring academic self-efficacy (writing papers, completing academic tasks, taking notes, etc.); 2) eight items measuring academic/social self-efficacy (asking questions in class, working on a

group project, talking with academic support staff, etc.); and 3) four items relating to roommate efficacy (getting along with your roommate). Because this study is interested in academic self-efficacy, the four items measuring roommate efficacy were excluded. The remaining 16 items are rated on a Likert-type 11-point scale, varying from 0 (totally unconfident) to 8 (totally confident). A high score on the assessment reflects a high level of self-efficacy, while a low score reflects a low level of self-efficacy. Scores are established by computing the mean of completed items. A reliability coefficient of .93 was established by Solberg, et al. (1993). Students who are comfortable engaging in class discussions, talking with academic support staff and seeking out-of-class relationships with professors are more likely to be successful and to be retained in college (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005).

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were calculated for each measure in SPSS. Statistical analyses used for this study included t-tests, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and multiple regression. The Data Analysis Table below describes the research questions, the independent and dependent variables and the test statistics utilized. In Part One (1a, 1b, and 1c), the dependent variables of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy were tested with the independent variables of first and non-first generation student status through a simple t-test statistic. In Part Two (2a, 2b), the independent variables of gender (male/female) were tested with the dependent variables of fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy through a simple t-test. In Part Three (3a, 3b, and 3c), factors of ethnicity were related to fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy utilizing an analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests. Part 4a, 4b, and 4c tested whether a student's income group is related to fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy at Southeastern. The test utilized for this question was analysis

of variance (ANOVA). Part Five of the study determined whether there were significant differences between freshmen and sophomore students on the variables of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy through t-tests. Finally, in Part Six of the study a multiple regression was calculated to determine the relationships between fear of failure, procrastination self-efficacy, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and generational status on student academic success as determined by the end of semester GPA (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Data Analysis Table*

Research Questions	Dependent Variable(s)	Independent Variable(s)	Survey Item	Statistical Method
Part One: Are there significant differences between first and non-first generation students on the factors of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy?	1a. Fear of Failure 1b. Procrastination 1c. Self-efficacy	First-generation students Non first-generation student	All survey items	t-tests: used to determine if the means for two groups are statistically different from each other
Part Two: Does gender play a significant role in fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy of college students?	2a. Fear of Failure 2b. Procrastination 2c. Self-Efficacy	Female students Male students	All survey items	t-tests: used to determine if the means for two groups are statistically different from each other
Part Three: Does ethnicity play a significant role in fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy of college students?	3a. Fear of Failure 3b. Procrastination 3c. Self-Efficacy	Caucasian African-American Hispanic Others	All survey items	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) used to determine the statistical difference in variables with more than two groups
Part Four: Does socio-economic status play a significant role in fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy of college students?	4a. Fear of failure 4b. Procrastination 4c. Self-Efficacy	\$30,000 below \$30,001-48,000 \$48,001-75,000 \$75,001-100,000 \$100,000 +	All survey items	Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) used to determine the statistical difference of variables in more than two groups
Part Five: Are there differences in fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy in freshmen and sophomore students?	5a. Fear of failure 5b. Procrastination 5c. Self-efficacy	Freshmen students Sophomore students	All Survey items	T-tests used to determine if the means between two groups are statistically different from each other
Part Six: Do the variables of fear of failure, procrastination, self-efficacy, gender, income, ethnicity and generational status impact student academic success as measured by end of semester cumulative GPA?	End of semester cumulative GPA	Fear of failure Procrastination Self-efficacy Gender Income level Ethnicity Generational status	All survey items	Multiple Regression Used when testing multiple independent variables on one dependent variable.

CHAPTER IV:  
PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

**Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to research the variables of fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy in first and non first-generation students at Southeastern Christian University and to determine what effect if any, these variables have with the academic success for the students in the study. In addition, the study also sought to understand if the variables of gender, ethnicity and income level were related to fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy of the students in the study. The data presented in this chapter represents the results from descriptive statistics, t-tests, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and multiple regression analyses. This chapter is organized into three sections: 1) demographic information on student sample at Southeastern Christian; 2) reliability analysis of survey instruments utilized in the study; and 3) research questions with descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Demographic Information**

The present study included 237 college students at Southeastern Christian University in the Southeast region of the United States. Tables 2 - 6 below present the demographic variables utilized in this study. Table 2 indicates that out of the sample of 237 students who completed the research survey, 126 met the criteria for first-generation students; neither parent nor guardian graduated from college with a bachelor's degree (U. S. Dept of Education, 1996). Non first-generation students equaled 111 of the study participants. There were 107 male participants and 130 female participants. Table 3 displays the six educational levels of the study participant's

parent or guardian. Although this study utilizes the U. S. Educational Department's (1996), criteria for first-generation students, some scholarly journals define first-generation students as those for whom neither parent nor guardian attended any college. Therefore, the researcher for this study developed six levels of parental education categories to provide future researchers at Southeastern the capability to use either definition of first-generation student should future research be conducted.

Table 2

*Generational Status of Study Participants*

Generational Status	Number of Participants
First-Generation	126
Non First-Generation	111
Total	237

Table 2 shows that 53% of the study's sample indicated they were first-generation college students, while 47% were non first-generation students. Table 3 shows the gender breakdown of study participants.

Table 3

*Gender of Study Participants*

Gender	Number of Participants
Male	107
Female	130
Total	237

Table 3 shows that male students equal 45% of the study participants while female students equal 55% of the study’s participants. Table 4 indicates the level of parental education for study participants.

Table 4

*Level of Parental Education for Participants*

Educational Level	Mother	Father	Total	Percent of Sample Size
Did not complete high school	12	28	40	8
High School Graduate	66	54	120	26
Some College	42	47	89	19
Two-Year College Grad	30	24	54	11
Four-Year College Grad	55	47	102	22
Master’s Degree	30	28	58	12
Doctorate	2	9	11	02
Total	237	237	474	100

Table 4 indicates that 64% of parents of the study participants graduated with a two-year college degree or less, while 36% of parents of the study participants graduated with a four-year degree or higher. Table 5 below indicates the ethnic background of study participants. Because Southeastern is a predominately White institution (PWI), only three categories were utilized, Caucasian, African-American and Hispanic/Other.

Table 5

*Ethnicity of Participants*

Ethnicity	Number of Participants	Percent of Sample Size
Caucasian	202	85
African American	25	11
Hispanic/Other	10	04
Total	237	100

As indicated a majority of the study participants, 85% were Caucasian, ( $N=202$ ). African American students represented 10.5% of the sample size ( $N=25$ ), and Hispanic/Other students represented 4.2%, ( $N=10$ ). Table 6 shows the class breakdown of study participants.

Table 6

*Class in College of Participants*

Class in College	Number of Participants	Percent of Sample Size
Freshman	98	41
Sophomore	69	29
Junior	43	18
Senior	27	11
Total	237	100

As indicated by Table 6, 41% of the study participants were freshman students, ( $N=98$ ). In the total student population at Southeastern, freshmen represent 28%. Sophomore students that participated in the study equaled 29% of the sample, ( $N=69$ ), whereas sophomores equal

21% of the entire student body at Southeastern. While juniors who participated in this study equaled 18% ( $N=43$ ), they equal 23% of the total student body. Senior study participants equaled 11%, ( $N=27$ ). In the total Southeastern student population seniors equal 28% of the student body. The variation in percentages of the study's participants in relation to the total student body percentages for each class is due to the administration of the survey through the Personal Wholeness program. The Personal Wholeness general education curriculum was new to Southeastern and many of Southeastern's juniors and seniors were under a different catalog of general education; therefore not required to take the Personal Wholeness course sequence.

Data on family income of study participants below was obtained from Southeastern's data management system, Jenzabar EX. The income levels used in this study are those reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System, (IPEDS). Table 7 describes the income level, the number of study participants in each level and the percent of sample size.

Table 7

*Family Income of Participants*

Income Level	Number of Participants	Percent of Sample Size
\$30,000 and below	83	35
\$30,001-\$48,000	43	18
\$48,001-\$75,000	44	19
\$75,001-\$110,000	32	14
\$110,000+	35	15
Total	237	100

Table 7 indicates that 53% of study's participants have family income levels below \$48,000 per year while 48% have income levels above \$48,001.

### **Reliability Analysis**

Tables 8 through 17 present the results of internal consistency reliability coefficient alphas for each of the measures of the total scales and subscales for fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy. As shown in the tables, Chronbach's coefficient alphas have been calculated for each of the five subscales of fear of failure, as well as the total scale (PFAI, Conroy, 2001). Internal consistency reliability was calculated for the procrastination scale (PASS, Rothblum, 1984) as well as the total self-efficacy scale (CSEI, Solberg, 1993) and 2 subscales, social self-efficacy, and academic self-efficacy. Coefficient alphas ranged from .71 to .90. Reliabilities greater than .70 are considered minimum for research purposes (Witte & Witte, 2007).

Table 8

*Chronbach's Coefficient Alphas for Subscale of Fear of Failure—Experiencing Shame and Embarrassment on PFAI*

Fear of Experiencing Shame and Embarrassment	Description	Alpha if item deleted
Item 1	When I am not succeeding, I am less valuable than when I succeed.	.826
Item 2	When I am not succeeding, I get down on myself easily.	.803
Item 3	When I am failing, it is embarrassing if others are there to see it.	.798
Item 4	When I am failing, I believe that everybody knows I am failing.	.786
Item 5	When I am failing, I believe that my doubters feel that they were right about me.	.801
Item 6	When I am failing, I worry about what others think about me.	.773
Item 7	When I am failing, I worry that others may think I am not trying.	.790
$\alpha$ Shame and Embarrassment		.821

Although deleting Item 1 would improve Chronbach's alpha from .821 to .826, the researcher kept the item because the literature supports the use of an unmodified scale (Conroy, 2004). Additionally the added variance of keeping all possible items improves the subscale. Finally, Item 1 was retained in the subscale because the Alpha reliability was exceptionally high. Also, deleting any item reduce Chronbach's Alpha for the entire PFAI scale.

Table 9

*Chronbach's Coefficient Alphas for Fear of Failure Subscale—Devaluing One's Self-Estimate on PFAI*

Fear of Devaluing One's Self-Estimate	Description	Alpha if item deleted
Item 1	When I am failing, it is often because I am not smart enough to perform successfully.	.677
Item 2	When I am failing, I blame my lack of talent.	.553
Item 3	When I am failing, I am afraid I might not have enough talent.	.560
Item 4	When I am failing, I hate the fact that I am not in control of the outcome.	.765
$\alpha$ for Devaluing		.721

Items 1, 2, and 3 contribute the majority of the reliability of the subscale Fear of Devaluing One's Self-Estimate. Removing any of those items would significantly lower overall Chronbach's Alpha. Deleting Item 4 would have improved the overall reliability, but the researcher retained the item because the literature supports the use of an unmodified scale (Conroy, 2004). In addition, retaining Item 4 contributes to the overall variability in the subscale and the overall reliability at .721 is still higher than the needed standard of .70 (Witte & Witte, 2007).

Table 10

*Chronbach's Coefficient Alphas for Fear of Failure Subscale–Having an Uncertain Future on PFAI*

Fear of Having an Uncertain Future	Description	Alpha if item deleted
Item 1	When I am failing, my future seems uncertain.	.738
Item 2	When I am failing, I believe that my future plans will change.	.708
Item 3	When I am failing, it upsets my “plan” for the future.	.708
Item 4	When I am failing, I am worried about it affecting my future plans.	.827
$\alpha$ Uncertain Future		.799

Removing Item 4 would improve the overall reliability to .827, but it was kept in the subscale because of literature supports the use of an unmodified scale (Conroy, 2004).

Furthermore, keeping Item 4 improves the overall variability of the subscale. Finally, while removing the item might lead to a slight increase in scale reliability, the score of the scale even with the item is .799, well above the .7 threshold being used for this study.

