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Implications of acceleration on student success course curriculum: a comparison of accelerated and traditional course modalities

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IMPLICATIONS OF ACCELERATION ON STUDENT SUCCESS COURSE CURRICULUM: A COMPARISON OF ACCELERATED AND TRADITIONAL COURSE MODALITIES

by

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Dedication

To Rick Picardo, my husband and best friend. Without your support and enthusiasm for my achievements, I would not have accomplished this milestone. You have *always* believed in me and for that, I am a lucky woman. Thank you for a wonderful life.

"Days may not be fair always,

But that's when I'll be there always.

Not for just an hour,

No, not for just a day,

Not for just a year,

But always."

Music and lyrics by Irving Berlin (1925)

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Abstract

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Many individuals enter community colleges with high expectations of improving skills, yet are underprepared for the demands of college. Student success courses and acceleration are promising interventions created to improve success rates in developmental education, however, research on accelerated student success courses is virtually non-existent. This explanatory, sequential mixed methods study compared accelerated and traditional student success courses on the attainment of course learning outcomes, term grade point average and retention from fall to spring, while participants' motivation and use of learning strategies were analyzed in both strands. Students' experiences were also analyzed. Findings indicate 1) that the nature of acceleration motivated students to put time management strategies into practice, 2) most students exhibited extrinsic motivation almost to the exclusion of intrinsic motivation, 3) most students reported acquiring and using learning strategies regardless of course modality, and 4) accelerated students recognized the importance of early exposure to curricula that included learning strategies such as avoiding procrastination, and accessing college resources. Competing interventions and the simultaneous enrollment in more than one course modality detracted from the benefits of acceleration.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

Two realities have converged to bring the efficacy of accelerated course design to the forefront of American postsecondary education. Shortages in the college-educated workforce and insufficient completion rates in developmental education are fueling conversation and research about the value of accelerated learning in higher education. Current forecasts predict that the nation will require 22 million new college degrees by 2018. Further predictions indicate that this goal will not be attained, falling short by at least 3 million post-secondary degrees, associate's or higher. Furthermore, 4.7 million new workers with postsecondary certificates will also be in demand (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). Additionally, the demand for greater degree completion comes at a time when low success rates in developmental education are making national headlines, thus focusing the attention of educational leaders, funding sources and the public on community colleges' open-access mission statements. In addition to access and affordability, this attention is resulting in revised college mission statements that include success defined by certificate or degree completion.

Statement of the Problem

The world-wide demand for college-educated and competitively skilled workers is at an all-time high, and after decades of leading the world in degree attainment, paradoxically, the United States is now 16th in completion rates for 25 to 34 year-olds (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009, p.2). College completion has become a priority for many constituencies including both public and

private agencies that fund higher education initiatives, and the taxpayer whose tuition dollars are highly critical to the running of these institutions. As a result, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) launched "The Completion Agenda" in 2010. AACC is the professional organization that promotes and supports approximately 1,200 two-year, associate degree granting, community colleges that represent more than 13 million students (AACC, 2011). In 2010, AACC joined with other national organizations including the Association for Community College Trustees, the Center for Community College Student Engagement, the League for Innovation in the Community College, the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, and the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society "to publicly commit to assisting our members in producing 50% more students with high-quality degrees and certificates by 2020" (McPhail, 2011).

Recently, the Lumina Foundation set a most ambitious goal for America entitled Goals 2025. By 2025, "60% of Americans will hold a college degree, certificate, or other high-quality postsecondary credential" (Lumina Foundation, 2015, pg. 2). Community college students who said their goal was to complete a certificate grew 8% between 2004 and 2014. For completion of associate degrees, the percentage grew 5% during the same timeframe (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2016, p. 3). These initiatives and the increase in the number of students with credential completion in mind demonstrate significant commitment to ensure that the majority of the country's citizens attain a postsecondary credential. However, the challenges to retaining students to successful credential or degree completion are persistent and ever-present and threaten the nation's ability to achieve these goals. More importantly, our inability to retain students to completion threatens to diminish students' expectations and hopes for

completion. Nationwide, of the students who enrolled in a two-year college in 2003, 46 percent did not earn a degree and were not enrolled in college in 2010, while only 14 percent earned an associate's degree, eight percent earned a certificate, 12 percent earned a bachelor's degree, and 20 percent did not earn a degree, but were enrolled in college (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010).

This disappointing story places a significant responsibility for the achievement of the completion agenda on community colleges since approximately 50% of all new college students enroll in community college (Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen & Person, 2006). The 2015 National Center for Educational Statistics' Institutional Retention and Graduation Rates for Undergraduate Students reports that "the graduation rate was 20 percent at public 2-year institutions, 54 percent at private nonprofit 2-year institutions, and 63 percent at private for-profit 2-year institutions" (p.4).

When examined in terms of age, race, ethnicity, and first generation enrollment, the story grows more complex as community colleges enroll between 40% and 60% of this underrepresented population. Despite high rates of enrollment, many of these students, especially Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians never attained graduation status (AACC, April 2012). For example, one analysis indicates that 6 years after college entry, only 30% of low-income community college students, 26% of Black students, and 26% of Hispanic students have completed either a degree or a certificate, compared with 39% and 36% of White and high-income students, respectively (AACC, April 2012). Since open access and lower tuition costs make community colleges attractive to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the ramifications of enrollment in a community college often include unsuccessful completion of an Associate's degree or certificate.

In community colleges, first-year students who do not meet college-level placement standards in reading, writing, and math attempt to remediate these skills in one or more semesters. Nearly two-thirds of first-year community college students and 40% of first-year freshman at 4 year institutions place into and enroll in developmental education courses (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013) and their success in these courses is precarious. Whether or not students enroll in developmental education courses, the results are similar: first-year students are not persisting to completion of their goals.

> In communities where from 30 to 80 percent of the students who graduate from high school with a diploma lack the high school-level skills necessary to succeed in college, it is the rare Developmental Studies program where more than 60 percent of the students remediate their basic skills' deficits. (Mellow and Heelen, 2008, p. 169)

Developmental education sequences that contain several levels of courses create barriers that students never overcome which decreases a student's opportunity for completing college-level math and English and therefore their ability to earn a degree or successfully transfer to a 4-year institution (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010; Hern, 2014, 2010; Hern & Snell, 2010). Hern aptly describes this rate of student attrition in multiple sequences of developmental mathematics as "hemorrhaging" (p.1). Ultimately, the desired outcome of successful graduation and improved employment opportunities is lost, and this substandard outcome fueled national, state and local debate about continued investment in developmental education.

However, as developmental education programs continue to see only minor, localized improvements in student success, and retention and graduation rates remain measurably low, national surveys have begun to show the positive effects of intentional first-year interventions on student success. In 2007, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) reported that

> Current research indicates that helping students succeed through the equivalent of the first semester (12–15 credit hours) can dramatically improve retention. Successfully completing the first semester, moreover, improves students' chances of attaining further milestones and, ultimately, earning certificates and degrees. (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2007, p.13)

Furthermore, since community colleges are being challenged to commit to the completion agenda along with their long-standing missions of access and affordability, addressing first-year retention is more important than ever (Derby & Smith, 2004). Under growing pressure to graduate more students, there is increased interest in the effectiveness of student success courses.

Student success courses, also referred to as orientation or freshman seminar courses, were created to transition high school students to a more demanding and independent collegiate learning environment (Duggan & Williams, 2011). The curriculum varies, but most often includes study skills, time management, and instruction on effectively using campus resources. The 2012-13 National Survey of First-Year Seminars surveyed chief academic, executive, or student affairs officers from more than 3700 institutions to collect information about first-year seminars in higher education. From more than 850 completed surveys, 804 institutions reported that the three most

common objectives for first-year seminars were: 1) to develop a connection with the institution, 2) to provide orientation to campus resources and services, and 3) to develop academic skills (National Resource Center on the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, 2012-13). Research has been conducted that showed the value of using student success courses as a delivery method for intentional advisement and program planning during the first-year of college (Boudreau & Kromney, 1994; Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2009; Stovall, 2004). These courses offer community colleges the opportunity to engage students in the classroom where retention efforts are most successful (Boudreau & Kromney, 1994; O'Gara, Karp, & Hughes, 2009; Stovall, 2004; Tinto, 2005). Since community college students are less likely than students attending 4-year institutions to engage with counselors, tutors and other student development profession outside of the classroom, these courses provide an institution with ample opportunities to engage and retain more students.

Accelerated or intensive courses have a long and popular history with non-traditional, adult populations (Scott, 1994; Scott & Conrad 1992; Wlodkowski & Kasworm, 2003; Wlodkowski & Westover, 1999). Acceleration allows a student to complete academic requirements in an expedited manner and accelerated programs offer students the opportunity to accumulate credits, graduate or complete a course of study in a shorter timeframe than traditionally timed courses or programs (Edgecombe, 2011; Wlodkowski, 2003). The Center for the Study of Accelerated Learning identified 250 colleges and universities with accelerated programs that allow degree completion to occur in a faster and more convenient manner than a traditional 15-week semester can offer (Wlodkowski, 2003). That number has grown considerably as 52% of the colleges

participating in the 2011 Community College Survey of Student Engagement offer some type of accelerated basic skills programs (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014).

The lack of research on accelerated student success courses was extremely important to this study (O'Gara, Karp, & Hughes, 2009; Zeidenberg, Jenkins, & Calcagno, 2007). Independent of each other, there are distinct bodies of research that have considered accelerated courses and student success courses as a means to improving student success outcomes (Barefoot 2005; Cho & Melchur Karp, 2013; O'Gara, et al., 2009; Scott 1996; Scott & Conrad, 1992; Wlodkowski, 2003; Wlodkowski & Kasworm, 2003**).** Accelerated student success courses have the ability to emphasize process in equal portion with content and therefore serve as a framework for sense-making in the first-year of colleges. Faculty have the opportunity to engage with students earlier and more frequently in the semester which is a critical factor missing in traditional course modalities. O'Gara et al. (2009) state that an area of improvement for student success course development lies in the structure of the course. Referring to the student success courses offered during the traditional 15-week semester, they assert, "In particular, the organization of the curriculum meant that information was given in a less-than-timely manner. For example, students were frustrated because the campus tours occurred too late in the semester (p. 214).

There is a preconception on the part of the students and their families that earning their associate degree will require two years of study. This preconception exists largely because the associate degree is often referred to in conversation as a two-year degree. The terms associate degree and two-year degree are used interchangeably, with the latter

used more commonly. Lacking the knowledge that in order to complete the 60 credits needed to earn the associate degree in two years, a student must enroll for least 15 credits per semester and sometimes use additional semesters to earn credits lost from failing or withdrawing from a course or to earn additional credits to meet transfer or certification requirements. When developmental coursework which does not carry graduation credit is required, the time to complete the associate's degree significantly increases. At the study site, most first-year students carrying developmental requirements enroll for 12 credits. This enrollment pattern is accomplished through advising, and is not a registration rule, but part of the accepted pattern of advising for first-year students. This enrollment decision was made recognizing that students enroll with outside work and family commitments. An underlying paradox emerges, however. Students, even after enrolling, and in some cases, well into the first semester, thought that they were on track to complete their degree in two-years. The realization that earning the degree will require additional time at the College at best frustrates students and causes some to disengage. It must be asked if this paradox does not add to the number of students who transfer without graduating or fail to re-enroll after accumulating two or three semesters of credit. Thus, students may not only be underprepared academically, but they enter the institution without the cultural capital needed to prepare them for both the academic and pragmatic challenges of earning a degree including time to complete course work while balancing work, family and possibly significant personal responsibilities.