Table 11

*Chronbach's Coefficient Alphas for Fear of Failure Subscale—Important Others Losing Interest on PFAI*

Fear of Important Others Losing Interest	Description	Alpha if item deleted
Item 1	When I am not succeeding, people are less interesting in me.	.778
Item 2	When I am not succeeding, people seem to want to help me less.	.800
Item 3	When I am not succeeding, people tend to leave me alone.	.781
Item 4	When I am not succeeding, some people are not interested in me anymore.	.746
Item 5	When I am not succeeding, my value decreases for some people.	.768
$\alpha$ Important Others Losing Interest		.812

All items were retained in this subscale as deleting any one item would lower the overall alpha reliability and the literature supports the use of an unmodified scale (Conroy, 2004).

Table 12

*Chronbach's Coefficient Alphas for Fear of Failure Subscale—Upsetting Important Others on PFAI*

Fear of Upsetting Important Others	Description	Alpha if item deleted
Item 1	When I am failing, it upsets important others.	.719
Item 2	When I am failing, I expect to be criticized by important others.	.775
Item 3	When I am failing, I lose the trust of people who are important to me.	.834
Item 4	When I am failing, important others are not happy with me.	.704
Item 5	When I am failing, important others are disappointed.	.702
$\alpha$ Upsetting Others		.791

Although deleting Item 3 would improve the overall Alpha reliability from .791 to .834, the researcher chose to retain this item because the literature supports the use of an unmodified scale (Conroy, 2004). In addition, keeping the item improves the variability in the scale. Finally, although deleting Item 3 would produce a slightly higher scale reliability, the item was retained, because the overall reliability is above the threshold of .7 used for this study.

Table 13

*Chronbach's Coefficient Alphas for Fear of Failure Total Scale on PFAI*

Fear of Failure	Description	Alpha if item deleted
Item 1	When I am failing, it is often because I am not smart enough to perform successfully.	.902
Item 2	When I am failing my future seems uncertain.	.898
Item 3	When I am failing, it upsets important others.	.900
Item 4	When I am failing, I blame my lack of talents.	.900
Item 5	When I am failing, I believe that my future plans will change.	.897
Item 6	When I am failing, I expect to be criticized by important others.	.900
Item 7	When I am failing, I am afraid that I might not have enough talent	.899
Item 8	When I am failing, it upsets my "plan" for the future.	.896
Item 9	When I am failing, I lost the trust of people who are important to me.	.901
Item 10	When I am not succeeding, I am less valuable than when I succeed.	.898
Item 11	When I am not succeeding, people are less interested in me.	.899
Item 12	When I am failing, I am worried about it affecting my future plans.	.903

Fear of Failure	Description	Alpha if item deleted
Item 13	When I am not succeeding, people seem to want to help me less.	.902
Item 14	When I am failing, I lose the trust of people who are important to me.	.899
Item 15	When I am not succeeding, I get down on myself easily.	.898
Item 16	When I am failing, I hate the fact that I am not in control of the outcome.	.900
Item 17	When I am not succeeding, people tend to leave me alone.	.900
Item 18	When I am failing, it is embarrassing if others are there to see it.	.898
Item 19	When I am failing, important others are disappointed.	.899
Item 20	When I am failing, I believe that everybody knows I am failing.	.897
Item 21	When I am not succeeding, some people are not interested in me anymore.	.899
Item 22	When I am failing, I believe that my doubters feel that they were right about me.	.898
Item 23	When I am not succeeding, my value decreases for some people.	.899
Item 24	When I am failing, I worry about what others think of me.	.896
Item 25	When I am failing, I worry that others may think I'm not trying.	.897
$\alpha$ Total Fear of Failure		.903

The reliability scores for each of the twenty-five items are exceptionally high and removing any one of the items would not greatly improve Cronbach's overall coefficient. Therefore, all items were retained as there is literature support for an unmodified scale (Conroy, 2004).

Table 14

*Chronbach's Coefficient Alphas for Procrastination Scale—PASS Scale*

Procrastination	Description	Alpha if item deleted
Item 1	To what degree do you procrastinate on writing a term paper?	.828
Item 2	To what degree is procrastination on writing a paper a problem?	.818
Item 3	To what extent do you want to decrease your procrastination on writing a term paper?	.823
Item 4	To what degree do you procrastinate on studying for exams?	.828
Item 5	To what degree is procrastination on studying for exams a problem?	.822
Item 6	To what extent do you want to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on studying for exams?	.828
Item 7	To what degree do you procrastinate on weekly reading assignments?	.831
Item 8	To what degree is procrastination on reading assignments a problem?	.824
Item 9	To what extent do you want to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on reading assignments?	.820
Item 10	To what extent do you procrastinate on administrative tasks (registering for classes, etc.)?	.820
Item 11	To what degree is procrastination on administrative tasks a problem?	.820
Item 12	To what extent do you want to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on administrative tasks?	.815
Item 13	To what degree do you procrastinate on meeting with your advisors and/or professors?	.820
Item 14	To what degree is procrastination on meeting a problem?	.818

Procrastination	Description	Alpha if item deleted
Item 15	To what extent do you want to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on meetings?	.815
Item 16	To what degree do you procrastinate on school activities?	.826
Item 17	To what degree is procrastinating on school activities a problem?	.823
Item 18	To what extent do you want to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on school activities?	.822
$\alpha$ Procrastination		.831

For the scale of procrastination, removing any of one of the eighteen items would not have improved overall reliability. All items are well above the minimum reliability needed for research at .70 (Witte, 2007). Furthermore, the literature supports the use of an unmodified scale (Rothblum, 1990).

Table 15

*Chronbach's Coefficient Alphas for Self-Efficacy Subscale—Social Self Efficacy—CSEI*

Social Self-Efficacy	Description	Alpha if item deleted
Item 1	How confident are you to talk with professors/instructors?	.775
Item 2	How confident are you to join an intramural sports team?	.842
Item 3	How confident are you to ask an instructor a question outside of class?	.769
Item 4	How confident are you to work on a group project?	.780
Item 5	How confident are you to talk with academic and support staff?	.776
Item 6	How confident are you to join a student organization?	.769
Item 7	How confident are you to ask a question in class?	.768
Item 8	How confident are you to participate in class discussions?	.777
$\alpha$ Social Self-efficacy		.804

Although removing Item 2 would increase the scale reliability to .842, the item was retained because the literature supports the use of an unmodified scale and because the scale reliability of .804 is well above the threshold of .7 which is being used for this study (Solberg, 1993).

Table 16

*Chronbach's Coefficient Alphas for Self-Efficacy Subscale—Academic Self-Efficacy—CSEI*

Academic Self-Efficacy	Description	Alpha if item deleted
Item 1	How confident are you to take good class notes?	.745
Item 2	How confident are you to research a term paper?	.739
Item 3	How confident are you to understand your textbooks?	.766
Item 4	How confident are you to write a course paper?	.734
Item 5	How confident are you to do well on your exams?	.750
Item 6	How confident are you to manage your time effectively?	.744
Item 7	How confident are you to use the library?	.775
Item 8	How confident are you to keep up to date with your school work?	.746
$\alpha$ Academic Self-efficacy		.774

Each of the items on the subscale of academic self-efficacy are very similar to the overall Chronbach reliability alpha of .774. Deleting Item 7 would only slightly improve the overall reliability and the overall reliability of .774 is above the threshold of .7 used for the current study. Therefore, all items were retained as the literature supports the use of an unmodified scale (Solberg, 1993).

Table 17

*Chronbach's Coefficient Alphas for Total Self-Efficacy Scale—CSEI*

Total Self-Efficacy Scale	Description	Alpha if item deleted
Item 1	How confident are you to take good class notes?	.821
Item 2	How confident are you to research a term paper?	.823
Item 3	How confident are you to understand your textbooks	.825
Item 4	How confident are you to write a course paper?	.819
Item 5	How confident are you to do well on your exams?	.821
Item 6	How confident are you to manage your time effectively?	.822
Item 7	How confident are you to use the library?	.827
Item 8	How confident are you to keep up to date with your school work?	.821
Item 9	How confident are you to talk to your professors/instructors?	.811
Item 10	How confident are you to join an intramural sports team?	.848
Item 11	How confident are you to ask a professor a question outside of class?	.810
Item 12	How confident are you to work on a group project?	.816
Item 13	How confident are you to talk with school academic and support staff?	.811
Item 14	How confident are you to join a student organization?	.813
Item 15	How confident are you to ask a question in class?	.817
Item 16	How confident are you to participate in class discussions?	.819
$\alpha$ Total Self-Efficacy		.830

The only item in the overall self-efficacy scale that would improve Chronbach's alpha is Item # 10. The item was kept because the literature supports the use of an unmodified scale

(Solberg, 1993) and because the overall reliability of .83 is well above the .7 level used for this study.

## Research Questions

### Research Question One

Are there significant differences between first and non first-generation college students on the factors of a) fear of failure, b) procrastination, and c) self-efficacy? To answer each part of this question, descriptive statistics were first calculated including mean and standard deviation for each of the variables of fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy. T-tests were then calculated to determine if significant differences exists between first and non first-generation students.

**Fear of failure results.** Eight students out of the sample of 237 failed to answer at least one question on the fear of failure survey, so they were removed listwise ( $N=229$ ). Mean scores are on a scale of 0 to four with 0 being “no fear of failure” and four being “strong fear of failure.” Results are presented in Table 18.

Table 18

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for First and Non-First Generation Students on Variable Fear of Failure at Southeastern Christian—All Classes (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior)*

Student Population	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.
All Students	229	1.966	.667	-.099	.921
First-Gen	122	1.960	.704		
Non First-Gen	107	1.970	.648		

A two-tailed t-test comparing first-generation to non first-generation students across all classes of Southeastern students on the variable of fear of failure indicated no statistically significant difference between the groups,  $t(227) = -.099$ ,  $p = .921$ . Surprisingly, first-

generation students did not differ in fear of failure from non first-generation. The lowest individual score for fear of failure for both groups combined was .28 and the highest score was 3.44. Figure 7 displays a histogram of the distribution scores of fear of failure for the sample of students at Southeastern Christian, ( $N=229$ ,  $M = 1.97$ ,  $SD = .677$ ). Discussion of this finding and implications for practice will be presented in Chapter V.

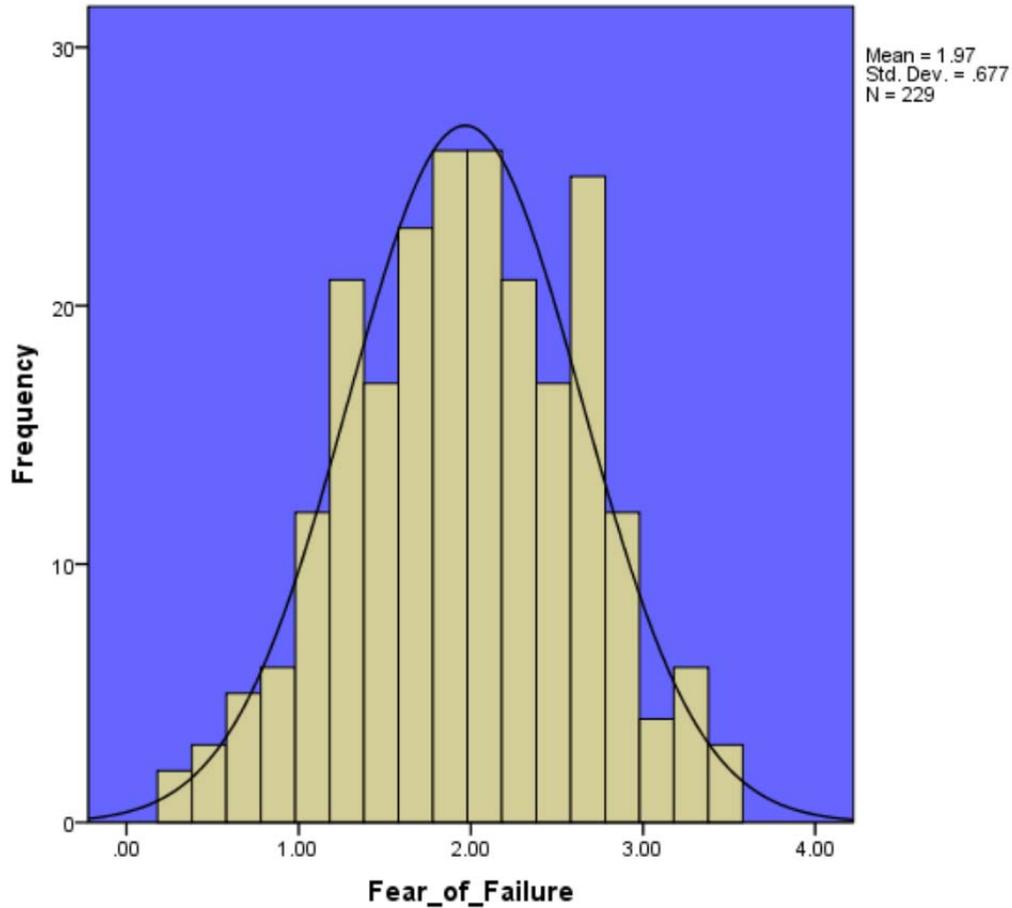


Figure 7. Fear of failure vs. frequency.

To determine if there were significant differences in fear of failure between first and non first-generation students in the freshmen and sophomore classes only, descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated for each of these two classes, leaving out the junior and senior classes. The freshman and sophomore years are the most critical in terms of adjustment to college, both academically and psychologically (Tinto, 2005; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004). Tables 19 and 20 below compare the mean differences of first and non first-generation students on the variable of fear of failure in the freshman and sophomore classes.

Table 19

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for First and Non First-Generation Students in Freshman Class on Variable of Fear of Failure*

Class in College	Generational Status	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Freshman	First-Gen	56	2.11	.678	1.74	.085
	Non First-Gen	35	1.86	.680		

Although the mean score for Fear of Failure in first-generation college students at Southeastern ( $M = 2.11$ ) is higher than the mean score for non first-generation students ( $M = 1.86$ ), a *t* test indicates that the difference is not significant,  $t(89) = 1.74, p = .085$ .

Table 20

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for First and Non First-Generation Students in Sophomore Class on Variable of Fear of Failure*

Class in College	Generational Status	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Sophomore	First-Gen	30	2.01	6.90	.466	.640
	Non First-Gen	38	2.08	6.52		

For the sophomore class, mean scores on fear of failure are similar for first and non first-generation students ( $M=2.01$ ) and ( $M = 2.06$ ) respectively. A t test indicates no statistically significant differences,  $t(66) = -.466$ ,  $p < .64$ . Discussion of this finding will be presented in Chapter V.

The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI) (Conroy, 2003) utilized in this study has five subscales: 1) fear of shame and embarrassment; 2) fear of devaluing one's self-estimate; 3) fear of having an uncertain future; 4) fear of important others losing interest; and 5) fear of upsetting important others. Table 21 presents the descriptive statistics on the five subscales for the freshman class at Southeastern.

Table 21

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for First and Non First-Generation Students on Fear of Failure Subscales-Freshman Class at Southeastern Christian*

Fear of Failure Subscales	First-Gen			Non First-Gen			t	Sig.
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD		
Shame and Embarrassment	57	2.56	.91	38	2.31	.81	1.36	.176
Devaluing One's Self Estimate	60	1.72	.92	38	1.39	.92	1.70	.090
Having an Uncertain Future	60	1.88	.67	38	1.37	.73	3.54	.001***
Important Others Losing Interest	58	1.13	.84	35	1.11	.82	.111	.91
Upsetting Important Others	59	2.49	.91	38	2.36	.98	.67	.50

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

Whereas in the total fear of failure scale, there were no statistically significant differences in first and non-first generation students in the freshman class, on the subscale of ‘fear of having an uncertain future’, there are significant differences found between the means of the two groups,  $t = 3.52 (96), p < .001$ , which means first-generation students are more fearful of having an uncertain future than are there non first-generation peers. Utilizing subscales in the PFAI allows the researcher to tease apart subtle nuances regarding fear of failure. Discussion of this interesting finding will be presented in Chapter V.

**Procrastination results.** What are the differences between first and non-first generation students on the variable of procrastination? A two-tailed t-test was conducted to determine if significant differences exist between first and non first-generation students. Table 22 describes the descriptive and inferential data followed by a histogram of the procrastination scores in Figure 9. Scores on the PASS are calculated on a five-point Likert scales with 0 indicating ‘never procrastinate’ and 4 indicating ‘always procrastinate.’

Table 22

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for First and Non First-Generation students at Southeastern on Procrastination (PASS)*

Generational Status	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.
First Generation	88	2.08	.610	.294	.769
Non First-Generation	75	2.05	.529		

Results from a t-test indicate there are no statistically significant differences in the procrastination levels of first and non first-generation students,  $t (161), = .294 p = .769$ . Figure 8 on the following page presents a histogram showing distribution scores of all study participants at Southeastern on the variable of procrastination with ( $N = 233, M = 2.05, SD = 0.57$ ).

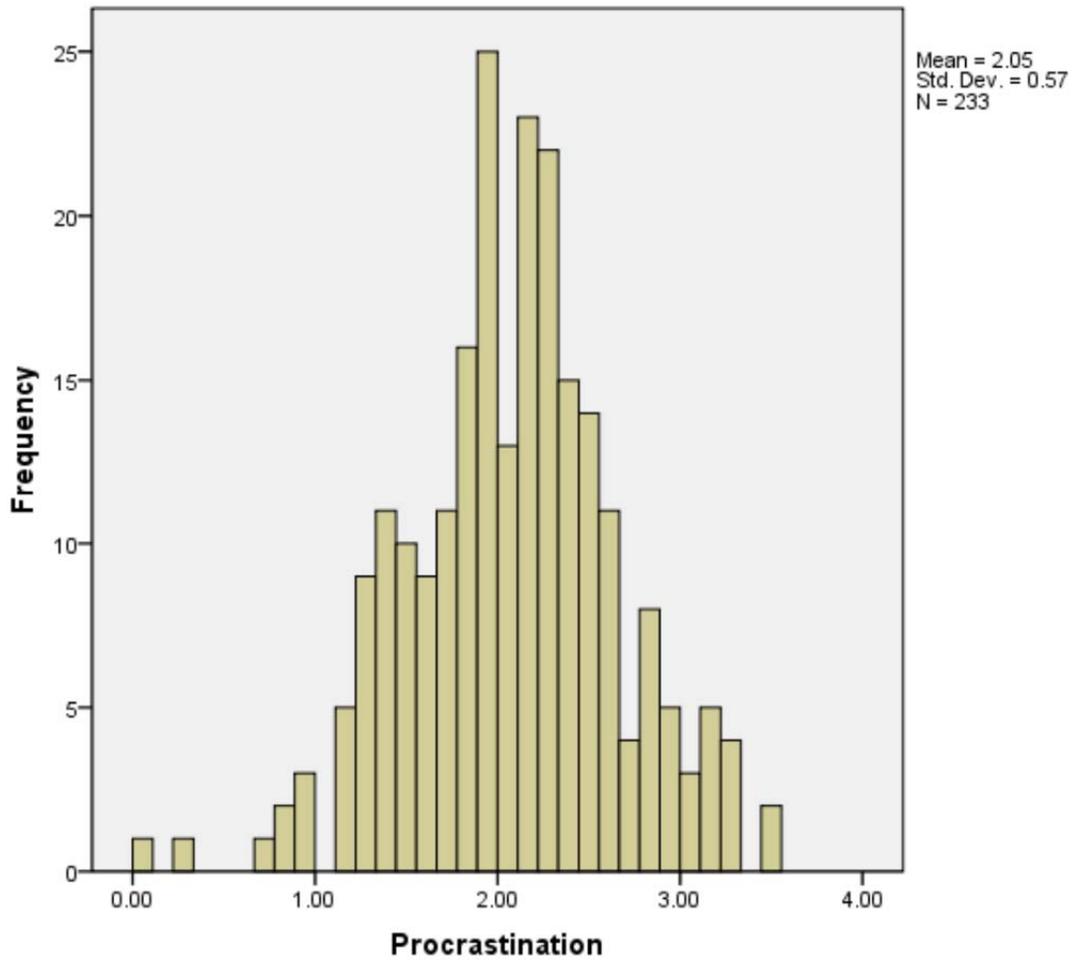


Figure 8. Histogram showing distribution scores of all study participants at Southeastern on the variable of procrastination

**Self-efficacy results.** Do first-generation and non first-generation students differ significantly on scores of self-efficacy? Tables 23, 24, and 25 and Figure 9 present the descriptive and inferential statistics on both the total self-efficacy scores and the subscales of social self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy. The CSEI mean scores are on a scale of 0 indicating ‘totally unconfident’ and 8 indicating ‘totally confident.’

Table 23

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics by Generational Status of all Study Participants at Southeastern Christian on the Scale of Total Self-Efficacy (CSEI)*

Generational Status	N	M	SD	t	Sig.
First Generation	121	5.41	1.04	.511	.610
Non First-Generation	110	5.49	1.05		

Results indicate that first-generation and non first-generation students do not statistically differ on scales of Self-Efficacy,  $t(229) = -.511, p = .610$ . Chapter V will discuss these findings.

Table 24

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics by Generational Status of all Study Participants on the Subscale Social Self-Efficacy for Students at Southeastern Christian*

Generational Status	N	M	SD	t	Sig.
First Generation	122	5.51	1.39	.360	.720
Non First-Generation	110	5.58	1.37		

On the subscale of social self-efficacy, there were no statistically significant differences between first and non first-generation students at Southeastern,  $t(230) = .360, p = .720$ .

Table 25

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics by Generational Status for all Study Participants on Subscale Academic Self-Efficacy for Students at Southeastern Christian*

Generational Status	N	M	SD	t	Sig.
First Generation	125	5.31	1.09	.511	.610
Non First-Generation	111	5.40	1.14		

The findings in this study indicate there are no statistically significant differences in scores for academic self-efficacy between first and non first-generation students at Southeastern,  $t(234) = .511, p = .610$ . Figure 9 presents the histogram of scores on total self-efficacy at Southeastern, ( $N = 231, M = 5.45, SD = 1.042$ ).