The research on accelerated student success courses is virtually non-existent. However, both student success courses and acceleration of students' progression through multiple levels of course work are representative of nationwide initiatives to improve

success outcomes. As community colleges strive to meet the national challenge to increase the number of entering students who complete a credential or degree, investigating and determining the efficacy of accelerated student success courses will ultimately aid colleges in helping to meet the national challenge to create a more competitive workforce.

Significance of the Study

This study contributed to the literature on the efficacy of accelerated student success courses to successfully transition students through the first-semester of college. This information can guide first-year academic and student affairs programming aimed at supporting students, especially those who are enrolled in developmental education courses.

The purpose of this explanatory, sequential mixed-methods study was to compare student success course modalities, specifically, accelerated, seven-week courses with traditional 14-week courses. I hoped to determine if accelerated student success courses were intentional interventions optimally situated to transition students with diverse backgrounds into an academic world that may be unfamiliar and intimidating for multiple reasons. To do so, my choice of research designs was guided by the observation of Miles and Huberman and Saldana (2014) who, when "recognizing the long-standing battle between quantitative and qualitative researchers, emphasize that together, numbers and words are requisite for a better understanding of the world" (p.40). Bazeley and Jackson (2013) state that qualitative methods are necessary when situations require a deeper examination and possible understanding of the data than quantitative analysis alone can produce. Since retention of students enrolled in community colleges continues to be a

complex problem, a sequential mixed-methods approach allowed for a deeper analysis of the difference, if any, between seven and 14-week student success course modalities.

Performance on final exams that included embedded course learning outcomes, motivation and the use of learning strategies, grade-point average and retention of students enrolled in both modalities were examined quantitatively. In keeping with a sequential mixed methods research design, these findings determined the direction of the qualitative phase of my study. Additionally, qualitative methods explored changes, if any, in students' levels of motivation and their use of learning strategies. Finally, students' experiences in both the traditional and accelerated sections of the student success class were analyzed qualitatively. When examined with a mixed-methods lens, a clearer picture of the role of acceleration in student success course design emerged. Retention is one of the most studied concepts in higher education and for the purposes of this study, retention was viewed within a conceptual framework informed by midrange theories that examine the relationship between particular types of students and their success at certain types of campuses (Berger and Lyon, 2005). Social reproduction theory, constructed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, proposes that a student's perception of themselves, their place in the world and opportunities to achieve success are determined by social and economic background (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990; Lareau, 2011 Mullen, 2010; Mutch, 2006). Berger (2000) asserts that within the context of higher education, "it is the interaction of individual and organizational social reproduction processes that best explains undergraduate persistence from a Bourdieuvian perspective" (p.104). Similarly, Mullen situates the ability to succeed with the constructs of an historical perspective, asserting that,

> well before students begin to apply to college, differences in the advantage provided by their families and schooling converge to engender profound disparities in students' levels of academic achievement, motivation, educational expectations, and even in their sense of what it means to be a student. (p. 206)

My conceptual framework is further explored in Chapter 2 with a review of the literature on the role of student success courses and acceleration to transition students successfully through the first semester of college.

Separately, student success courses and acceleration of multiple levels of developmental education have experienced some success in community colleges where students are often enrolled in both simultaneously (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014; Edgecombe, 2011; Hern, 2010; Karp, Bickerstaff, Rucks-Ahidiana, Bork, Barragan, & Edgecombe, 2012; O'Gara et al. 2009). Accelerated student success courses offer colleges an opportunity to strategically place these intentional retention interventions early in the semester (O'Gara et al., 2009; Center for Community College Engagement, 2009). However, research on accelerated student success courses is very limited and investigating differences between 14-week[1] traditional and seven-week accelerated student success courses in terms of students' mastery of learning outcomes, levels and orientation of motivation, use of learning strategies, term grade point average, retention, and students' experiences

[1] "Semester credit hour" is defined by the State's Administrative Code Title 9A as 50 minutes of face-to-face class activity each week for 15 weeks (or the equivalent attained by scheduling more minutes of face-to-face class activity per week for fewer weeks in the semester).

informed the literature on the effectiveness of accelerated student success courses in terms of retention and credential completion.

The Scope of the Study

This explanatory, sequential mixed-methods study took place at a mid-size suburban community college in the northeastern United States in fall 2011 and spring 2012. The College, with an enrollment of more than 12,500 credit students, offered over 500 courses, including a three-credit student success course. In fall 2011, 54 sections of the Course were offered enrolling approximately 1,401 students. Of these students, 1108 or 79% were new students. The course was required of entering students whose placement test results indicated the need for two or more courses within developmental education areas. Therefore, the majority of the students in the study were simultaneously enrolled in developmental reading, writing and/or mathematics. With the exception of multiple summer sessions where most courses were offered in an accelerated, compressed modality, acceleration during the fall and spring semesters occurred less frequently with no more than five sections offered in the fall or spring semesters. Prior to fall 2011, accelerated student success courses had never been offered in the fall or spring semesters.

A sample of six sections of the College's student success course, offered in the fall 2011, was used. The sample consisted of three pair of courses consisting of a traditional, 14-week and an accelerated, seven-week course. Prior to the study, the faculty curriculum coordinator for the Course, asked several instructors who were teaching a 14-week section of the Course if they would be interested in teaching an accelerated section simultaneously. Three instructors volunteered to do so and at that time, I contacted each faculty member to ask if they would be interested in being part of

the study. All three instructors agreed to participate. A standardized syllabus containing the same learning outcomes was used by all instructors (Appendix A).

I employed a "mixed–methods way of thinking" (Greene, Benjamin, and Goodyear, 2001) best suited for research on a multi-dimensional problem of transitioning and retaining diverse groups of students into the College. This approach was important for three reasons: 1) the research on accelerated student success courses was extremely limited and as separate entities were viewed with some skepticism by both faculty and administration. Studying the phenomena from an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design where the quantitative phase informed the direction of the qualitative data collection provided richer detail about the value of the course modality as a first-year intervention, 2) studying differences in the achievement of course learning outcomes provided much needed data about the difference between the two course modalities, and 3) an explanatory, sequential approach where the qualitative phase was given priority contributed to the research on motivation and community college students. Finally, investigating differences between accelerated and traditional course modalities through a comparison of achieved learning outcomes not only allowed us to assess students' ability to master student success concepts, but to do so in an accelerated time format.

Research Questions

Three underlying ideas influenced the formation of the research questions and hypotheses. First, there is very limited research on accelerated student success courses and this lack of information established the need for the study. Secondly, concurrent with the interest in student success courses, was the realization, and subsequent frustration, that despite the investment of significant resources, retention efforts realize

limited and localized success especially as it pertained to students enrolled in multiple levels of developmental education. Subsequent to this acknowledgement were the influence of social reproduction theory and the concepts of habitus, cultural capital and field on retention.

The following were the research study's questions:

1. How do learning outcomes compare between students enrolled in the seven-week accelerated student success courses and the 14-week traditional student success courses?
2. How do students enrolled in seven-week accelerated student success course compare to those students enrolled in 14-week traditional student success courses in terms of semester GPA and retention from fall to spring?
3. What are the differences, if any, in the levels of motivation and use of effective learning strategies between students enrolled in the seven-week accelerated student success courses and 14-week traditional student success courses?
4. How do student experiences vary between the seven-week accelerated student success courses and the 14-week traditional student success courses?

Definition of Key Terms and Concepts

The following key terms are useful in the reading and analysis of accelerated student success courses in the community colleges.

The focal point of this study, *accelerated student success courses*, are also known as compressed orientation or freshman seminar courses that expedite learning about oneself in the context of higher education. Unto themselves, student success courses, transition first-time students from high school, work environments, or other non-academic endeavors to a college learning environment. They "facilitate learning: learning about a subject or combination of topics, learning about the institution, learning about the diversity within campus communities, but most importantly, learning about oneself and one's abilities" (Hunter and Linder, 2005). In this study, the term, *the Course* refers to the student success course being taught at the research site at the time of this study. Also, in this study, the term *accelerated or acceleration* does not refer to increased rigor. Instead, the term was used to refer to the length of the course compressed from 14-weeks to seven-weeks with the instructional contact hours remaining the same. Therefore, students in the seven-week accelerated student success courses met for five hours and twenty minutes per week whereas the traditional 14-week student success course met for two hours and forty minutes of instruction per week. Programs offered in an accelerated manner allowed a student to complete academic requirements in an expedited manner, thus accumulating credits to graduate or complete a course of study more expediently (Edgecombe, 2011; Wlodkowski, 2003).

Developmental education refers to the curriculum, programs and services that "address academic preparedness, diagnostic assessment and placement, affective barriers to learning, and development of general and discipline-specific learning strategies" (http://tncc.edu/VADE/NADEpurpose.pdf). This term, along with remedial education and basic skills are used interchangeably.

At the college, *grade point average* (GPA) is determined by dividing the grade point total (GPT) by grade hours (GHR) where GHR is obtained by totaling all of the credits from courses for which grades were given and GPT is determined by multiplying course credits by the grade points per credit. All credit and credit equivalent courses were included in the term GPA (the College, 2013).

For the purposes of this study, success is defined as a 2.0/4.0 overall GPA at the conclusion of the fall semester, retention to the spring 2012 semester and a grade of 70% or better on the SSC 100 final exam administered to all sections SSC 100 used in this study.

The terms *retention and persistence* are used as substitutes for one another which is not always the case in retention studies. For this study, the term retention is used more frequently since accelerated student success courses are situated as institutional interventions to advance retention. The National Center for Educational Statistics associates the term retention with institutional action and persistence with a student's ability to complete a degree. "In other words, institutions retain and students persist" (Hagedorn, 2005, p. 93). Similarly, the terms *student success* and *retention* are used interchangeably. In higher education, the term student success can have several meanings that are both broadly as well as narrowly defined. For the purposes of this study, successful retention from fall to spring was characterized as student success since transitioning through the first-year of college is singularly important to degree or certificate completion. Furthermore, retention and student success are viewed as "ill-structured problem(s) therefore ascribing to the challenge of college student attrition

many factors including sociological, psychological and financial" that might affect student success (Braxton and Hirschy, 2005, p.61).

The term *engagement* refers to intentional academic and/or social interaction between students and faculty, students and college support professionals, and between the students themselves. Although effective engagement occurs inside and outside of the classroom (CCSSE 2007), in a community college, engagement in the classroom is a critical component of student success. "Moving the needle on student outcomes at community colleges substantially depends on what happens in the classroom" (2010 Center for Community College Student Engagement, p.8).

My conceptual framework includes the concepts of *habitus, cultural capital* and *field* exemplified by the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and the more recent work by Berger, 2000; Berger & Lyon, 2005; Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Lareau, 2011; Mullen, 2010. Berger (as cited in Braxton & Hirschy, 2005), refers to Bourdieu's (1977) description of habitus. "Habitus is a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of *perceptions, appreciations, and actions* (p. 81). Lareau asserts that Bourdieu's terminology can be complex, therefore, for the purposes of this study, the following definitions of habitus, cultural capital and field applied. In comparing accelerated and traditional student success courses, *habitus* is best describe as an individual's taken for granted world view that emerges due to similar lived experiences (Berger, 2000). Lareau suggests that these are "dispositions toward cultural, social, and educational experiences that are learned at home and eventually taken for granted" (p. 162). Individuals possess beliefs and explanations that have been long routinized and thus build a worldview created by the

ownership of similar types of cultural capital that in turn affects decision-making (Berger, 2000; Bourdieu, 1984).