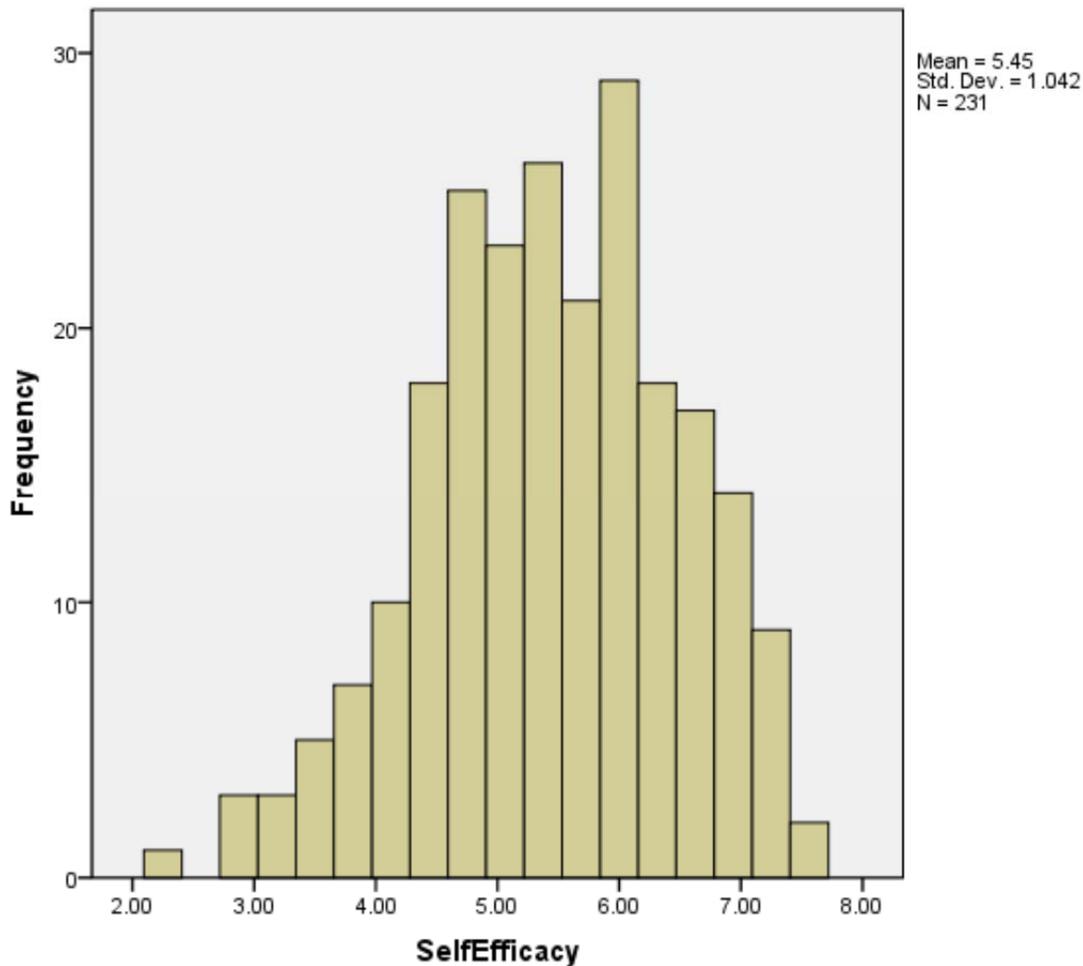


Figure 9. Histogram of scores on total self-efficacy.

### Research Question Two

Does gender play a significant role in fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy of college students? To determine the answers to the three parts of this question, t-tests were calculated for the mean differences between males and females on the variables of fear of failure,

procrastination and self-efficacy. Table 26 details the descriptive and inferential statistics between male and female students at Southeastern on fear of failure.

Table 26

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics Comparing All Male and Female Students at Southeastern on Fear of Failure*

Fear of Failure	Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
	Male	101	1.84	.66		
	Female	128	2.07	.68	-2.52	.012*

\*  $p < .05$

Results indicate that females at Southeastern experience higher levels of fear of failure than do their male peers,  $t(227) = -2.52, p \leq .012$ . Table 27 details the results of descriptive and inferential statistics on fear of failure in the freshman class.

Table 27

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics Comparing Freshman Male and Female Students at Southeastern on all Scales of Fear of Failure*

Fear of Failure	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig
Total Fear of Failure	Male	39	1.86	.64	-1.80	.075
	Female	52	2.12	.70		
Fear of Shame	Male	42	2.24	.73	-2.30	.023*
	Female	53	2.64	.94		
Fear Devalue	Male	44	1.49	.94	-1.01	.310
	Female	54	1.68	.93		
Fear of Uncertain Future	Male	44	1.60	.65	-1.02	.309
	Female	54	1.75	.81		
Fear Others Losing Interest	Male	40	.945	.87	-1.82	.072
	Female	53	1.26	.81		
Fear Upsetting Others	Male	43	2.41	.95	-2.73	.780
	Female	54	2.47	.94		

Results indicate that on the total scale of Fear of Failure, there are not statistically significant differences between freshman males and females,  $t(89) = -1.80, p = .075$ , whereas on the subscale of fear of shame and embarrassment, females are significantly more prone to experience feelings of fear of shame and embarrassment than are males in the freshman class,  $t(93) = 2.30, p < .023$ . The following section presents results for the variable of procrastination and details the descriptive and inferential data on statistically significant differences between males and females.

Table 28

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for Males and Females on the Variable of Procrastination*

Procrastination	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
	Males	69	2.20	.488		
	Females	94	1.97	.613	2.57	.011*

\* $p \leq .05$

As indicated in Table 28, males procrastinate at significantly higher levels than do females,  $t(161) = 2.57, p < .011$ . Conclusions and discussion regarding implications for practice will be presented in Chapter V. The following section presents descriptive and inferential statistical results comparing males and females at Southeastern on the variable of self-efficacy.

Table 29

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for Males and Females on variable of Self-Efficacy (CSEI)*

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Self-Efficacy	Males	107	5.35	1.07		
	Females	130	5.53	1.02	-1.33	.184
Academic Self-Efficacy	Males	107	5.05	1.08		
	Females	128	5.59	1.09	-3.70	.000*
Social Self-Efficacy	Males	102	5.63	1.44		
	Females	130	5.48	1.33	.79	.492

\* $p \leq .05$

A two-tailed t-test indicates that on overall self-efficacy, there are no significant differences between males and females  $t(235) = -1.33, p = .184$ . There are significant differences however, between males and females in academic self-efficacy,  $t(235) = -3.70,$

$p < .000$ . Table 30 shows the differences between males and females in the freshman class on total self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and social self-efficacy.

Table 30

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for Males and Females in the Freshman Class on the Variable of Total Self-Efficacy, Subscales of Academic Self-Efficacy and Social Self-Efficacy*

Self-Efficacy	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Self Efficacy	Males	40	5.29	1.10	-2.84	.777
	Females	54	5.35	1.03		
Academic Self Efficacy	Males	44	4.82	1.14	-2.29	.020*
	Females	54	5.33	1.05		
Social Self Efficacy	Males	40	5.74	1.38	1.265	.209
	Females	54	5.38	1.36		

\* $p \leq .05$

A two-tailed t-test indicates that while there are not statistically significant differences between freshman males and females at Southeastern on the total self-efficacy scale,  $t(92) = -2.84$ ,  $p = .777$ , and no statistically significant differences on social self-efficacy,  $t(92) = 1.265$ ,  $p = .209$ , there are statistically significant differences between male and female freshman students on academic self-efficacy,  $t(96) = -2.29$ ,  $p < .02$ . This finding indicates that males at Southeastern have significantly less academic self-efficacy than do their female peers. Interpretation and implications for practice will be discussed in Chapter V.

### **Research Question Three**

Does ethnicity play a significant role in fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy of college students? To answer this question, three univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests

were run with the primary ethnic groups at Southeastern; Caucasian, African-American, and Hispanic/Other. Table 31 presents the results for the ANOVA test for the variable fear of failure.

Table 31

*Analysis of Variance Between the Groups Caucasian, African American and Hispanic/Other at Southeastern on the Variable Fear of Failure*

Ethnicity	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.961	2	.481	1.019	.365
Within Groups	41.493	88	.472		
Total	42.454	90			

The ANOVA test for fear of failure across three ethnic groups at Southeastern indicates no statistically significant differences between groups on this variable,  $F(2,88) = 1.109, p = .365$ .

Table 32 presents results for ANOVA on the variable of procrastination across ethnic groups.

Table 32

*Analysis of Variance Between the Groups Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic/Other at Southeastern on the Variable of Procrastination*

Procrastination	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.92	4	.481	1.492	.206
Within Groups	73.52	228	.322		
Total	75.443	232			

Analysis of variance on the variable Procrastination between the ethnic groups at Southeastern indicate no significant differences,  $F(4,228) = 1.492, p = .206$ . Table 33 presents

the results of the ANOVA test on the variables of social self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and total self-efficacy.

Table 33

*Analysis of Variance between the groups Caucasian, African-American and Hispanic/Other on the variable of Total Self-Efficacy, Academic Self-Efficacy and Social Self-Efficacy*

Self Efficacy	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.839	2	.919	.815	.446
Within Groups	102.669	91	1.128		
Total	104.507	93			
Academic Self-Efficacy					
Between Groups	1.077	2	.538	.429	.652
Within Groups	119.256	95	1.255	.429	
Total	120.333	97			
Social Self-Efficacy					
Between Groups	3.197	2	1.599	.842	.434
Within Groups	172.791	91	1.899		
Total	175.988	93			

Results indicate no significant differences among ethnic groups at Southeastern on the variable of overall self-efficacy,  $F(2,91) = 1.128, p = .815$ , academic self-efficacy,  $F(2,95) = .429, p = .652$  and social self-efficacy,  $F(2,91) = .842, p = .434$ . Discussion of this finding will be presented in Chapter V.

#### Research Question Four

Does socio-economic status of students play a significant role in the fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy of college students? To answer this research question, three separate univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were calculated comparing six student income levels with the variables fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy. Table 34 presents the results on fear of failure.

Table 34

*Analysis of Variance Between the Income Levels of Southeastern Students on the Variable Fear of Failure*

Fear of Failure	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.435	4	.359	.752	.559
Within Groups	41.019	86	.477		
Total	42.454	90			

There were no statistically significant differences on the variable fear of failure for students in six different income levels at Southeastern,  $F(4,86) = .752, p = .559$ . Students in low-income groups at Southeastern had no more fear of failure than did their peers in higher-income brackets. Tables 35 and 36 present the results for descriptive and inferential statistics on the variables of procrastination and self-efficacy across family income levels for students at Southeastern.

Table 35

*Analysis of Variance between Income Groups of Southeastern Students on the Variable of Procrastination*

Procrastination	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.434	4	.359	1.105	.355
Within Groups	74.008	228	.325		
Total	75.443	232			

Results of the ANOVA indicate no statistically significant differences on the variable of procrastination among students in the six income groups at Southeastern,  $F(4,228) = 1.105, p = .355$ . The finding indicates that student procrastination is not associated with family income level.

Table 36

*Analysis of Variance Between Six Income Groups of Southeastern Students on the Variable of Self-Efficacy*

Self-Efficacy	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.006	4	.751	.688	.601
Within Groups	246.786	226	1.092		
Total	249.792	230			

There were no statistically significant differences across family income groups at Southeastern on the variable of self-efficacy,  $F(4,226) = .688, p = .601$ . Students whose families have less income have similar rates of self-efficacy as those students whose families have higher levels of income. Discussion of these findings will be presented in Chapter V.

### Research Question Five

Are there significant differences in fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy between freshmen and sophomore students? First, to determine if there were significant differences in fear of failure between students in the freshman and sophomore classes only, descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated for each of these two classes, leaving out the junior and senior classes. Table 37 compares the mean difference of freshman and sophomore students.

Table 37

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for Freshman and Sophomore Classes on Variable of Fear of Failure*

Fear of Failure	Class in College	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.
	Freshman	91	2.01	.687		
	Sophomore	68	2.05	.67	-3.48	.726

A two-tailed t-test indicated no statistically significant differences on Fear of Failure between students in the freshman and sophomore classes, which means that freshmen students have no more or no less fear of failure than do sophomore students,  $t(157) = 3.48, p = .726$ . A two-tailed t-test was calculated on the variable of procrastination for the freshman and sophomore classes (see Table 38).

Table 38

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for Freshman and Sophomore Classes on the Variable of Procrastination*

Procrastination	Class in College	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig.
	Freshman	96	2.18	.545	3.018	.003**
	Sophomore	67	1.90	.578		

\*\* $p \leq .01$

Results of the two-tailed t-test indicate freshman students procrastinate at significantly higher levels than do sophomore students,  $t(161) = 3.018, p < .003$ . To determine the differences between freshman and sophomore students on the variables of total self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and social self-efficacy, a two-tailed t-test was calculated. Results are presented in Table 39.

Table 39

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for Freshman and Sophomore Classes on the Variable of Self-Efficacy, Academic Self-Efficacy, and Social Self-Efficacy*

	Class in College	N	Mean	Std.	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Total Self Efficacy	Freshman	94	5.33	1.06	-1.51	.132
	Sophomore	69	5.57	.92		
Academic Self-Efficacy	Freshman	98	5.10	1.11	-2.46	.015*
	Sophomore	69	5.52	1.02		
Social Self Efficacy	Freshman	94	5.54	1.38	-.42	.67
	Sophomore	69	5.62	1.23		

\* $p \leq .05$

Results indicate that the only statistical significant difference in Self-Efficacy scales between the freshman and sophomore classes are on academic self-efficacy,  $t(165) = -2.46$ ,  $p < .015$ , which means that freshmen build academic self-efficacy through the college experience and that academic self-efficacy builds as a student continues in college from the freshman to the sophomore year. Findings will be discussed in Chapter V.