Continuing with Berger's assertion concerning the relationship between habitus and cultural capital, it is important to understand *cultural capital* as a symbolic resource consisting of "informal interpersonal skills, habits, manners, linguistics, educational credentials, and lifestyle preferences" (p. 97). It is a symbolic resource, not material in nature that is only valuable in its ability to be converted, manipulated or invested (Berger 2000; Mutch 2006). It is not taught in schools, and is instead a type of knowledge that members of lower socioeconomic groups do not naturally learn or possess while members of the upper classes possess as a natural part of their lifestyle and upbringing (Berger, 2000, Lareau, 2011; Mullen, 2010).

For this study, the concept, *field*, refers to the community college as an institution that awards associate degrees and certificates after the achievement of between 30 – 65 academic credits as well as non-credit programs that enhance both personal and professional development. Mutch (2006) describes the concept of field as "a common ground on which action occurs and this ground has boundaries where entry is blocked by existing holders of power" (p.162). In a discussion of community college student success, the concept of field (Bourdieu, 1990; Mutch, 2006) allows the researcher to contextualize the power balance that exists between students and the faculty, administration, and policies that define the community college, and in a broader context, higher education. Further discussion of habitus, cultural capital, and field, as part of my theoretical framework, are found in Chapter 2.

Amidst multiple theories of retention used to address high attrition rates, I proposed that *middle range theories* of retention that attempt to explain a "limited range of phenomena" be applied to examine student departure. As stated earlier, for the purposes of this study, retention is defined as an "ill-structured problem that contains many factors including sociological, psychological and financial" (Braxton and Hirschy, 2005, p.61). Merton (1968) asserts that middle-range theories are "empirically grounded theories – involving sets of confirmed hypotheses- and not merely organized descriptive data or empirical generalizations or hypotheses which remain disparate and unconnected" (p. 61). Within in the context of student departure, middle range theory allows for multiple theoretical perspectives where one explains student departure in commuter colleges on one-hand and in residential colleges on the other (Braxton and Hirschy, 2005; Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon, 2004).

Many professionals involved in educational or social science research have defined the term *motivation.* Deci and Ryan's (1985) seminal work on Self Determination Theory (SDT) suggests that motivation means *to be moved* to do something (Ryan and Deci, 2000, pg. 54). For the purpose of this study, and in conjunction with the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), the survey used to measure student motivation and use of learning strategies in the accelerated and traditional students success courses in this study, motivation is viewed in terms of an orientation to motivation or "why" of motivation (p.54).

Orientation to motivation is conceptualized as extrinsic or intrinsic which characterizes the genesis of a student's motivation. As defined for this study, *extrinsic goal orientation* or motivation represents action for reward, praise, or fear of authority

(Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991, p. 10). For the purposes of this study, extrinsic motivation is viewed on a continuum where action taken in order to earn rewards or avoid punishments lie at one end and more internalized actions such as preparing for long-range goal achievement such as study to prepare for highly competitive graduate school entrance exams lie at the other (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Liao, Edlin, and Cuttita-Ferdenzi, 2014; Ryan and Deci, 2000, 2000b; Vallerand, Pelletier, Blaise, Hriere, Senecal, and Vallieres, 1992).

Extrinsic motivation is largely viewed in association with *intrinsic motivation* or goal orientation. Intrinsic motivation occurs when action is undertaken for the pleasure or meaning of the activity and not for reward or punishment (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991, p. 9). In this study, intrinsic motivation was only used in reference to extrinsic motivation and was not studied as part of the research.

The terms *inference* and *meta-inference* are used following Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) assertion that drawing inferences from each phase of the study and creating a meta-inference provides a larger interpretation of mixed methods finding. This connection offers a more thorough perspective for understanding the purpose of the study (p.237). Connecting the findings in this matter provides depth to the discussion about the efficacy of accelerated student success courses as intentional retention strategies.

Summary

There is little disagreement concerning the disappointing story of unsuccessful credential or degree completion among community college students, most especially first-generation student populations. This shortfall comes at a time when the nation has recognized the need to insure that its citizenry has attained the education needed to

compete successfully in a global workforce. As a result, community college mission statements have expanded to include not only access and affordability, but successful completion of a credential or degree.

First-generation students who require multiple levels of developmental education fail to persist at higher rates than students who enter college-ready. However, intentional interventions, such as acceleration of developmental course work and student success courses have shown signs of improving historical patterns of high attrition during the first-year of college. Student success courses are often taken simultaneously with developmental education courses. Yet, research on accelerated student success courses is virtually non-existent. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, I looked for possible differences in learning outcomes, grades-point-average, retention, levels of motivation, use of learning strategies and student experiences between seven and 14-week student success courses. This approach allowed my study to ascertain the efficacy of accelerated student success courses to successfully transition students into and through the first semester of college as well as advancing the literature on community college student motivation and retention.

Organization of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2, I present my theoretical framework and literature review as it applies to acceleration, student success courses, habitus, cultural capital, and field as concepts of social reproduction theory, the importance of middle range theories of retention, and motivation.

In Chapter 3, I present the research questions and hypotheses that influenced the study's methodology. The study's research design, participants, and my approach to analysis is presented.

In Chapter 4, I present the findings of my research, and in order to provide context for the findings, background information on the student interviewees, including an analysis of their levels of cultural capital and motivation, are included.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the inferences, meta-inference, findings, and results in light of the study's research questions and theoretical framework. Limitations and recommendations are also examined, as well as implications for leadership.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Introduction

This study compared accelerated seven-week and traditional 14-week student success courses at a mid-size suburban community college in the northeastern United States. It contributed to the paucity of literature on accelerated student success courses as intentional interventions situated to transition and retain community college students into an academic world that may be foreign and intimidating.

Insufficient completion rates in developmental education as well as shortages in the numbers of Americans who have achieved a credential or college-degree are fueling conversations and research about the value of accelerated learning on retention and student success (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009; Hern 2010). Retaining students who enter community college significantly underprepared as determined by college entrance testing is one of the initial challenges to improving graduation completion rates when more than 60% of the students enrolled in community college require at least one developmental education course (Parker, 2012).

Student success courses are being required of a growing number of students who enter college academically and, in some cases, culturally underprepared. "Nearly six in 10 institutions report requiring more than 90% of their entering students to take a first-year seminar" (National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition, 2012 – 2013). Furthermore, student success courses are often part of developmental education programs in reading, writing, or mathematics and together

characterize a typical community college students' first-semester schedule (Cho & Karp, 2013; Hunter &Lindner, 2005; Permzadian & Crede, 2015).

The majority of the 172 participants in my study were simultaneously enrolled in the Course and at least two developmental education courses in either English, reading or mathematics. Although hurrying remediation appears counterintuitive, there is evidence that along with student success courses, acceleration, diagnostic, and in-time learning are having positive effects on completion rates in developmental education sequences (Cho, Kopko, Jenkins, & Jaggars, 2012; Center for Community College Student Engagement 2016, 2007; Edgecombe 2011; Edgecombe, Jaggars, Baker, & Bailey, 2013; Hern 2010; Hodara and Jaggars, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

In the context of student success, retention is seen as an "ill-structured problem therefore ascribing to the challenge of college student attrition many factors including sociological, psychological and financial" (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005, p.61). My theoretical framework drew from middle range theories that attempt to explain a "limited range of phenomena" to examine student departure (Merton, 1968). As such, Merton asserts that middle-range theories are "empirically grounded theories – involving sets of confirmed hypotheses - and not merely organized descriptive data or empirical generalizations or hypotheses which remain disparate and unconnected" (p. 61). Within the context of student departure, middle-range theory allows for multiple theoretical perspectives where one explains student departure in commuter or community colleges specifically (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004).

The literature on retention and student success in higher education is prolific with

well-documented theory. These theories have assisted hundreds of institutions with retention planning over several decades (Braxton 2000; Braxton & Hirschy 2005; Hagedorn, 2005; Tinto 2005). Tinto's Student Integration Model (1987) and Bean's Student Attrition Model (Bean & Metzner,1985) are two significant examples of academic and social engagement retention frameworks that have historically influenced research and practice. For more than 30 years, both models recognized engagement and integration as the critical ingredient in student retention (Tinto, 1997; Astin, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Tinto (1997) stated, "The greater a student's involvement or integration in the life of the college, the greater the likelihood that they will persist" (p. 600). However, Marti (2008) asserted that the research on community college institutional practice is lacking. He states that "the empirical evidence for Tinto's theory of student departure found that there are notable differences in the theory's support between the 2-and 4-year sectors" (p. 321). Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2004) found after investigating thirteen of Tinto's propositions on student engagement that only one of the propositions, student entry characteristics, was found to have empirical evidence (p. 17).

Notwithstanding, it is Bean's assertion that the predictors of student persistence are "student beliefs which subsequently shape their attitudes" (Hagedorn, 2005) that challenges us to consider French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's social reproduction theory as a means to better understand undiminished attrition despite numerous and costly retention strategies. Berger (2000) asserts that "understanding the role that earlier educational experiences play in shaping future chances of persistence is a key part of understanding retention from a social reproduction perspective" (p.102). Social

reproduction theory accounts for the effects of a student's sense of themselves as a determiner of success in the context of higher education and sheds light on why, despite numerous retention interventions, underrepresented population continue to experience higher attrition than White students (Mullen, 2010, Berger 2005, 2000).

Social reproduction and student success. As mentioned previously, a Bourdieuvian perspective applied to retention and student success underscored my theoretical framework. This influence began with work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984,1990) and expanded with the more recent work by Berger (2000); Berger and Lyon (2005); Braxton and Hirschy (2005); Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon (2004); Lareau (2010); Mullen (2011); Mutch (2006) and Swartz (1997). Their research helped crystalize my conceptual framework where student success is conceptualized as an organic process, that is, a power play involving the habitus and the cultural capital of all players, including students, faculty, administration and staff, within the field of higher education, community colleges in particular. In my conceptual framework, as Mutch suggests, all players have a defined power status as it pertains to student success. This power balance, or line of tension, is a byproduct of the organizational habitus of the community college through its mission statement, strategic plan, college policies, and the academic culture prescribed by the faculty and administration as well as by the many rules that are created and implemented to educate students (Mutch). Students, from the point of admission, can succeed or fail by the influences of institutional or organizational habitus.

Mutch (2006) compares a "social field" to a field of play (Bourdieu, 1990) where players occupy positions that are defined by the amount of cultural capital they possess

and where they interact in a dynamic, organic way. Within the context of the community college in higher education, student and institutional habitus may be, in fact, inconsonant. The term higher education connotes the pursuit and attainment of higher learning, and in the United States, where school attendance is most often required until the ages of 16 to 18, access to higher education means going beyond a high school diploma or a General Education Development credential (Sanchez, 2013). The number of Americans entering higher education has risen as well with more than 50% enrolling in the nation's community colleges. **"**The nation's 1,132 community colleges enroll nearly half of all undergraduates in the U.S.—just over 13 million students" (American Association of Community Colleges, 2013, p. 4). The community college open access agenda alters the traditional playing field where the power balance between faculty and students is more complex. Access to higher education is complicated by the fact that unpreparedness results in only one third of entering community college students completing a credential (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005). Access exposes the playing field to sociological, economic and psychological influences that permanently change how higher education is delivered and received by students and thus further confounds the path to degree completion. The community college is the field where habitus and cultural capital coalesce to effect, either positively or negatively, first-year students' motivation to succeed and how they maneuver to achieve success. Davey (2009) asserts that,

> in order to work with habitus, it must be understood as a relational concept. The formulation of '(Habitus x Capital) + Field = Practice' helps us to see how habitus cannot be detached from the overall framework illustrated by this admittedly pseudo-mathematical formula. We glimpse the habitus as it comes into contact

> with field, and we see this through the narratives of school change as each student reflects on entering a new place within the educational field. Habitus is exposed through their attempts to understand the informal, unspoken rules of the new environment. Anchoring habitus to cultural capital, I interpret it through the students' confidence and knowledge of the academic environment, its hierarchies and their place relative to other students. I explore how the new students' accumulation of cultural capital is used, abandoned or adapted as they negotiate the field. (p.256)

In its simplest form, habitus is an individual's evaluation of a set of long-held and entrenched expectations that affect decision-making (Bourdieu, 1990). More specifically, Bourdieu explains

> social order is progressively inscribed in people's minds. Social divisions become principles of division, organizing the image of the social world. Objective limits become a sense of limits, a practical anticipation of objective limits acquired by experience of objective limits, a 'sense of one's place' which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, places and so forth from which one is excluded. (p. 471)

Accordingly, for the purposes of this study, it is Berger's (2000) explanation of habitus as "a shared world view" stemming from the ownership of similar amounts and types of cultural capital that when situated within the context of retention and student success most clearly defines habitus.

> …people who live similar lifestyles because of their common level of access to capital develop a shared worldview as a result of common experiences and interaction. This habitus fosters a common representation of the world in a

> class-specific manner at a cognitive, taken-for-granted level. Thus, certain preferences and tendencies become routinized as part of an individual's worldview. People unconsciously classify themselves with others based on common preferences and expectations. This also serves as a mechanism for marginalizing others who have access to different amounts and types of capital. (p. 99)

Many sociologists have explored the nature of habitus. Lareau (2011) describes habitus more simply as "what feels right, comfortable or natural" in social situations (p. 361). Additionally, Lareau's characterization of habitus as "dispositions…that one generally learns at home and then takes for granted" is important to a study on accelerated student success courses in a community college where students are place bound" (p.362). That is, community college students for the most part are living at home, are generally older than students who attend a four-year institution and are therefore subject to the influences of cultural capital already earned. Mullen (2010) concurs and adds that habitus greatly "effects expectations of choices that are unthinkable, possible, or probable, shaping the aspirations and expectations that guide decision-making and actions" (p. 36). In her study comparing the choice patterns of students attending Yale University and Southern Connecticut University, Mullen suggested that unlike the students who attend Yale, the Southern Connecticut students set pragmatic goals focused on degree completion for employment sake. Most significant to this outcome is her observation about the students' view of attending college. Mullen asserts,

> The Southern students viewed college as a burdensome, often tedious process of deciphering and needing organizational regulations, fulfilling program

> requirements for their majors, and doing enough work to pass their courses. For them, college became more a matter of manipulating bureaucracy than of cultivating the self. (p.207)

Compare this viewpoint with the habitus of most academics that have spent their life ambition studying, achieving degrees and mastering knowledge for knowledge sake. My conceptual framework envisioned an academic world that, even within a community college defined by open access policies, may be incongruous to first-generation students' habitus and the amount of cultural capital they possess upon entering higher education.

In this framework, institutional habitus may, in fact, be in conflict with the habitus of many students entering the community college, especially those from underrepresented populations. The ambiguity that surrounds retention may in fact be ambiguous by design to allow society to uphold certain societal divisions or in other words, a reliance or dependency on social reproduction (Hagedorn, 2005).

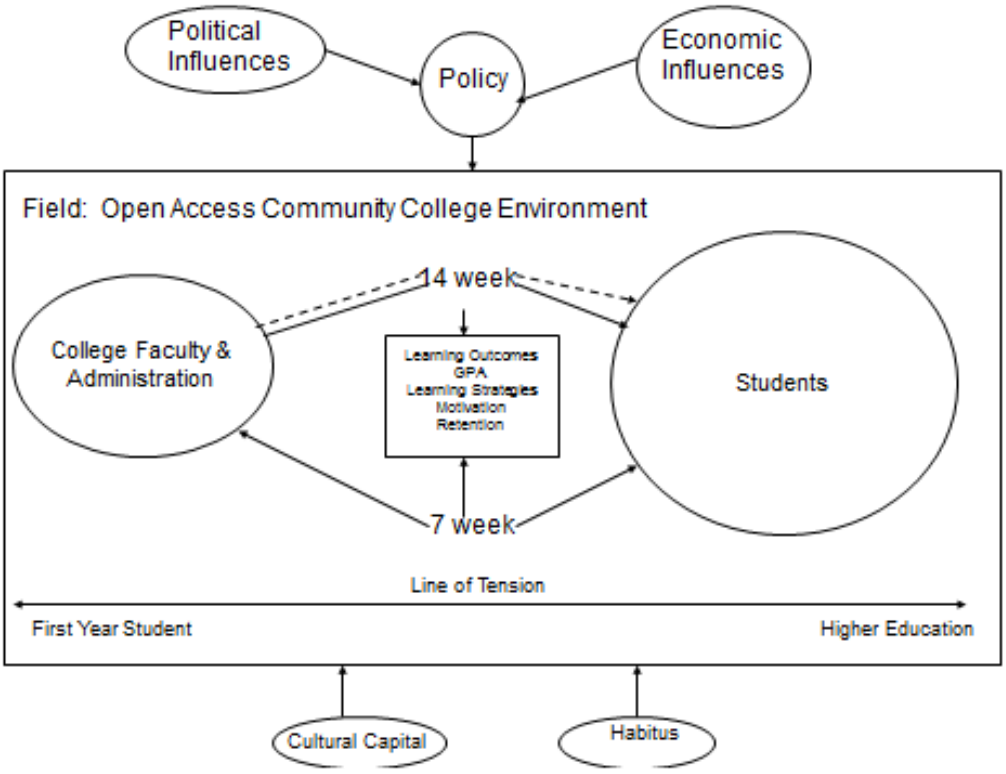

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework.

Literature Review

The following is a review of the literature on student success courses, acceleration, and their place within developmental education programs. Literature on student departure in terms of habitus, cultural capital and field, as well as retention and motivation, are also included.

Student success courses. My theoretical framework viewed student success courses as intentional interventions optimally situated to transition a diverse group of students into an academic world that may be unfamiliar and intimidating for diverse reasons. It is widely known and accepted by student affairs professionals that student

support strategies can be offered in many ways, through advising centers, counseling offices, and learning centers. However, research has clearly shown that the activity conducted in college classrooms effects what happens outside the classroom and the timing of this interaction is critical in effecting student engagement (Tinto, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). A well-planned and strategically-timed student success course can be aligned with developmental courses in reading, writing and math, as well as first-year composition and survey courses.

Student success courses are also referred to as orientation courses, College 101, first-year experience and first-year seminars (Cho & Karp, 2013; O'Gara, et al., 2009; Hunter & Lindner, 2005). The various names sometimes correspond to differing purposes, number of contact hours and delivery methods. (Duggan & Williams, 2011; Boudreau & Kromrey, 1994; Derby &Smith, 2004).

Fitts & Swift (as cited in Strayhorn, 2009) stated that freshman seminar courses have existed for more than 130 years with initial transition or orientation courses taking place at Lee College in Kentucky, and the first reported "for credit" seminar offered at Reed College in 1911 (Myers 2003). Throughout their history, the popularity and existence of freshman seminar courses has come and gone. "After Reed College offered the first orientation course in 1911, wider acceptance occurred in the late 1940's when a survey reported that "43 percent of institutions offered a required orientation course" (Hunter & Linder, 2005, p.276). The curriculum of present day student success courses can be traced to "University 101" developed and offered in 1972 by the University of South Carolina in response to the social issues of the time, namely student protests over the Vietnam War and growing campus-wide involvement in the civil rights movement

(Myers). Most recently, student success courses have retained their goal as transition courses while adding curricula aimed at combatting high rates of attrition that especially occur in first-generation student populations. Presently, student success courses are offered nationwide, mostly for college credit, and are administered through academic affairs, although some are housed in first-year experience offices or counseling departments.

According to the 2012-2013 National Survey of First-Year Seminars (NSFYS) of the 896 completed surveys submitted by chief academic officers, executive, or student affairs officers, 804 institutions (89.7%) reported that they have a first -year seminar.

> Nearly forty percent reported extended orientation seminars as the first-year seminar type with the highest enrollment of students. Academic seminar on various topics was reported as the next most frequent primary first-year seminar, followed in order of decreasing prevalence by academic seminar with uniform academic content, hybrid, basic study skill seminar, pre-professional or discipline-linked, and other. When combined, the two academic seminars (various topics and uniform content) were nearly as prevalent as the extended orientation seminar. (National Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition, 2012 -2013, ¶ 3)

An indication of the prevalence of freshman seminar or student success courses is underscored by the fact that

> nearly six in 10 institutions reported requiring more than 90% of their entering students to take a first-year seminar... When broken down by institutional type, a quarter of two year institutions reported requiring 90% or more of first-year

students to enroll in the course, compared to two thirds of four-year institutions. (National Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, ¶ 4)

At the research site, registration rules that required enrollment is the student success course were aimed at students who tested into two or more developmental areas, thus referred to as academically underprepared for college by the National Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (¶ 5).

In community colleges, these courses have been created to assist students in the first-semester of college in transitioning from high school, work environments or other non-academic settings. Since these students often enter college underprepared for postsecondary education, these courses serve as a bridge to higher education (Boudreau & Kromrey, 1994; O'Gara et al., 2009). Historically, attrition, or student departure was seen as a way in which faculty and administration looked to retain only the best and most academically gifted students (Thelin, 2010). Later in the 1970s, budgetary challenges became a reality for postsecondary education and the retention of students became primary concern for college administrators. A few simultaneous occurrences are important to take into consideration during this time period. Within four-year colleges and universities, student success and accelerated content courses began to gain popularity and attention independently of one another which coincided with an increase in the number and popularity of community colleges nationwide (Cohen & Brower, 2003; Hunter & Linder, 2005; Wlodkowski, 2003). It is important to note however that, in general, community colleges did not adopt and offer students success courses as student support measures until the late 1980's.

Adult learning theory is important when studying the ability of a student success course to successfully transition students through the first-year of college. Henschke (2011) offers a brief history of andragogy, or adult learning theory, and the term was first written about by Alexander Kapp (1833), a German high school teacher. Rosenstock-Huessy then used the term when teaching German workers "dispirited and degenerated after WW I." In 1926, Lindeman (1936), as cited in Henschke, 2011, introduced the term andragogy in the United States as a "key method for teaching adults" (p.34). In 1966, Dr. Malcolm Knowles acquired the term from Dusan Savicevic and through research and practice refined the theory (Sopher, 2003, as cited by Henschke). Andragogy, according to Knowles, is the "acknowledgement that learners are self-directed and autonomous and that the teacher is a facilitator of learning rather than presenter of content" (p.34).