### Research Question Six

Do the variables fear of failure, procrastination, self-efficacy, gender, income level, ethnicity, and generational status impact the academic success of college students as indicated by their end of semester GPA? To answer this question, a multiple regression analysis was calculated. Results are presented in Table 40.

Table 40

*Multiple Regression Analysis Measuring the Statistical Significance of Fear of Failure, Procrastination, Self-Efficacy, Gender, Ethnicity, Generational Status, and Income Level on the GPA of College Students at Southeastern*

Variable	B	Std Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	3.102	.481		6.448	.000
Fear of Failure	-.127	.083	-.098	-1.534	.127
Procrastination	-.388	.100	-.251	-3.875	.000***
Self Efficacy	.117	.056	.139	2.075	.039*
Gender	.219	.111	.123	1.978	.049*
Ethnicity	-.621	.160	-.236	-3.881	.000***
Gen Status	.182	.113	.102	1.611	.109
Income Level	.037	.039	.060	.943	.347

\*  $p \leq .05$  \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

The multiple regression analysis in this study found that procrastination, self-efficacy, gender, and ethnicity are significantly correlated with academic success as measured by end of semester GPA. Results revealed that the following four variables, procrastination ( $\beta = -.251$ ), self-efficacy ( $\beta = .139$ ), gender ( $\beta = .123$ ) and ethnicity ( $\beta = -2.36$ ) emerged as being significantly correlated with academic GPA. Procrastination is negatively associated with academic GPA, denoting that as procrastination scores increase, GPA scores decrease. Self-efficacy is positively associated with GPA, meaning that as self-efficacy scores increase, academic GPA increases. Gender was coded as 0 for males and 1 for females; therefore a positive Beta of .123 indicates that females receive higher GPA's than do males. Ethnicity was coded 0 for Caucasian, 1 for African American, and 2 for Hispanic/Other; hence, a negative Beta of -.236 reveals that Caucasians in this study receive higher academic GPA's than do African Americans and Hispanic/Other.

Fear of failure was included in the original regression model and was not found to be statistically significant, but given that procrastination has been found to account for 50 percent of the variability in fear of failure, (Rothblum, 1984), the researcher believed multicollinearity between fear of failure and procrastination might have presented a problem with this model. Subsequently, a Pearson Product Moment correlation was conducted to determine if fear of failure alone has a correlation with academic GPA. Fear of failure was weakly correlated with GPA but statistically significant at the .05 confidence level,  $r (N=229) = -.141, p < .033$ . Because  $r$  was less than .2, multicollinearity was not problematic for this model (Witte, 2007).

## CHAPTER V:

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study researched several psychological/motivational factors that have been missing in the literature. Specifically, the study sought to determine if the variables fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy were significantly different in first and non-first generation college students. Furthermore, the study sought to understand if fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy correlated significantly with gender, socio-economic status and ethnicity. Finally, the study sought to understand if fear of failure, procrastination, self-efficacy, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and generational status correlated with academic success as determined by end of semester cumulative GPA.

While first-generation students are enrolling in college in greater numbers than in the past, the number of these students who persist to graduation are far fewer than those students termed non first-generation, whose parents graduated from college with a bachelor's degree (Choy, 2001; Nunez & Cuccara-Alamin, 1998). Despite the fact that researchers have studied this sub-population of students for over forty years, the extant literature lacks conclusive evidence on the motivational factors that may impact first-generation student's success in college (McGregor, Mayleben, Buzzanga, Davis, & Becker, 1991; Wang & Castaneda-Sound, 2008; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Belcastro, 2009).

Participants in the present study consisted of 126 first-generation and 111 non first-generation students; 137 were Caucasian, 21 were African American, and 5 were Hispanic/Other. There were 130 female participants, and 107 male participants. Study

participants volunteered to take a 91-question survey through a general education required course entitled Personal Wholeness. The survey consisted of Conroy's Performance Failure Assessment Inventory (PFAI), Rothblum's Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS), and Solberg's College Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI). This final chapter discusses the study's findings and conclusions, and makes recommendations to educators and practitioners for future practice and research.

## **Findings and Conclusions**

### **Research Question One: Differences in First and Non First-Generation Students**

Are there significant differences between first and non first-generation college students on the factors of a) fear of failure, b) procrastination, and c) self-efficacy? A two-tailed t-test was calculated to test for statistically significant differences on each of these variables for first and non first-generation students. Findings indicate that there are no statistically significant differences between the two groups on the overall scales of the above variables.

**Fear of failure.** The significant findings in this study suggest that while first-generation students are no more prone to experience fear of failure than are their peers whose parents attended and graduated from college, 75% of the students who participated in the study experience some degree of fear of failure on a regular basis, believing that failure will have adverse consequences for their lives. Out of the total group of students surveyed, (first and non-first generation combined), 54% scored above the mean score of 1.96 on the fear of failure assessment, while 46% scored below the mean score. Given that no differences were found among ethnic groups or family income groups on the fear of failure assessment, the study indicates that college students who experience fear of failure are found among all demographic groups. The only statistically significant finding indicating any difference in fear of failure

between first and non-first generation students was found on the subscale of ‘fear of an uncertain future’ which will be discussed further in Implications for Practice. This study also found that females are more prone to experiencing shame and embarrassment in connection to fear of failure, which will be discussed further in Implications for Practice.

The findings in this study differ from Bui’s (2002) study in which the researcher found a significant difference between first and non first-generation students on one survey question, “I am afraid of failing in college.” The findings may differ because while Bui’s study had one question on fear of failing, the present study utilized a 25-question survey, in which the construct of fear of failure was substantially developed into five subscales and tested in numerous studies for reliability and validity (Conroy & Elliott, 2004).

Another possibility for the contradiction in findings may be the institutional demographics. Bui’s study was conducted at a selective, academically rigorous, four-year public institution, while the present study was conducted at a non-selective, private university, which may account for the divergence in findings. First-generation students who attend highly selective and competitive universities may be more prone to fear of failure due to peer pressure to perform academically, whereas first-generation students attending non-selective institutions may not encounter as demanding an academic environment where peers vie for top grades.

Although there were no statistically significant differences in fear of failure between first and non first-generation students across the entire student population at Southeastern (freshman, sophomore, junior and senior classes), results of this study indicate that there are greater differences in the mean scores on fear of failure between first and non first-generation students in the freshman class (2.11 vs.1.85 respectively) than in the sophomore class (2.00 vs. 2.08 respectively). This finding might suggest a possible reason for a high risk of departure after the

first year of college for first-generation students, whom according to Bui (2002), and Cox (2009) are apt to feel less confident in their ability to succeed in college. The findings also support the research of Nunez (2000), who found that first-generation students enter college as freshmen with lower self-esteem and less confident in their ability to succeed academically. The present findings suggest that with each consecutive year in college, first-generation students build academic self-efficacy and fear of failure decreases. Therefore, it may be concluded that incoming college freshmen are more at risk for fear of failure and anxiety in academic settings, and counseling and student affairs interventions may be highly beneficial in overcoming these fears. Implications for practice will be further highlighted in subsequent sections.

Despite the fact that there are no significant differences between first and non first-generation students on the total fear of failure score, there are statistically significant differences in the freshman class on the fear of failure subscale entitled ‘fear of having an uncertain future.’ This finding supports the research by several authors suggesting that for first-generation students, going to college represents a severance with their family ties and the development of a new identity (Goffman, 1952; London, 1992; Terenzini et al., 1996; Jalomo, 1995). First-generation students whose parents did not graduate from college with a bachelor’s degree lack parental role models needed to help them plan for a future after graduation from college. Through utilizing a fear of failure instrument with specific subscales, this study was able to identify an area in which freshman first-generation students may be particularly vulnerable and to which educational practitioners will be able to target their interventions. Recommendations for practice on this finding will be discussed further under Implications for Practice.

**Procrastination.** Results of the present study indicate that first and non first-generation students do not procrastinate on academic tasks at significantly different levels. The mean score

for first-generation students was 2.08, whereas the mean score for non first-generation students was 2.05. The frequency distribution of procrastination scores on the PASS assessment revealed that scores ranged from .0 signifying that a student rarely procrastinated, to a score of 3.50, showing that a student nearly always procrastinated. When breaking procrastination scores into quartiles, (0-1, 1-2, 2-3, and 3-4), it is evident that the majority of students in the present study procrastinate to some degree on a regular basis. Only eight students (3%) received procrastination scores between 0 and 1, indicating they rarely procrastinate. Ninety-six students (41%) received scores between 1 and 2, indicating that they sometimes procrastinate. One hundred-fifteen students (50%) received procrastination scores between 2 and 3, indicating they often procrastinate, and fourteen students (6%) received scores between 3 and 4, indicating they nearly always procrastinate. These findings support previous research that between 75-95% of college students procrastinate on a regular basis (Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984).

Findings of this study indicate that first-generation students are no more at risk for procrastinating behaviors than their counterparts whose parents graduated from college. Because fear of failure has been shown to be significantly correlated with procrastination (Rothblum, 1990), and this study found that first-generation students do not experience fear of failure at significantly higher levels than their non first-generation peers, the finding that first-generation students do not procrastinate any more than their counterparts is very plausible.

**Self-efficacy.** The findings of this study indicate that on scores of overall self-efficacy, first-generation and non first-generation students do not significantly differ. This finding corroborates the study conducted by McGregor et al. (1991), in which the researchers found first-generation students to believe themselves as capable as their counterparts to succeed in college.

Further, the study is consistent with the findings of Vuong, Brown-Welty, and Tracz, (2010) in which the authors found no differences between first and non first-generation sophomores on self-efficacy. These results contradict those of Wang and Casteneda-Sound (2008) and Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols (2007) in which the authors found that first-generation students come to college with lower levels of self-efficacy than their peers. The inconsistency in findings may be due to self-reporting of overconfidence by first-generation students. Rittman (1999) reported that as students enter college, they “often make overly confident predictions about future academic performance” (p. 28). Furthermore, as overly confident students misjudge their academic ability in college, they tend to later make negative predictions regarding future academic outcomes.

A further explanation for a discrepancy in findings on self-efficacy may be a result of how various researchers have defined first-generation. Wang and Casteneda-Sound (2008) defined first-generation as any student for whom neither parent attended a post-secondary institution, while the present study defined first-generation as those for whom neither parent nor guardian graduated with a four-year degree. The discrepancy in findings on self-efficacy provides an opportunity for future research on the construct of self-efficacy and first-generation students.

### **Research Question Two: Gender Related to Fear of Failure, Procrastination, Self-Efficacy**

**Gender and fear of failure.** The results of this study indicate that females experience significantly higher levels of fear of failure than do males. Furthermore, the significant areas of fear are associated with experiencing shame and embarrassment and fear of one’s self-estimate being devalued. According to Conroy and Elliott (2004), shame proneness precedes fear of failure; therefore the study’s findings are significant for college females. The findings in the current study support the previous research by Thompson, Sharp, and Alexander (2008), in

which the authors found women to have higher levels of achievement guilt and shame proneness. Lutwak and Ferrari (1997) found that shame-proneness has negative effects on an individual's functioning, in terms of social anxiety, fear of intimacy and social avoidance. Tangney, Wagner, Gramzow and Fletcher (1992) found that the shame-prone individual tends to blame others and avoid self-criticism, creating social situations where the individual may be isolated.

Furthermore, although not statistically significant in this study, on the subscale of 'important others losing interest,' females in the present study had higher mean scores than males (1.26 vs. .940 respectively). This finding corroborates those of Rothblum (1990), who found that women report more fear of failure when they believe that achievement may impact significant relationships. In other words, females worry more than males about others losing interest in the relationship when they are failing as well as when they are succeeding. In addition this study supports findings by Stein and Bailey (1973) that women are more anxious about failing in academic settings, and are more prone to test anxiety than are men. Del Vara (1996) found that individuals prone to fear of failure are often more cooperative rather than competitive, as well as group oriented rather than individually oriented. Females who experience failure early in life may tend to give up more easily than their male peers. The shame and embarrassment surrounding the failure may be overwhelming, and since females tend to be cooperative rather than competitive, they may decide the risk to try again is not worth the costs. Given that studies have shown shame to be the core emotion of fear of failure, and that shame is a powerful negative emotion, (McGregor & Elliot, 2005), this study's findings are significant for future practice with female college students. This will be discussed in the section Recommendations for Practice.

**Gender and procrastination.** The present study found that males procrastinate at statistically significant higher levels than do females. This study contradicts previous research in which no differences were found between males and females on the tendency to procrastinate (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Effert & Ferrari, 1989; Haycock, McCarthy, & Skay, 1998) as well as one study finding indicating that females procrastinate more than males (Paludi & Frankell-Hauser, 1986).

One possible explanation for a discrepancy in results may be the factor of age. Haycock, McCarthy, and Skay (1998) argue that younger students tend to procrastinate more than older students because they have had inadequate time to develop good study habits. Given that the majority of the students in the present study were first-generation students, and first-generation students tend to be older and female, we might surmise that the males in this study were younger and had less developed study habits. In addition, discussed in the following section, the present study found males to have lower levels of academic self-efficacy, and academic self-efficacy has been inversely correlated with procrastination in the literature (Tuckman, 1991; Ferrari, Parker, & Ware, 1992).

**Gender and self-efficacy.** This study found statistically significant differences between males and females on academic self-efficacy, with females having higher levels than their male peers. The finding supports a reasonably large body of literature stating that females have higher levels of academic self-efficacy than do males (Caprara et al., 2008; Pastorelli et al., 2001; Bandura et al., 1996). Pastorelli's cross cultural study with 1,179 school children found significant differences between girls and boys on academic self-efficacy. The study also found that girls are better than boys at refusing to go along with peer activities that may take them away from their studies. Pajares et al. (1999) and Pajares et al. (2000) found that girls reported higher

levels of self-efficacy for monitoring their work in elementary school and greater confidence in the ability to use study strategies and manage their time to complete projects. Caprera et al. (2008) also found that the gender gap in academic self-efficacy widens as students progress in school which would support the findings in this study that males have lower levels of academic self-efficacy. Even though the majority of research supports the finding in this study, differences in gender self-efficacy beliefs dissipate when previous successful academic performance is controlled (Pajares, 1996). In other words, when comparing males and females with similar academic achievement backgrounds, researchers have found that self-efficacy beliefs are similar between the two groups. This has significant implications for practitioners which will be discussed in a later section.

### **Research Question Three: Ethnicity Related to Fear of Failure, Procrastination, Self-Efficacy**

**Ethnicity and fear of failure.** Although access to college for minority students is increasing, educational measures including standardized test scores, high school GPA, placement in remedial college courses, and persistence and graduation rates, indicate that minorities still underperform in college as compared to their peers (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007). African American males face the lowest educational outcomes in the United States, which has a huge impact on persistence in college for this group of students (Levin, Belfield, Muennig, & Rouse, 2007). Given this unfortunate reality, one might expect to find that ethnic minority students experience higher levels of fear of failure, but the findings in this study indicate otherwise. Results of the ANOVA test indicate that there are no significant differences in fear of failure between Caucasians, African-Americans, and Hispanic/Other in this study.

With limited research in this area of study, it is difficult to determine how reliable this finding may be in other university settings. The findings in this study appear to contradict Phillips (2002) study which found that African Americans who enroll in Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), experience more fear of failure than their counterparts in terms of fear of disappointing family members. Given that African American males are at risk for attrition in college, a recommendation for further research on fear of failure in African American males will be made in the section on Recommendations for Future Research.

**Ethnicity and procrastination.** Results of the present study suggest there are not statistically significant differences among ethnic groups on the variable of procrastination. The findings support a study by Davis (1999) in which no significant differences existed on procrastination levels between ethnic groups at the high school level. In addition, Prohaska, Morrill, Atilas, and Perez (2000) found no ethnic differences in scores on Rothblum's (1984) procrastination scale in non-traditional students. Jeffrey and Hill (1994) surveyed African American students at a historically black college using Rothblum's PASS assessment. Findings indicated that African American college student's procrastination behaviors are similar to their Caucasian peers. Research literature on the topic of procrastination among minority groups is scant; therefore a recommendation will be made in a subsequent section for future study.

**Ethnicity and self-efficacy.** While Lent et al. (1994, 1996) suggested that ethnic minorities may be less self- efficacious due to less exposure to the sources of self-efficacy, and researchers in the 1990s found that ethnic minorities had lower levels of self-efficacy than Caucasians (Gloria & Hird, 1990; Mayo & Christenfeld, 1999), the findings of the present study indicate there are no significant differences in overall self-efficacy among the three ethnic groups of Caucasian, African-American, and Hispanic/Other. Furthermore, no significant differences

were found on the subscales of social and academic self-efficacy among the ethnic groups. This study supports a recently published study by DeFrietas and Bravo (2012) in which the researcher found no differences in ethnic groups on the factor of self-efficacy. Edman and Brazil (2009) also found that while Caucasian students had higher scores on self-efficacy than Latino and Asian students, there were no significant differences in self-efficacy between African Americans and Caucasians. These recent findings are encouraging as self-efficacy has been highly correlated with academic performance (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

In other research, ethnicity has been shown to be a predictor of self-efficacy (Nesdale & Pinter, 2000). The researchers found that if ethnic minority students felt accepted by the dominant culture, they possessed higher levels of self-efficacy. This finding may be at work in the study at Southeastern. African-American and Hispanic/Other students may indeed feel inclusion and acceptance by the dominant Caucasian culture.

#### **Research Question Four: Socio-Economic Status Related to Fear of Failure, Procrastination and Self-Efficacy**

The present study found that family income level of college students was not significantly associated with the variables of fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy in college students. The findings of the present study are consistent with Collin's (1992) study in which the researcher found that low socio-economic status students possessed a relatively high self-concept independent of academic achievement. Although Skunk and Meece (2000) and Bradley and Corwyn (2002) have suggested that families with greater income are able to provide richer experiences for their children, thereby increasing opportunities for their children to build

self-efficacy, Bronfenbrenner (1986) cautioned that socio-economic status is a descriptor, not an explanatory variable for self-efficacy.

While first-generation students are more likely to come from low-income families, (York-Anderson & Bowman, 1991), income level does not appear to be correlated with self-efficacy, procrastination or fear of failure in these students.

### **Research Question Five: Differences in Freshmen and Sophomore Students on Fear of Failure, Procrastination and Self Efficacy**

Interestingly, freshmen as an entire group, including both first and non first-generation students, do not experience statistically significant higher levels of fear of failure than their sophomore peers, but do have significantly lower levels of academic self-efficacy, and procrastinate at higher levels than their sophomore peers. Factors such as college transition issues, learning to manage one's time, and adjusting to the academic rigor of college are most likely the causes of procrastination in freshmen students. Prolific literature exists on the importance of the first year in college (Tinto, 1993; Levitz & Noel, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Upcraft et al., 2005). This study indicates that for freshmen students, building self-efficacy and decreasing procrastinating behaviors are key factors in academic achievement. Implications for this finding will be discussed in a following section and recommendations will be made for practitioners.

### **Research Question Six: GPA as a factor of Fear of Failure, Procrastination, Self-Efficacy, Gender, Ethnicity, Income Level, and Generational Status**

The current study shows that self-efficacy, procrastination, gender and ethnicity are variables significantly correlated to academic GPA. Fear of failure, socio-economic status as

measured by family income level of the student, and generational status (first generation vs. non first-generation) did not significantly correlate with academic GPA.

**Fear of failure.** As no studies have been located in the literature empirically correlating fear of failure with academic GPA, this study contributes to the body of research on the inverse relationship between fear of failure and academic success. The present study suggests that even though the correlation is weak, students who experience higher levels of fear of failure receive lower academic GPAs than their counterparts who are more academically self-efficacious and less anxious about failing.

With the positive psychology movement begun at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), a focus on student talents, innate abilities and strengths appear to be the norm in higher education settings today. Many colleges and universities utilize survey instruments to assess student strengths rather than areas of weakness or concern. While student self-efficacy may certainly be increased through the utilization of such valuable strengths assessments, a student with underlying fear of failure has the potential to sabotage any benefit of discovering his/her strengths and talents. Fear of failure is often insidious to the point that a student and faculty/staff working with the student may not recognize the cognitive and affective ways in which he/she is being impacted by fear of failure (Beery, 1975). Until fear of failure is acknowledged and confronted in students, our efforts to build student academic self-efficacy may be undermined. Challenging faulty belief systems in students requires intentional and intrusive measures on the part of education faculty and staff. Recommendations for practice concerning this conclusion will be discussed in a subsequent section.

**Self-efficacy.** Even though some studies have shown that self-efficacy does not predict GPA after controlling for high school standardized test scores and grades (Hoover, 2003), and

that the degree of correlation between GPA and self-efficacy is small to moderate (Elias & Loomis, 2000), this study supports other research findings indicating that academic self-efficacy is positively correlated with academic GPA (Lent, Brown, & Larkin 1984, 1989; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992; Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005; Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Bong, 2001). Given that the literature is contradictory, further research is warranted.

**Procrastination.** The present study's findings indicates that student procrastination in college is inversely correlated with end of the semester academic GPA. The finding confirms previous research indicating that procrastination is correlated with academic underachievement (Covington & Omelich, 1979; Martin & Marsh; 2001; Senecal, Koestner, & Vallerand, 1995; Schouwenburg, 1992; Urdan & Midgley, 2001; Day, Mensink, & O'Sullivan, 2000; Ferrari, Keane, Wolf, & Beck, 1998). In a study by Klassen, Krawchuk, and Rajani (2008), the researchers found that academic procrastination in college students is highly correlated with low self-efficacy for self regulation. In other words, students who find it difficult to manage and regulate their own behavior on a daily basis are more likely to procrastinate. For college freshmen unaccustomed to regulating their daily activities without the encouragement and push by parents, procrastination is likely to be high. This study supports Klassen et al. finding that as freshmen had higher levels of procrastination than upperclassmen. As 52% of college students cite procrastination as being a top concern (Day, Mensink, & O'Sullivan, 2000), recommendations will be made in a subsequent section for higher education practitioners

**Gender.** This study indicates gender is significantly correlated with academic GPA. Female students outperformed their male counterparts in the classroom. Despite the fact that DeBerard and Julka (2000) have found gender to be a statistically significant factor in first

semester GPA of college students, with males receiving lower GPA's, a review of the literature by Bridgeman and Wendler (1991), reveals that gender is not a stable predictor of overall academic performance. Interestingly, Keller, Crouse, and Trusheim (1993) found that males outperform females in certain college courses (engineering and math), while females perform better in courses in the humanities field. Because this study did not control for the various types of courses taken, it would be problematic to argue that females received higher GPA scores due to the types of courses taken in the curriculum. As the current study found that males procrastinate at higher levels than females, and procrastination is inversely correlated with GPA, we might conclude that procrastination is one determinant of lower academic achievement for the males in this study. Recommendations for practice will be discussed in a subsequent section.

**Ethnicity.** Whereas increasing numbers of minority students are attending colleges and universities today, many studies have shown that these students are not performing as well academically as their Caucasian counterparts (Tierney, 1999; Lau, 2003; NCES, 2001; Steele, 1992; Osborne, 1997; Demo & Parker, 1987; van Laar, 2000). The current study supports the previous studies revealing a significant relationship between ethnicity and academic GPA. Caucasian students in this study received higher end of semester academic GPA's than their African American and Hispanic/Other peers. Because this study shows no statistically significant differences among Caucasians, African Americans and Hispanic/Other students on the factors of fear of failure, procrastination and self-efficacy, we may not conclude that lowered academic achievement is related to any of the variables in this study. Research into other cultural and sociological variables is recommended in a following section.