This emphasis of "guide on the side, rather than sage on the stage" is also a basic tenet of current student success curricula. In considering Bensimon's (2007) theory regarding the importance of practitioner reflection on teaching strategies and her suggestion that learning is a partnership between teacher and student, there is an opportunity to contribute to the literature engagement and student success that places primary consideration on the diversity of community college student populations. Mezirow (1978), as cited in Taylor (2008), introduced a theory of adult learning that is transformative in nature. "'Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action'" (p. 5). Transformative learning theory allows adult learners, as well as underrepresented or marginalized populations, to revise and reflect on their learning in terms of their past experiences. Critical thinking is of

paramount importance in this process, but again, the responsibility or ownership of learning is placed on the student with the practitioner guiding the process. This blended theory considers empirically researched student success theory, engagement theory, and adult leaning theory. When viewed in the context of accelerated learning, a more comprehensive theory of engagement develops.

It is clear that student support strategies can be offered in multiple ways, through advising centers, counseling offices, and learning centers. However, research has shown that the activity conducted in college classrooms effects what happens outside the classroom and the timing of this interaction is critical in effecting student engagement (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987, 1997). Research that measures the relationship between accelerated study and course learning outcomes is lacking and has created academic skepticism about the value of accelerated course design. In relation to student success courses, traditional-length semesters keep pertinent information from being presented in a timely manner when most needed by the student (O'Gara, Karp, & Hughes, 2009).

Acceleration. As early as 1839, the first, albeit limited, examples of accelerated courses were created. Scott and Conrad (1992) offered a history of accelerated course development that begins in 1839 with "teacher institutes," offered in summer when teachers were available to participate. As time passed, these courses were created to address demands for more expedient re-training and attainment of degrees and certificates. The World Wars created demand for language experts and afterwards training for careers when service men and woman returned home (Daniel, 2000; Seamon, 2004; The Culinary Institute of America, 2011).

For this study, the term accelerated or acceleration did not refer to increased rigor. Instead, the term was used to refer to the length of the student success course compressed from 14-weeks to seven-weeks with the instructional contact hours remaining the same. Edgecombe (2011) defines acceleration as the "reorganization of instruction and curricula in ways that facilitate the completion of educational requirements in an expedited manner" (p.4). Therefore, students in the seven-week accelerated student success course met for five hours and twenty minutes per week whereas the traditional 14-week student success course met for two hours and forty minutes of instruction per week. Programs offered in an accelerated manner allowed a student to complete academic requirements in an expedited manner, thus accumulating credits to graduate or complete a course of study more expediently (Edgecombe, 2011; Wlodkowski, 2003).

Swenson (2003) suggests that the term "accelerated," when coupled with the term "learning," creates an immediate paradox, which suggests that another timeframe, usually longer, is a more normal timeframe in which learning can take place. "Therefore, any method that deviates from this standard is likely to be treated with suspicion and may invite summary dismissal of what might otherwise be an effective, innovative approach to designing instruction" (p. 83). There is very little evidence that a college course must meet several times a week for 15 weeks to produce an educationally valuable experience (Daniel, 2000). Smart, Kuh, and Tierney (1997) state that inequitable demand and funding situations trigger colleges to "often adopt structural patterns (e.g., centralization of functions) and management practices (e.g. autocratic decision-making process) that frequently result in inflexible patterns of behavior, which over time may have a negative influence on institutional performance" (p.257). Adherence to the traditional 15-week

semester is an example of a "structural pattern" that may have the capacity to inhibit students' efforts to persist and complete a degree or certificate. As Birkholtz (2004) references the important educational outcome shift from information delivery to learning outcomes in the 1990's, Swenson asserts that initial decisions regarding instructional design and delivery were not an effort to support more effective learning, but instead the result of practicality and time, characterized by lectures that were easy to deliver and replicate. The lecture format was delivered under the influences of an agrarian calendar that significantly influenced daily life for centuries. "Academic calendars designed for an agrarian society are anachronisms in the digital-age, where more than half of all students work full-time, year-round and instruction can take place regardless of time and place" (p.84).

Increased demand for these courses and programs meant increased revenue from higher enrollment (Wlodkowski & Kasworm, 2003). Institutions may use facilities year round and attract greater numbers of students to their campuses via multiple curricula delivery modalities including, but not limited to, accelerated delivery. Wlodkowski and Kasworm state, "Accelerated learning specifically, and adult education generally, have made enormous inroads into higher education because they are moneymakers. They did not gain a place in this arena because they were homes to prestigious or famous scholars" (p.93). These programs grew out of a demand by people who sought further education, but wanted it on their own terms. It is this demand that challenges the sensibility of faculty who are entrenched in the traditional manner of teaching often seeing themselves as the purveyors of knowledge to be dispensed, less guide than sage. Enrollment in

accelerated course modalities also fueled the debate about academic rigor and the time required to achieve course learning outcomes.

Scott and Conrad (1992) reported that, where learning outcomes included quiz grades, final courses grades, term papers, and comprehensive exams "with only one exception, the experimental research reviewed has found no significant differences in learning outcomes between compressed courses and quarter-or semester-length courses" (p. 423). Based on a study conducted by Frank (1973) on intensive courses in German, as cited in Scott and Conrad (1992), students in the intensive courses consistently

> scored higher on comprehensive examinations and found the intensive courses more stimulating than traditional length German courses. As a result of the success, a higher proportion of students enrolled in upper division German courses and other foreign language disciplines within the department inaugurated their own intensive foreign language courses. (p. 424)

Similarly to student success courses, accelerated courses have undergone significant amounts of research that has investigated the experiences and perception of students and faculty, the effect of prerequisites on accelerated course grades, learning measured by end-of-course grades, and term grade point average (Daniel, 2000; Scott & Conrad, 1992; Seamon 2004). Despite this research, accelerated courses remain subject to skepticism and doubt by both faculty and administration (Daniel 2000; Scott & Conrad, 1992; Wlodkowski, 2003). Much of the research has limitations that include measurement of short-term learning, assigned grades, small sample size, and focus on faculty and student expectations and perceptions (Austin & Gustafson, 2006; Birkholtz, 2004; Caskey, 1994; Daniel 2000; Edgecombe, 2011; Scott & Conrad, 1992; Seamon,

2004; Van Scyoc and Gleason, 1993). However, Scott and Conrad found in their "meta-analysis of 50 research examinations across 33 disciplines, only one intensive course inferior to traditional-length classes" (p. 429).

Birkholtz (2004) references a dynamic shift that occurred in the 1980's and 1990's that changed the focus of higher education from "delivering instruction" to "producing learning" (p.27). This change intensified the focus on the efficacy of accelerated courses. College faculty continue to be skeptical and this may be one of the reasons that accelerated courses have not expanded despite the favorable research. After researching and writing about the subject for more than 10 years, Cross (2003) asserts, "Although they offer little research to support their claims, many colleges and universities continue to schedule classes based on assumptions and traditions rather than solid empirical evidence" (p. 29). Within the context of the current economic climate, the need for research on the ability of accelerated courses to produce significant learning is clear. The demand for a better educated, technology-enabled workforce make a college degree a necessity. Community colleges have the unique ability to help narrow the unemployment gap with a diverse array of programs and delivery methods, such as acceleration of coursework, which in turn can help the United States reach its educational and workforce development goals. Community college professional associations have been reacting expediently and predictably (American Association of Community Colleges, 2011). Accomplishing more with less and adapting quickly to changing economic, political, and societal change is the norm for community colleges. Examples of this responsiveness is most evident in the incorporation of accelerated instruction within developmental education programs nationwide.

Acceleration and developmental education. Developmental education is "designed to support access to a post-secondary degrees, regardless of prior academic preparation" (Hodara & Jaggars, 2014, p. 247). The demand for greater degree completion occurred at a time when low success rates in developmental education were making national headlines. In 2010, Jenkins, Speroni, Belfield, Jaggars, and Edgecombe reported that there were only a few "rigorous statistical studies" when comparing similar students who are enrolled in developmental education with those who are not (p.1). Three years later, when nearly two-thirds of first-year community college students and 40% of first-year freshman at 4-year institutions placed into and enrolled in developmental education courses, research continued to find that students do not accumulate credit and they did not persist or earn a certificate or degrees due to participation in developmental education programs (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010; Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Furthermore, Hodara and Jaggars (2014) state that most studies find "…negative or insignificant effects of enrolling in lower levels of developmental education compared to the next highest level of developmental education" (p. 248). The demand for a more highly-educated workforce along with significantly low student success completion rates merged and became an impetus for interventions that could improve student success regardless of first-time placement in college. For community colleges, this blended reality is critical since an increasing number of students, especially underrepresented and first-generation students, enroll in community colleges to take advantage of affordable tuition and flexible scheduling.

These initial studies were the impetus for needed statistically rigorous research on the effects of accelerated learning in developmental education. For example, in relation to the attrition that occurs in developmental education, Hern (2010) references the work of Myra Snell, a mathematics professor at Los Medanos College in California that illustrates a mathematically defined example of student attrition.

> For Myra Snell, this realization came when she confronted the results of a pipeline study at Los Medanos, which showed that only 18% of students beginning two courses below college-level successfully completed a college Math courses. The Math department had spent year of intensive work on professional development, curricular innovation, and careful attention to student learning outcomes. (p.2)

At Los Medanos, success rates had improved, but completion rates had not. As an example, Snell asks us to imagine that 100 students enroll in a math course three levels below college-level math. Seventy-five (75%) percent of the students pass the course. Allowing for the attrition that occurs in community college for reasons beyond the control of institution such as family and work responsibilities, she asks us to assume that 75% of the successful students enroll in the next level (p.3).

> At the beginning of the second course, the pool of students has already shrunk from 100 to 56, and there are still three more semesters to complete [when including the first college-level math course]. If your success rates and persistence rates stay at 75% for the rest of the sequence, only 13 of the original 100 students will pass the college-level course. (p. 3) (Table 1)

In regard to the first college-level course, when defining developmental education course sequences, Bailey et al. (2010) states that 'gatekeeper' courses are often included in the sequence because "in the end, the short-term purpose of remediation is to prepare the student to be successful in that first college-level course" (p. 1).

Table 1

Illustration of the Multiplication Principle

How many students will pass the college-level course?			
If this was the student's initial placement. . .	And these were the rates at which they passed each class and persisted to the next class in the sequence. . .		
	70%	80%	90%
1 level below transfer	34%	51%	73%
2 levels below	17%	33%	59%
3 levels below	8%	21%	48%

(Hern, 2010 p.3)

Hern (2010) suggests several reasons why this principle is so difficult for well-meaning and hard-working faculty to digest: "To faculty who have devoted their lives to helping students learn, it just doesn't make sense that providing more courses could be harmful" (p.3). Multiple levels of developmental education create barriers that students rarely overcome which in turn decreases their opportunity to complete college-level math and English and subsequently their ability to earn a degree or successfully transfer (Bailey et al., 2010; Hern, 2010, 2014). Ultimately, the desired outcome of successful graduation and improved employment opportunities is lost.

Over the past 15 years, several acceleration initiatives in developmental education programs have attracted the attention of community college faculty, administrators, funding sources and policy makers. Fast-Start at the Community College of Denver (FastStart), the Accelerated Learning Project of Baltimore County Community College (ALP) and the California Acceleration Project (CAP) have experienced significant results in accelerating student time in developmental English and mathematics, and as a result, have produced data measuring the outcomes of accelerated developmental education.