## **Conceptual Framework Revisited**

The conceptual framework for this study presented a model in which fear of failure, low academic self-efficacy, and procrastination interferes with the ability of a student to be academically successful in college. The framework utilized both Bandura's (1977, 1993) self-efficacy theory, and Beery (1975) and Covington and Omelich's (1991) theory of self worth. The findings in this study partially support the conceptual framework through discovery that students with low academic self-efficacy beliefs and high levels of procrastination are more likely to receive low grade point averages in college than their peers with high academic self-efficacy and low procrastination behaviors. Although the findings partially support the model there are limitations. Whereas fear of failure is significantly correlated with academic GPA, the correlation is weak. Procrastination is highly correlated with academic GPA, and there are other reasons for procrastination besides fear of failure, among those reasons are task aversiveness, perfectionism and discomfort (Rothblum, 1990; Milgram, Marshevsky, & Sadeh, 1995).

Furthermore, the conceptual model may not be generalized across all demographics of college students. When considering fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy, one must consider the salient issues of gender and ethnicity. For example, the conceptual model presupposes that a female college student who presents with high levels of fear of failure would procrastinate and academically underperform as compared to her male counterpart who is not as fearful of failing. The findings indicate otherwise. Although females in this study presented with higher levels of shame and embarrassment with fear of failing, they procrastinated less than males, and performed better in the classroom as evidenced by academic GPA.

Furthermore, the conceptual model would suggest that African American students who do not procrastinate at significantly higher levels than their Caucasian peers, would perform as

well in the classroom, and such is not the case. As a group, African American students in this study did not procrastinate at higher levels, and yet received significantly lower GPA scores at the end of semester. Undoubtedly, salient sociological and cultural variables not addressed in this study are at work, which presents opportunity for further research when studying college student success.

### **Summary of Study Conclusions**

Although previous researchers have found that first-generation students encounter obstacles unlike their non first-generation peers (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Nunez & Cuccara-Alamin, 1998), and some authors have found that they come to college with lower self-esteem than their peers (Nunez, 2000; Grimes & David, 1999), the present study found no significant differences in overall fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy in first and non first-generation students. The only statistically significant difference found in first and non first-generation students in this study was on ‘fear of having an unknown future’ in which freshmen first-generation students had significantly higher scores.

Freshmen students had significantly lower levels of academic self-efficacy than their sophomore peers, and procrastinated at higher levels than sophomores. This finding confirms previous research in which academic self-efficacy increases as students learn that they have what it takes to perform successfully in the classroom (Bandura, 1977). Fear of failure and procrastination decrease and self-efficacy increases during a college student’s four years of study. This finding supports the conclusion that the first year of college is indeed, the most critical year for academic and social integration of students (Tinto, 1993).

The study also found interesting differences between male and female students on the variables studied. While female students reported more shame and embarrassment when failing,

they outperformed males academically as measured by GPA. Males reported significantly lower levels of academic self-efficacy, and higher levels of procrastination, but did not report higher levels of fear of failure. Although African American and Hispanic students in this study did not report higher levels of fear of failure and procrastination, or lower levels of self-efficacy than their Caucasian peers, academically they received significantly lower GPA scores at the end of the semester, indicating there are other variables at work contributing to the lowered performance of ethnic minorities.

### **Implications for Practice and Future Research**

Based on the findings in this study, the following implications for practice are suggested. Recommendation One will discuss implications for practice regarding fear of failure. Recommendation Two will discuss implications for practice based on the findings regarding procrastination. Recommendation Three will discuss the gender differences found in the study. Finally, Recommendation Four will make suggestions for college student academic success based on the findings in this study. Recommendation Five will discuss implications for practice based on the multiple regression model in which all study variables were correlated with academic GPA.

### **Implications for Practice**

#### **Recommendation One**

Although fear of failure does not appear to be commonly discussed among educators as a significant issue, this study finds that it is prevalent in various degrees among college students. Because fear of failure can be subtle and dangerous (Beery, 1975), the researcher recommends that college and university practitioners consider utilizing a valid and reliable fear of failure assessment in first-year experience programs with incoming freshmen. Used early in the first

semester of college to identify which students are more prone to experience high levels of fear of failure, recommendations may be made to university counseling services before first tests and major exams. In this way, students with high levels of fear of failure may begin to understand their fears, learn coping strategies, and build academic self-efficacy through attempts at academic tasks. Colleges that offer summer bridge programs to help at-risk students transition to college (McCurry, 2009) may consider adding a valid and reliable assessment of fear of failure to their programs and help students begin building academic self-efficacy throughout the summer months before the beginning of the critical first semester of college. As Yuen (1984) and Beery (1975) point out, fear of failure does not appear often as an obvious problem; it is often subtle and insidious; therefore, assessment is vital. Assessing students for fear of failure may prove to be more advantageous to individual students with high levels of fear rather than to make programmatic changes in college; students with high fear of failure may be connected with peer and faculty mentors as well as directed to the counseling center for help in reframing fear into positive motivators for success

Because first-generation students tend to come to college with fear of an uncertain future, the researcher recommends that first-generation students be identified upon admission to college, and that they be offered an opportunity to meet early with first-year professional advisors or college career counselors. Students who have unclear expectations and goals for the future are at high risk for attrition in college (Hull-Blanks, Kurpius, Befert, Sollenberger, Nicpon, & Huzer, 2005). Early and on-going career counseling with first-generation students may be vital to their success and continued persistence in college. Career counselors should be mindful to provide students experiences in which they may explore all of their options, without the pressure of declaring a major too early in the freshman year. Given that first-generation students tend to be

fearful of an unknown future, pressuring these young people to make hasty career decisions may increase fear of failure. Advisors and counselors could work with these students to provide experiences in which they are provided various options and are led through decision-making processes.

### **Recommendation Two**

First-year seminars have been shown to assist freshmen make the difficult transition from high school to college (Gardner, Barefoot, & Swing, 2001). Because freshmen seminars are often conducted in small intimate classroom settings with peer mentors, the atmosphere of the setting and the informal relationship between faculty and students can lend itself to alleviating fear and anxiety about college. The researcher recommends that first-year experience seminar instructors administer assessments to all freshmen on measures of procrastination mid-way through the first semester in college as students are beginning to establish their study habits. This study indicated that procrastination is negatively correlated with academic GPA and helping freshmen to understand the relationship between procrastination and academic success may encourage less procrastinating behaviors. Small group sessions conducted by upperclassmen on how procrastinating behaviors have impacted their own academic achievement might further encourage freshmen to refrain from procrastinating. According to Astin (1993), one's peers are the most persuasive influencers in college. Utilizing peer mentors to encourage and model good study habits should increase freshmen academic success.

### **Recommendation Three**

As females are more prone to shame and embarrassment surrounding fear of failure than are their male peers (Rothblum, 1990) in addition to assessing all students on the construct of fear of failure, the researcher recommends first-year experience programmers incorporate

individual or group sessions with college females who score high on fear of failure. As Rothblum (1984) pointed out, psychodynamic theories of fear of failure originated from the viewpoint of female development. Women who are prone towards fear of failure are also more affiliative, and less competitive. Furthermore, women who are afraid of failure are often also fearful of losing important relationships if they succeed, and may sabotage their success rather than risk the relationship. According to Mellin (2008) rejection-sensitivity in which an individual is particularly sensitive to the potential loss of important relationships is correlated with depression in college students. The researcher recommends that counselors working with female students on the issue of fear of failure address the phenomenon from a multifaceted approach to include interpersonal relationships as well as academic achievement.

#### **Recommendation Four**

Given that academic self-efficacy is highly correlated with academic achievement, the researcher recommends assessment of incoming college freshmen on academic self-efficacy. Utilizing valid and reliable scales such as Solberg's, (2003) College Self Efficacy Inventory (CSEI), either during freshman summer orientation or the beginning of the fall semester will allow university staff to identify and help students low on academic self-efficacy. As male students may be prone to lower levels of academic self-efficacy and higher levels of procrastinating behaviors, developing academic mentoring programs specifically for male students in the freshmen residence halls is also recommended.

#### **Recommendation Five**

As GPA is significantly correlated with fear of failure, procrastination, self-efficacy, gender, and ethnicity, the researcher makes the following recommendations to increase the likelihood of academic success for college students: 1) assess all students on the construct of fear

of failure utilizing a valid and reliable assessment instrument, such as Conroy's Performance Failure Assessment Inventory (PFAI); 2) utilize results of the assessment to recommend counseling on the various components of fear of failure, individualizing the assessment results to the student; 3) create programming by upperclassmen college students on the potential consequences of procrastinating behaviors on academic success; 4) create intentional opportunities for college students to build academic self-efficacy through living-learning communities and freshmen programming; 5) enlist academically successful male college students to mentor male freshmen on creating study habits that lessen procrastinating behaviors, and promote academic self-efficacy; and 6) finally, create intentional opportunities for minority ethnic groups to build academic self-efficacy.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The following paragraphs will discuss implications for future research through four recommendations. Recommendation One will discuss fear of failure findings in light of what is still to be discovered. Recommendation Two will discuss the topics in self-efficacy research for future research. Recommendation Three details what is yet to be known regarding procrastination in college students, and finally, Recommendation Four makes suggestion for future research on the sub-population of first-generation college students.

#### **Recommendation One**

Because limited empirical research on the construct of fear of failure exists in American higher education, and although the correlation is weak, a statistical significance exists between fear of failure and academic GPA, it is recommended that future studies be conducted at various types of institutions, and with a variety of demographic populations on the construct of fear of failure. Because this study was conducted at a private, liberal arts, non-selective university, the

researcher recommends further empirical study utilizing a valid and reliable instrument to assess for fear of failure at community colleges where a large population of first-generation students enroll, major four-year research public institutions, and private selective institutions. As discussed earlier, students at private highly selective institutions may experience higher fear of failure than those at open, non-selective institutions such as the one in which this study was conducted. In addition to studying fear of failure at various institutional types, it is recommended that further study be conducted on fear of failure among different generations of students. Fear of failure may be more or less prevalent among older, non-traditional students than students eighteen to twenty-two.

Further, given that shame-proneness is a core emotion of fear of failure, (McGregor & Elliot (2005) and research including this study, indicates that women experience more shame associated with fear of failure than do men, the researcher recommends further study on shame-proneness and academic achievement in women, as well as shame-proneness and self-efficacy. Additionally, although there is a link between fear of failure and shame-proneness (McGregor & Elliot, 2005), we have yet to discover the exact way that anticipating shame may precede avoidance in achievement situations. A path analysis model is recommended.

Covert et al. (2003) did find that shame-proneness was negatively associated with self-efficacy, but no other studies looking at this relationship can be found in the literature. Additional research into the correlation between academic self-efficacy and shame-proneness is warranted. Moreover, research targeting African American males and fear of failure is warranted, given Phillips (2002) study which indicated that African American males are worried about disappointing important others. As Caraway et al. (2003) found fear of failure to be inversely correlated with school engagement for high school students, further study is warranted

at the college level as engagement, both social and academic, is paramount to student success (Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993). Given Elliot and McGregor (2001) found fear of failure to be correlated with three categories of goal orientation for college students- mastery-avoidance, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance, further research investigating goal orientation of first-generation students may provide insight for future educators working with this population of students. Furthermore, if fear of failure is discovered to be problematic for first-generation students, qualitative research conducted with in-depth interviewing of first-generation students should be carried out to ascertain the lived experiences of college students with fear of failure. In this way, we can hope to increase the self-efficacy of first-generation students and improve their chances for academic success in college.