These programs differ in purpose, scope and requirements for participation. For example, FastStart, is a compressed course program model combining several semester-length courses in reading, writing and mathematics into a single intensive semester (Edgecombe, Jaggars, et al., 2013, p, 1). Students choose to join FastStart and must adhere to additional program requirements to remain enrolled (Jaggars, Hodara, Cho, and Xu, 2014). In California, CAP also offers a compressed course model where "students with any placement score can take a single precollegiate semester of integrated reading and writing instruction. The accelerated class functions as a kind of 'junior varsity college English'" (Hern, 2014, p. 30). ALP at the Community College of Baltimore County is an example of mainstream acceleration where students who place just below the cut-off for college-level writing, enroll directly into their first college-level writing course, English 101, with the provision that they enroll simultaneously in a small, one hour support course taught by the same professor teaching the English 101 course (Jaggars et al., 2014).

A quantitative analysis of FastStart's math program found an association between acceleration and "higher rates of enrolling in and passing college-level math courses, but

not with increased persistence or with increased accumulation of college-level credits" (Edgecombe et al., 2013, p, 1). When examining the outcomes of the program, it is important to consider three influences in light of those outcomes. First, students were screened and agreed to be part of the program. Edgecombe, Jaggars, et al., (2013) report that "one in ten students declined to enroll after being informed of the demands of the program" (p. 46). Second, the program provided "structured professional development including one-on-one classroom observations as well as forums for faculty reflection" (p.6). Finally, students were provided support services coordinated by a case manager and were simultaneously enrolled with a student success course that was closely aligned with the program's goals and objectives (Edgecombe, Jaggars, et al., p.48; Jaggars, et al. 2014, p.6).

Analysis indicated several considerations for acceleration of developmental education for students with significant remedial needs. First, FastStart students were "more likely than otherwise similar students to pass the highest developmental math course as well as to enroll in and pass gatekeeper math courses" (Edgecombe, Jaggars, et al., p. 46). It is important to note that when controlling for the effects of support services such as the student success course, the pass rates in higher levels of developmental math and gatekeeper math courses remained the same and that students earned more "overall credits than comparison students" (p. 47).

Edgecombe, Jaggars, et al. (2013) suggest that policy makers and faculty consider the integration of developmental education curriculum into college-level course work (p.49). Since 2007, ALP's dual course format has been an example of this approach. The goal of the program is to increase a student's chance for success in the first college-

level English composition course (Cho, Kopko, et al., 2012, p.1). The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) found a recurring theme after conducting early research on ALP's first cohorts. Large numbers of students were failing the course, and furthermore, when examining progression of students who did pass, very few would then enroll in and successfully complete their first college-level English Composition course (Jenkins, Speroni et al., 2010).

These positive, yet limited findings, were further studied in 2010 and 2012 by the Community College Research Center (CCRC). The first study was based on a sample of 104 ALP students and 2, 070 control students taken from the first three terms of the initiative. Findings indicated that students who place in upper- level developmental education course sequences and "who participated in ALP were much more likely to pass college-level English courses, compared with those students who took the highest level developmental writing course by itself" (Cho, et al., 2012, p.1). Early successes encouraged the expansion of the program from 10 sections and 80 students to 80 ALP sections serving 640 students (Jenkins, Speroni et al., 2010, p. 3). Two years later, a larger study tracking larger cohorts for a longer period of time found that "ALP students were significantly more likely to persist to the next year, as well as to attempt and complete more college-level courses and credits than non-ALP students" (Cho et al., 2012, p. 23).

The California Acceleration Project (CAP) began in 2010 after faculty began seeing moderate success in accelerating students' time in developmental English. The Project's initial goal was to provide "workshops to 40 community colleges and supporting 5 colleges to pilot acceleration. These goals were achieved and then some.

Only three years later, "faculty and administrators from almost all of the state's 112 community colleges have participated in CAP workshops, and 42 colleges have offered redesigned accelerated courses in English and math" (Hern, 2014, 28). The Project focused on utilizing data to inform and support redesign of California's vast developmental education programs (Hern 2010). CAP outcomes show "that for more than a decade, students who have chosen Chabot's accelerated single semester accelerated Course have completed English at rates 23 – 26 percentage points higher than students who opted for the two-semester remedial pathway" (Hern, 2014, 2010).

Ultimately, these results require restructured developmental education course and program requirements that encourage and support completion in less time. Acceleration allows community colleges to address retention issues that undermine success, yet are most often out of the colleges' control. Community colleges compete for students' time and attention as they simultaneously care for family and work full-time, all while aspiring to earn a degree (Edgecombe, 2011).

Together, analysis of these initiatives are fueling other colleges to examine success rates in developmental education and to consider acceleration as a potential remedy to sagging success rates.

Retention and student success. Even after enhancing the scholarship on and resources applied to retention initiatives, as well as increasing the quantity and quality of student engagement opportunities, student success in community colleges is limited and localized (Rutschow, Richburg-Hayes, Brock, Orr, Crena, Cullinana, & Martin, 2011). Recent emphasis on research that considers both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of attrition are robust, and encourages college administrators and faculty to look at the

devastating effects of attrition with a sharper, new lens characterized by data-driven evidence (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015). For example, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as well as the Lumina Foundation and others have created large-scale data intensive initiatives such as Achieving the Dream; Community Colleges Count. Most recently, the Lumina Foundation initiated Goals 2025, whose goal is to find far-reaching solutions to increase academic success, and therefore the completion of a credential, especially by first-generation populations (Lumina Foundation, 2015; Rutschow, E. et al., 2011, p.ES-1). The overwhelming result of this investment in retention and completion is the recognition that many influences determine the potency of engagement, such as establishing meaningful connections between students and college practitioners, connections among students themselves, and the use of informal communication between faculty and students (Bensimon 2005).

In a report on the first 26 colleges to join Achieving the Dream, two key findings for the first five-years of the Initiative reported results that were limited in scope and range. The report found that most initiatives reached less than 10 percent of their intended target populations and that change in student outcomes were negligible (Rutschow, E. et al., 2011). Although low degree completion rates disappoint policy makers and create skepticism among funding sources, this frustration is sharply felt by faculty, counselors, and student development professionals as they work to help students succeed only to become exasperated by the mercurial returns that student success initiatives produce.

The way in which retention benchmarks are measured for community colleges adds to the conundrum of this ill-structured problem (Braxton and Hirschy, 2005). The

Integrated Post-Secondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) requires community colleges to use and report on the progress of first time, full time students. These are traditional markers, first developed for measuring student success in four-year institutions, yet they are used to measure the often non-traditional progress of students who constitute the majority of community college enrollments. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics in 2010, most of the students enrolling in community colleges enroll part-time, therefore, when graduation of first-time, full-time students is the common denominator used to measure success, it captures an inaccurate picture of the number of students who enroll in a community college. The resulting data excludes a large portion of the population. In this traditional view, a first-time, full-time student is 18 years of age, attending college fulltime and whose ability to persist is uncomplicated by circumstances that are common to the student who typically enrolls in a community college. In sharp contrast, these characteristics do not include students from traditionally underrepresented populations, most often African-American, Hispanic or Asian, who have major demands on their time due to family and work obligations, as well as language acquisition issues. Until recently, the dominant paradigm of student engagement theory was based on empirical research with predominantly White undergraduates in four-year colleges and universities and did not include large numbers of underrepresented students (Bensimon, 2005; Kuh, Kinzie, Cruce, Shoup, & Gonyea, 2006b; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Then, add to this picture the fact that more than 70% of the new students require at least one developmental education course (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Even though a percentage of these students are first-time, full-time students, research confirms that they are high-risk and less likely to

persist to complete traditional gatekeeper courses such as the first English composition or algebra course, never mind graduate.

At the College, IPEDS First-time Cohort Retention Rates for the fall 2011 - spring 2012 academic year show that a total of 2,564 first-time, full and part-time students were enrolled at the College. First-time, full-time enrollment equaled 2,076 students and first-time, part-time enrollment equaled 488 students. Retention data shows that 66% of the first-time, fulltime enrollment returned for the following fall, while 49% of the first-time, part-time population returned for the same time period.

As noted earlier, community colleges are challenged by the diverse number of reasons that motivate people to enroll including expedient retraining, acquisition of prerequisite courses for transfer, and courses taken purely for personal enrichment. Conversely, the same can be said of the number of diverse reasons that students depart.

First-year students, upon entering an institution, report high levels of commitment toward graduating and securing employment commensurate with a college degree although some express concerns about fitting in, making connections and establishing a sense of belonging and succeeding (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2007, 2016). Despite these high expectations, large numbers of entering students never begin a second year of college, and even more disheartening are the causalities that disappear before the first semester concludes (2013 National Center for Educational Statistics). As a counselor, administrator, and instructor, I have used multiple strategies and techniques, both in and out of the classroom, to support students' efforts in making meaningful connections. These connections vary, depending on the student and the mix of experiences, both positive and negative, that naturally accompany them as they enter

college. Varied and inexplicable results occurred. As expected, some students understand the concepts of time management, effective use of resources, critical thinking exercises, and succeed. Others make no observable use of services, yet persist from fall to spring and beyond, while others join clubs, make friends, participate in class and do not return the next semester. In my experience, in-class performance does not always predict retention to the next semester.

My research examined retention from the first to the second semester of college, and must be seen, as Berger (2005) suggests, within the context of the students enrolled in a particular college, the college campus itself, the policies that shape the college, as well as other contextual constructs. Berger's own definition, "the ability of an institution to retain a student from admission to the university to graduation," may not fit the entering first-year community college student who leaves and subsequently enters for numerous reasons. Initial aspirations may include the opportunity to explore the probability of success in higher education which includes cultural, economic, social as well as academic fit. Other reasons include the need to upgrade job skills, eventual transfer to a university or a more prestigious institution, to assuage parental concerns, or because they have unrefined goals after graduating high school and view college as the only other alternative to how to spend their time.

Social reproduction theory, habitus, cultural capital, and field. As stated earlier, my theoretical framework recognizes the importance of moving beyond traditional engagement theory and focusing on how power relationships operate throughout an educational system to effect student success. Recent research has focused attention on the effect of a "diverse majority" on long-held engagement and integration

theory. Bensimon (2005) suggested that social class, race, and gender affect the type and quality of engagement while stating that the "racialized practices and the unconscious dynamics of White privilege play an important role in who has access to forms of engagement that have greater exchange value" (p.452). Bensimon's reference to engagement that has "greater exchange value" equivocates to Bourdieu's assertion that economic and cultural capital are "the two primary types of commodities used in the social reproduction process. First-generation students who are outside of the institutional habitus may not know how to become engaged, or perhaps they may not feel worthy of engagement, with faculty and administrators with whom they have no life experience (Stanton-Salazar (n.d.) as cited in Bensimon, 2005). Similarly, Tanaka (2002) critiqued student development theories for ignoring "the underlying cultures" of institutions and for adopting a perspective assuming that concepts such as involvement, integration, and effort are "culturally neutral" (p. 264). Dowd and Korn (2005), as cited in Tanaka, point out that measures of student effort such as those included in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) reflect middle-class culture and values. These surveys fail to consider the "cultural effort" associated with being a minority student, such as coping with racial hostility.