### **Recommendation Two**

As academic self-efficacy appears to be highly correlated with academic achievement (Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Zimmerman; Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010), the researcher is hopeful that further studies will be conducted with first-generation college students, delineating the subgroups of first-generation into those for whom neither parent nor guardian attended any post-secondary institution, with those students for whom at least one parent or guardian attended some post-secondary college. As this study focused on first-generation defined as those for whom neither parent nor guardian graduated with a four-year degree, attention should be given to the category of students for whom neither parent have ever enrolled at any post-secondary institution. Parents who have had some college experience are likely to create opportunities for their children to build academic self-efficacy. Furthermore, differentiating those first-generation groups into ethnic and gender sub-categories may help further determine what particular subsets of first-generation students need assistance in building academic self-efficacy. Additionally,

empirical studies related to the effects of programming on building academic self-efficacy in first-generation students are needed, coupled with research on the effects of programming intended to build academic self-efficacy in ethnic minority populations.

### **Recommendation Three**

As the present study found procrastination to be significantly correlated with academic GPA, and male students had higher levels of procrastinating behaviors, further research is recommended into the reasons for procrastination among male students, especially given that males also reported lower scores on all scales of fear of failure. Evidently for male students, there are other reasons that account for procrastinating behaviors above and beyond fear of failure. Lay and Schouwenburg (1993) reported that fear of failure did not account for academic procrastination, and other researchers have reported a variety of reasons for procrastinating behaviors, including time management and task aversiveness. Given that the present study found freshmen students to procrastinate at significantly higher levels than upperclassmen peers, investigation into the procrastinating behaviors of freshmen college students is warranted.

### **Recommendation Four**

As the results of this study indicated no statistically significant difference between first and non first-generation students on the variables fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy, there are other salient issues impacting success and persistence rates for these students. Some researchers have found that first-generation students experience acculturation issues when transitioning from their environment of non college-going families to the social and academic tradition of higher education (London, 1992). Flores, Ojeda, Huang, Gee, & Lee (2006) found that Hispanic first-generation students attempting to balance the dominant Anglo culture with

their own culture struggled with self-efficacy and academic performance in school. Further research on social and cultural issues for first-generation students is warranted.

### **Final Thoughts**

Graduation from college with a four-year baccalaureate degree is becoming increasingly important for young people as the United States struggles to compete in a global economy. Although educational researchers have studied various factors pertaining to the academic success and persistence in college for first-generation students, the demographic population of first-generation students has diversified and changed (Hurtado et al., 2007). There is much more to know about this growing population of students. Continuing to assess the affective and motivational factors that impact this population of students is warranted, as we have just begun to scratch the surface in these areas. Discovering the fears, hopes, dreams, and obstacles first-generation students face will inform policy and practice in higher education institutions.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (Long-Form)

Response Scale:

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

- 1. When I am failing, it is often because I am not smart enough to perform successfully.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

- 2. When I am failing, my future seems uncertain.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

- 3. When I am failing, it upsets important others.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

- 4. When I am failing, I blame my lack of talent.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

- 5. When I am failing, I believe that my future plans will change.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
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Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time
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**6. When I am failing, I expect to be criticized by important others.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

**7. When I am failing, I am afraid that I might not have enough talent.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

**8. When I am failing, it upsets my “plan” for the future.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

**9. When I am failing, I lose the trust of people who are important to me.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

**10. When I am not succeeding, I am less valuable than when I succeed.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

**11. When I am not succeeding, people are less interested in me.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not		Believe 50% of		Believe 100%



**18. When I am failing, it is embarrassing if others are there to see it.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

**19. When I am failing, important others are disappointed.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

**20. When I am failing, I believe that everybody knows I am failing.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

**21. When I am not succeeding, some people are not interested in me anymore.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

**22. When I am failing, I believe that my doubters feel that they were right about me.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

**23. When I am not succeeding, my value decreases for some people.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

**24. When I am failing, I worry about what others think about me.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

**25. When I am failing, I worry that others may think I am not trying.**

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Do Not Believe At All		Believe 50% of the Time		Believe 100% of the Time

## Appendix B

### Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS)

#### Areas of Procrastination

For each of the following activities, please rate the degree to which you delay or procrastinate. Rate each item on an “a” to “e” scale according to how often you wait until the last minute to do the activity. Then indicate on an “a” to “e” scale the degree to which you feel procrastination on that task is a problem. Finally, indicate on an “a” to “e” scale the degree to which you would like to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on each task.

#### **I. WRITING A TERM PAPER**

1. To what degree do you procrastinate on this task?

Never Procrastinate	Almost Never	Sometimes	Nearly Always	Always Procrastinate
a	b	c	d	e

2. To what degree is procrastination on this task a problem for you?

Not At All a Problem	Almost Never	Sometimes	Nearly Always	Always a Problem
a	b	c	d	e

3. To what extent do you want to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on this task?

Do Not Want to Decrease		Somewhat		Definitely Want to Decrease
a	b	c	d	e

## II. STUDYING FOR EXAMS

4. To what degree do you procrastinate on this task?

Never Procrastinate	Almost Never	Sometimes	Nearly Always	Always Procrastinate
a	b	c	d	e

5. To what degree is procrastination on this task a problem for you?

Not At All a Problem	Almost Never	Sometimes	Nearly Always	Always a Problem
a	b	c	d	e

6. To what extent do you want to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on this task?

Do Not Want to Decrease		Somewhat		Definitely Want to Decrease
a	b	c	d	e

## III. KEEPING UP WITH WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS

7. To what degree do you procrastinate on this task?

Never Procrastinate	Almost Never	Sometimes	Nearly Always	Always Procrastinate
a	b	c	d	e

8. To what degree is procrastination on this task a problem for you?

Not At All a Problem	Almost Never	Sometimes	Nearly Always	Always a Problem
a	b	c	d	e

9. To what extent do you want to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on this task?

Do Not Want to Decrease		Somewhat		Definitely Want to Decrease
a	b	c	d	e

**IV. ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS: FILLING OUT FORMS, REGISTERING FOR CLASSES, GETTING ID CARD**

10. To what degree do you procrastinate on this task?

Never Procrastinate	Almost Never	Sometimes	Nearly Always	Always Procrastinate
a	b	c	d	e

11. To what degree is procrastination on this task a problem for you?

Not At All a Problem	Almost Never	Sometimes	Nearly Always	Always a Problem
a	b	c	d	e

12. To what extent do you want to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on this task?

Do Not Want to Decrease		Somewhat		Definitely Want to Decrease
a	b	c	d	e

**V. ATTENDANCE TASKS: MEETING WITH YOUR ADVISOR, MAKING AN APPOINTMENT WITH A PROFESSOR**

13. To what degree do you procrastinate on this task?

Never Procrastinate	Almost Never	Sometimes	Nearly Always	Always Procrastinate
a	b	c	d	e

14. To what degree is procrastination on this task a problem for you?

Not At All a Problem	Almost Never	Sometimes	Nearly Always	Always a Problem
a	b	c	d	e

15. To what extent do you want to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on this task?

Do Not Want to Decrease		Somewhat		Definitely Want to Decrease
a	b	c	d	e

**VI. SCHOOL ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL**

16. To what degree do you procrastinate on this task?

Never Procrastinate	Almost Never	Sometimes	Nearly Always	Always Procrastinate
a	b	c	d	e

17. To what degree is procrastination on this task a problem for you?

Not At All a Problem	Almost Never	Sometimes	Nearly Always	Always a Problem
a	b	c	d	e

18. To what extent do you want to decrease your tendency to procrastinate on this task?

Do Not Want to Decrease		Somewhat		Definitely Want to Decrease
a	b	c	d	e

**Reasons for Procrastination**

Think of the last time the following situation occurred. It's near the end of the semester. The term paper you were assigned at the beginning of the semester is due very soon. You have not begun work on this paper. There are reasons why you have been procrastinating on this task.

Rate each of the following reasons on a 5-point scale according to how much it reflects why you procrastinated at the time. Mark your answers on your answer sheet.

Use the scale:

Not At All Reflects Why I Procrastinated		Somewhat Reflects		Definitely Reflects Why I Procrastinated
a	b	c	d	e

- 19. You were concerned the professor wouldn't like your work.
- 20. You waited until a classmate did his or hers, so that he/she could give you some advice.
- 21. You had a hard time knowing what to include and what not to include in your paper.
- 22. You had too many other things to do.
- 23. There's some information you needed to ask the professor, but you felt uncomfortable

- approaching him/her.
24. You were worried you would get a bad grade.
  25. You resented having to do things assigned by others.
  26. You didn't think you knew enough to write the paper.
  27. You really disliked writing term papers.
  28. You felt overwhelmed by the task.
  29. You had difficulty requesting information from other people.
  30. You looked forward to the excitement of doing this task at the last minute.
  31. You couldn't choose among all the topics.
  32. You were concerned that if you did well, your classmates would resent you.
  33. You didn't trust yourself to do a good job.
  34. You didn't have enough energy to begin the task.
  35. You felt it just takes too long to write a term paper.
  36. You liked the challenge of waiting until the deadline.
  37. You knew that your classmates hadn't started the paper either.
  38. You resented people setting deadlines for you.
  39. You were concerned you wouldn't meet your own expectations.
  40. You were concerned that if you got a good grade, people would have higher expectations of you in the future.
  41. You waited to see if the professor would give you some more information about the paper.
  42. You set very high standards for yourself and you worried that you wouldn't be able to meet those standards.
  43. You just felt too lazy to write a term paper.
  44. Your friends were pressuring you to do other things.

## Appendix C

### College Self-Efficacy Inventory (Long-Form)

Response Scale:

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

Using the scale provided, please mark the number which best represents the degree to which you feel confident performing the following tasks.

*Academic Efficacy:*

**1. Take good class notes.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**2. Research a term paper.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**3. Understand your textbooks.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**4. Write a course paper.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**5. Do well on your exams.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**6. Manage your time effectively.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**7. Use the library.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**8. Keep up to date with your school work.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

*Social/Academic Self- Efficacy:*

**1. Talk to your professors/instructors.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**2. Join an intramural sports team.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**3. Ask a professor or instructor a question outside of class.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**4. Work on a group project.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**5. Talk with school academic and support (e.g. advising) staff.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**6. Join a student organization.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**7. Ask a question in class.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident
2 = unconfident	5 = somewhat confident	8 = totally confident

**8. Participate in class discussions.**

0 = totally unconfident	3 = somewhat unconfident	6 = confident
1 = very unconfident	4 = undecided	7 = very confident

## Appendix D

### Demographic Questionnaire

1. Southeastern Christian University ID number \_\_\_\_\_
2. Did either of your parents or your guardian graduate with a 4-year college degree?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please check the appropriate box:

Mother: high school graduate \_\_\_\_\_ 2-year college graduate \_\_\_\_\_  
4-year college graduate \_\_\_\_\_

Father: high school graduate \_\_\_\_\_ 2-year college graduate \_\_\_\_\_  
4-year college graduate \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian: high school graduate \_\_\_\_\_ 2-year college graduate \_\_\_\_\_  
4-year college graduate \_\_\_\_\_

Please state your ethnicity by checking the appropriate box:

Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_

African American \_\_\_\_\_

Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please state your gender by checking the appropriate box:

Male \_\_\_\_\_

Female \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E

### IRB Approval

October 24, 2011

Office for Research  
Institutional Review Board for the  
Protection of Human Subjects

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA**  
R E S E A R C H

Beth Stuart  
ELPTS  
College of Education  
Box 870302

Re: IRB # 11-OR-312 "The Relation of Fear of Failure,  
Procrastination and Self-Efficacy to Academic Success and Persistence in  
First and Non First-Generation College Students in a Non-Selective  
Private Institution"

Dear Ms. Stuart:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

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

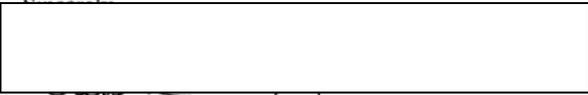
Your application will expire on October 23, 2012. If the study continues beyond that date, you must complete the IRB Renewal Application. If you modify the application, please complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, please complete the Request for Study Closure form.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this application, please include the assigned IRB application number.

Good luck with your research.



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