Masse, Perez, and Posselt (2010) stated that habitus is set in personalized history that includes socialization received via the family, and both internally and subconsciously frames an individual's sense of legitimate actions (p. 281). Using the concept of habitus as a construct of student departure theory allowed for deeper examination of the relationship between student success and possible institutional deficiencies in

instructional modalities, pedagogical approaches, and support provider awareness, instead of deficiencies in students alone (Bensimon, 2005; Calcagno, Bailey, Jenkins, Kienzt, & Leinbach, 2008; Masse et al. 2010; Scheutz, 2006). As discussed earlier, having developed student success course curriculum and taught student success courses in various forms for more than thirty years, I have watched students engage and still not persist. Not persisting is different from failing. An understanding of terms when discussing college student departure is important. Berger and Lyon (2005) offer the following definitions to distinguish types of departure.

> Voluntary departure occurs when the student decides not to reenroll; involuntary departure occurs when the institution does not permit the student to reenroll. Institutional departure describes the process of leaving a particular institution, whereas system departure refers to the departure from the higher education system. (p. 7)

Recent economic and political events have altered some of the rules that define the process of achieving a certificate or degree. Governmental and private funding sources have emphasized and required evidence of success. There is new pressure on administrators, faculty and staff to examine why students are not succeeding and furthermore, to provide evidence that more is being done to insure that students complete a certificate or graduate in a timely manner. The necessity for community college mission statements to include success as part of the access and affordability agenda gives credence to the fact that traditional policies and teaching practices that do not address student success risk becoming labeled timeworn and insignificant.

Traditional power may be shifting, even if in a glacier-like manner. Undoubtedly, faculty possess most of the power within higher education and this ownership defines the types of cultural capital most valued in the field. Students must still provide evidence of acquiring this emblematic resource. However, the completion agenda adds pressure for all players within on the higher education field, including board members, executive leadership, faculty, administrators, and staff, to examine the effect of habitus on student departure. Ultimately, this examination will need to legitimize the relationship between students' worldview, the culture of the institution and completion rates. (Berger, 2000).

Cultural capital has long been discussed in relation to how students perceive and understand educational choices and how they maneuver in order to fit into an educational system (Dumais, 2002; Mullen, 2010). Dumais, however, suggested that habitus is an important consideration in trying to understand how students navigate their way through the educational system.

> Studying cultural capital while ignoring habitus leaves Bourdieu's theoretical framework incomplete in its practical application. It is necessary to consider both one's resources (capital) and the orientation one has toward using those resources (habi-tus) to implement the model of practice in the educational field in the way that Bourdieu intended. (p. 45)

My theoretical framework focused on students' habitus or the totality of their upbringing, familial influences, awareness and sense of self within an academic environment will significantly affect their ability to connect during the first-year of college. Within the context of social reproduction theory, early educational experiences

must be accounted for in any discussion of retention (Berger, 2000). In terms of retention, Berger (2000) asserted

> Collectively, the ways in which these subsystems represent the organizational habitus directly affect students' chances for persistence. The more congruent a students' habitus and expectations in terms of entitlements are with the way in which an organization manifests its habitus through these subsystems, the more likely that a student is to persist.…In contrast, students who have relatively lower levels of either economic or cultural capital may leave for either voluntary or involuntary reasons….However, from a cultural capital point of view, departure may be due to failure to meet either social or academic expectations that are congruent with the organizational habitus or because of the difficulty of understanding the cues from the organizational subsystem. (p. 112-113)

Thus, when retention strategies are discussed, the combined effects of habitus, cultural capital, and field play a critical role in whether or not retention efforts will have a significant effect on student success.

Motivation and community college students. In the community college environment, diversity is commonplace. Most students who begin their post-secondary education in community colleges come from households with lower SES status and represent a variety of minority groups (Adelman, 1998). Ogbu (1988), as cited in Masse, Perez, and Posselt (2008) asserted, "caught in a network of competing social forces, many black and Latino students become discouraged about their prospects for further educational opportunities. One explanation for this discouragement is that students of color reject academic culture and opportunity…" (p.279). In this regard, engagement

quickly becomes disengagement. When considering these characteristics in a framework of student success, understanding motivation can help practitioners design more effective student success curriculum that recognizes students' orientation of motivation.

Most of our knowledge about student motivation, persistence, self-efficacy and academic success has been empirically studied at the 4-year level and applied to the community college setting (Liao, Cuttita-Ferdenzi, and Edlin, 2012; Liao, Edlin, and Cuttita-Ferdenzi, 2014; Marti, 2008). "Attempts to quantify the extent to which higher education research literature is biased towards understanding students in 4-year institutions indicate that <10% of published research focuses on community college students" (Marti, 2008, p.321). Furthermore, despite the most recent nationwide attention to issues of persistence and academic success in community colleges, Liao, Edlin, and Cuttita-Ferdenzi (2014) state that the literature on "the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs, motivation, and academic achievements among community college students is almost non-existent" (p. 596).

As presented in Chapter 2, orientation of motivation concerns the underlying attitudes and goals that give rise to action – that is, it concerns the why of actions" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.54). This orientation, most commonly characterized as intrinsic or extrinsic, has been the subject of decades of research that support the belief that "the quality of experience and performance can be very different when one is behaving for intrinsic versus extrinsic reasons" (Ryan & Deci, p.55). When students are involved in an activity for pleasure, learning, or curiosity, they are said to be intrinsically motivated. When they are "engaged in an activity as a means to an end" they are extrinsically motivated (Schunk, Meese, & Pintrich, 2002, p. 238).

Ryan and Deci (2000b) conducted a study to reexamine the functional definition of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This study is important when considering the kind of motivation that can be attributed to success in a student success course. Described, are varying types of extrinsic motivation which have been, and to some extent still are, considered "poor relatives to more richly defined intrinsic motivation that emerge as active, agentic states. They state that "students can perform extrinsically motivated actions with resentment, resistance, and disinterest or, alternatively, with an attitude of willingness that reflects an inner acceptance of the value or utility of a task" (p.55). Self-Determination Theory holds that this difference is a matter of what moves a student to accomplish a task. Inner acceptance implicates ownership by the student. Ryan and Deci label the action "self-endorsed and thus adopted with volition" (p. 55). Within the context of student success course curricula, this expansion of the nature of extrinsic motivation is demonstrable.

At their most basic, student success course objectives include learning how to achieve success in college. By way of example, the curriculum is embedded with clear comparisons between high school and college grading criteria, attendance, and work load. In a student success course, students are graded in relation to how well they master topics such as time management, academic planning, and in general transition to college. This subject matter is topically extrinsic. In a student success course, Ryan and Deci's assertion that

> because many of the tasks that educators want their students to perform are not inherently interesting or enjoyable, knowing how to promote more active and

volitional (versus passive and controlling) forms of extrinsic motivation becomes an essential strategy for successful teaching (p. 55).

This degree of importance influences the identification of students' actions as extrinsically or intrinsically motivated.

Research also supports the hypothesis that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation predict persistence among community college students (Liao, Edlin, & Cuttita Ferdenzi 2014). Griffin (2006) used qualitative methods to study and analyze "the responses of a socio-economically diverse sample of high-achieving Black students to learn about their source of motivation and perceptions of how they contribute to academic achievement" (p.385). Her findings signal a change in traditional motivation theory that finds intrinsic motivation predictive successful learning. The results of her study found that "there were multiple external factors that students felt encouraged that internal drive or influenced their motivation to succeed directly" (p. 395). Similarly, Grimes & David (1999) suggested that underprepared students "are motivated more by other extrinsic circumstances including that lack of employment and parental encouragement" (p. 87) Malhotra, Galletta, & Kirsch (2008), in a study on information technology, found that there are a "collection of motivations" that effect behavior (p.267).

Ryan and Deci (2000) assert that for extrinsic motivation, the important concepts are internalization and integration. "Internalization is the process of taking in a value or regulation, and integration is the process by which individuals more fully transform the regulation into their own so that it will emanate from their sense of self" (p. 60). In doing so, they acknowledged the size and complexity of the concept of motivation and most

importantly, they conceptualize motivation as an entity that has the capacity to be measured by both the amount a person possesses and by different orientations (p. 54).

Summary

In an effort to transition and retain students who enter college underprepared, student success courses have become part of developmental education programs that include acceleration as one of many solutions to combat low success rates and retention during the first-year of college.

My theoretical framework drew from middle range theories that allow for multiple theoretical perspectives where one explains student departure in commuter or community colleges specifically. This framework was influenced by the work of Berger (2000, 2005); Bourdieu (1977,1984, 1990); Braxton (2000, 2005), Braxton and Hirschy (2005); Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2004); Lareau (2010); Mullen (2011); Mutch (2006); and Swartz (1997) and visualized student success as an organic process, as well as a power play between players within the field of higher education involving the concepts of habitus, cultural capital, and field.

The literature on retention is robust. Many researchers interested in community college student departure have asserted that research on community college institutional practice is lacking, and that traditional engagement theory does not withstand further analysis for diverse community college populations.

A review of the literature conducted on student success courses, acceleration, and the role these interventions play within developmental education programs was included along with the literature on motivation and student departure in terms of habitus, cultural capital and field, as well as retention and motivation. By studying the differences, if any,

in the achievement of course learning outcomes, retention from fall to spring, grade point average , motivation and use of learning strategies, as well as students' experiences in the seven and 14-week student success courses, the literature on the effectiveness of accelerated student success courses has been advanced.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the study's methodology. My study compared accelerated and traditional student success course modalities. In the accelerated format, course content was compressed and covered in 7-weeks rather than in a traditional 14-week semester. I employed a sequential mixed methods design best suited for research conducted in a natural setting, defined for this study as the traditional and accelerated student success classroom at a mid-size, suburban community college campus in the northeastern United States (Greene, Benjamin, & Goodyear, 2001).

Until recently, the research on accelerated courses had primarily focused on outcomes that measure end-of-semester-grades, persistence, and student and faculty experiences and perceptions (Daniel, 2000; Seamon, 2004; Scott, 1994, 1995, 1996; Scott and Conrad, 1992). Despite research that shows little or no difference between accelerated and traditional courses, faculty remain skeptical about their ability to help students master course learning outcomes, so institutions continue to rely on traditional, full semester scheduling (Edgecombe, 2011; Daniel, 2000; Scott & Conrad 1992; Swenson 2003; Wlodkowski & Kasworm, 2003**)**. However, recent research on the effectiveness of acceleration in developmental education has suggested that acceleration may improve student persistence through developmental course sequences and this evidence has gained national interest (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2016, 2014; Edgecombe, 2011; Hern, 2010; Jaggars et al., 2014; Jenkins et al., 2010).

Student success courses, also known as College 101 courses, transition new students into higher education by addressing both academic and student development concerns. The current research on student success courses suggests support for their existence, yet lack of consistency in terms of the nature and extent of course content, the number of credits assigned to the course, and the level of academic rigor cause discrepancies in the courses ability to create measurable and enduring impacts on retention and student success overall (Karp, Bickerstaff, Rucks, Bork, Barragan, & Edgecombe, N. 2012).

Professional experience in student success course design and teaching influenced my interest in the effectiveness of accelerated student success courses as compared to their traditional, 14-week counterparts. When offered in a traditional semester, the curriculum coordinator and/or teacher faces difficult decisions about which topics to address initially and which topics must, by process of elimination, be relegated to the middle or end of the semester. My assumption was that students in the accelerated sections of the Course would benefit from early and intensive exposure to information pertaining to college policies, resources, and culture. O'Gara et al., (2009) reported that traditional length student success courses present information in a "less than a timely manner" (p. 214). The accelerated semester allows for the dedication of concentrated periods of time on critical topics, such as how to access campus resources, the importance of transfer and career information in academic planning, and a more timely application of study skills during the first-semester of college, when students need it the most: during the first half of the semester.

This study is timely given the recent national emphasis on increasing degree or certificate completion along with the failure of developmental education curriculum to transition significant numbers of students, primarily those from underrepresented populations, into these programs. As early as 2007, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) stated

> Current research indicates that helping students succeed through the equivalent of the first semester (12–15 credit hours) can dramatically improve retention. Successfully completing the first semester, moreover, improves students' chances of attaining further milestones and, ultimately, earning certificates and degrees. (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2007)

Most recent research supports the inclusion of student success courses as an effective delivery method for "intentional advisement and program planning" as well (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2009).

The purpose of the study was to determine if accelerated student success courses were intentional interventions optimally situated to transition students with diverse backgrounds into an academic world that may be unfamiliar and intimidating. As a practitioner, I understood the need for research results that were applicable to the complex issues and challenges that my colleagues and I faced while working with first-year students. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2006) suggest that the results that emanate from mixed methods research designs are "exciting…since in a single study, practical questions can be addressed, different perspectives can be examined, and if well documented, practitioners can obtain some sense of what might be useful in their local situations" (p. 48 – 49). In this regard, an explanatory, sequential mixed methods

approach allowed me to collect and analyze data quantitatively and then use those findings to determine the direction of the qualitative phase of the study.

This research design was used to study the efficacy of offering an accelerated student success course, and to discover if there was a difference in the achievement of learning outcomes, term grade point average, retention, motivation, use of learning strategies, and student experiences between seven-week accelerated courses and 14-week traditional courses. The research design of my study was influenced by the context of the research questions. The research questions and hypotheses offered were representative of my theoretical framework regarding first-year student success. As I moved from proposal to conducting research, social reproduction theory as espoused by Bourdieu (1990,1984); Braxton (2000); Lareau (2011); and Mutch (2006) informed my interest in connection to college student retention and the socio-economic problem of student success and college completion. As the study progressed, middle range theories of retention (Berger 2000, Braxton and Hirschy, 2005; Braxton, Hirschy & McClendon, 2004; Mullen, 2010) were added to my theoretical framework and provided much needed clarity to an explanation of the pervasive problem of retention and student success.

Beginning with the research questions and the hypotheses germane to the study, this study seeks to guide first-year programming aimed at supporting students, especially those who are enrolled in developmental education courses.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Three underlying ideas influenced the formation of the research questions and hypotheses. First, there was very limited research on accelerated student success courses and this lack of information established the need for the study. Secondly, concurrent

with the interest in student success courses, was the realization, and subsequent frustration, that despite the investment of significant resources, retention efforts realize limited and localized success especially as it pertains to students enrolled in multiple levels of developmental education. Subsequent to this acknowledgement are the influence of social reproduction theory and the concepts of habitus, cultural capital, and field on retention. The following were the research study's questions and hypothesis:

Research question 1. How do learning outcomes compare between students enrolled in the seven-week accelerated student success courses and the 14-week traditional student success courses?

Research question 1 hypothesis. Until recently, research on accelerated courses had primarily investigated learning outcomes that measure end-of-semester course grades and overall grade-point-average. This study compared the results of a faculty developed and approved final exam given to both the accelerated and traditional sections of the student success course. The exam was embedded with questions tied to the Course's course learning outcomes. I predicted that there would be little, if any, significant difference between the two groups for grades on the final exam.
Additionally, there would be little, if any, significant difference on the results of a self-report Survey of Perceived Competencies (SPC) historically developed and administered by the faculty to assess student mastery of course learning outcomes.

Research question 2. How do students enrolled in seven-week accelerated student success course compare to students enrolled in 14-week traditional student success courses in terms of semester GPA and retention from fall to spring?

Research question 2 hypothesis. Concern about the failure of developmental education programs to successfully transition new students into academic programs, and ultimately toward graduation, had resulted in several recent studies about acceleration in developmental writing and mathematics (Edgecombe, 2011; Hern 2010; Jenkins, et al., 2010; Karp et al., 2012; O'Gara et al., 2010). Prior to these studies, existing research showed little or no difference in terms of semester grade-point-average and retention between traditional and accelerated courses (Scott & Conrad 1992). I predicted that there would be no significant difference for term GPA and fall to spring retention between the traditional and accelerated student success courses.

Research question 3. What are the differences, if any, in the levels of motivation and use of effective learning strategies between students enrolled in the seven-week accelerated student success courses and 14-week traditional student success courses?

Research question 3 hypothesis. Most research on the relationship between motivation and learning strategies, two constructs that are favorably associated with academic success, had been conducted at four-year institutions and then generalized to the community college population (Marti, 2008; Liao, Edlin, & Cuttita Ferdenzi, 2014; Liao, Cuttita Ferdenzi, & Edlin, 2012). Survey results would show, at the end of the semester, evidence of equal or greater levels of motivation and use of learning strategies for students enrolled in the accelerated sections than those enrolled in the traditional sections.

Focus groups and interviews with students in the accelerated sections of the Course would present stories that described equal to or greater levels of motivation than

those told by students enrolled in traditional sections. They would also show equal or greater use of learning strategies for students enrolled in the accelerated classes.

Research question 4. How do student experiences vary between the seven-week accelerated student success courses and the 14-week traditional student success courses?

Research question 4 hypothesis. Research, as well as personal experience, acknowledges a frustration with the scheduling of student success course content within the confines of a traditional 15-week semester (O'Gara et al. 2010). Naturally, traditional semesters require that some course content be relegated to the latter part of the semester. This timeframe prevents the dissemination and subsequent acquisition of information in a "timely" manner (p. 214). For this reason, I hypothesized that students would report an appreciation of receiving information on student success concepts during the first seven-weeks of the semester.

Research Design

In order to answer the study's research questions, I chose an explanatory, sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell &Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) because the academic and ethnic diversity of students attending community colleges present challenges that are multidimensional. Given the multifarious picture of community college student enrollment characteristics juxtaposed with the many reasons students attend community colleges, this study benefited from a "a mixed-methods way of thinking" (Greene, Benjamin, & Goodyear , 2001).

There were primarily two phases of data collection: quantitative data collection consisted of a faculty developed and approved final exam that reflected course learning outcomes, the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), a Survey of

Perceived Competencies (SPC), term grade point average, and retention data from the College's student information database, Colleague. Qualitative data collection consisted of 12 focus groups and six one-on-one interviews conducted with students from both the accelerated and traditional sections of the Course.

Based on a sequential mixed methods design, the study's quantitative findings were used to create the interview protocol. However, it is important to note that the quantitative findings were not used to create the focus group protocol. This deviation from the typical sequential mixed methods research design was necessary due to the timing of the accelerated and traditional semesters. The focus groups in the accelerated sections were conducted at the end of the accelerated semester which occurred in mid-October, before all quantitative data had been collected and analyzed. This was a scheduling obstacle that could not be avoided. Therefore, when creating the focus group protocol, I paid close attention to the study's research questions. The focus groups in the traditional sections were conducted in December at the end of the 14-week traditional semester. For consistency, I used the same protocol for both the traditional and accelerated sections.

Between the end of the fall semester and the 10th day of the following spring semester, I gathered and analyzed the quantitative data. Results from a comparative quantitative analysis of accelerated and traditional students' final exam grades, end of term GPA, fall to spring retention, motivation, and use of learning strategies were used to create the interview protocol.

In this study, the qualitative, second phase of the study, was given priority. In doing so, I was able to better understand students' sense-making of their experiences as

they transitioned into college via the accelerated or traditional student success course. Their habitus or taken-for-granted world view, along with their level of cultural capital ownership, influences their ability to make meaning of their first-year experience in college (Berger, 2000). My ability to picture this view from their eyes was important when talking about their experiences during the first-year of college**.** Furthermore, this approach was also in line with Hesse-Biber's (2010) reference to the strong empathetic relationship between the researcher and the study's participants as the "practice of empathy," that is, by closely identifying with respondents' experiences. Individuals are perceived to be meaning makers of the worlds they reside in; it is their lived reality that qualitative researchers seek to understand" (p.63). During the participant interviews, I placed substantial emphasis on creating an atmosphere of respect and understanding as students told their stories about their experiences during the first semester of college, by listening and then reflecting on my interpretation of their responses. I created and maintained notes when my understanding was seen as incorrect or misunderstood by the student. Along with this approach, I relied on my experiences with first-year students garnered from more than 30 years in higher education as a counselor who developed student success course curriculum, as faculty teaching student success courses, and as an administrator of a first-year experience initiative. Understanding their perspective and the issues that influenced their point-of-view was critically important.

Target Population

In fall of 2011, a total of 54, 14-week sections, of the Course were offered at the College. The target population in this study was students enrolled in six sections of the College's student success course. Prior to the study, the faculty curriculum coordinator

for the Course, asked several instructors who were teaching a 14-week section of the student success course if they would be interested in teaching an accelerated section simultaneously. This outreach was motivated by the department's interest in offering more accelerated courses as well as the opportunity to study the mastery of learning outcomes in both the accelerated and traditional course modality. This approach follows purposive sampling techniques that are defined as "selecting units based on specific purposes associated with answering the study's research questions" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p.179). Additionally, this sampling technique followed Creswell and Plano-Clark's (2011) suggestion to collect data that are appropriate and important to the research questions. Three instructors volunteered to participate and each taught one seven-week accelerated and one 14-week traditional student success course using the standardized syllabus. This configuration also reduced the influence of teacher differences.

The accelerated seven-week courses met twice a week for 2 hours and 40 minutes per class period and the 14-week traditional courses met once or twice a week for a total of 3 hours of instruction weekly. All courses began the week of September 6, 2011. The accelerated courses ended on October 7, 2011 and the traditional-length courses ended on December 16, 2011.

Participants

By virtue of their performance on Accuplacer, the College's placement test, students who placed into two or more developmental areas, were required to enroll in the student success course. Of the 172 students enrolled in the six sections of the course, 170 were enrolled according to these registration guidelines, while 2 (.01%) were not

concurrently enrolled in at least two developmental areas. There are several reasons that this enrollment pattern might occur. A student can elect to take the Course regardless of placement test scores, transfer students can be exempt by transcript evaluation, and students may repeat the course if they earn a D or an F grade. If the student withdraws from the course prior to the end of the semester, the student is required to re-enroll.

Most students self-selected into either the seven-week accelerated or 14-week traditional course for the fall 2011 semester, although during the focus group, a few students (4) mentioned that they did not know that they had enrolled in an accelerated class until the first day of class. Random assignment of students into course sections was impossible to accomplish since, at the research site, new students self-selected into their first-semester courses during Orientation. This purposive sample was comprised of 172 students who were enrolled in one of the six sections of the course (Table 2). Of the participants, 85 were female and 87 were male. Race and ethnicity data was based on answers to an optional question on the College's admissions application. Available ethnicity data revealed that 64 students identified as being Hispanic while 98 indicated Non-Hispanic.

Table 2

Enrollment by Instructor and Classtype

Teacher	Classtype		Total Enrollment
	Accelerated (7-week)	Traditional (14-week)	
A	31	28	
B	26	31	
C	27	29	
Total Sample	84	88	
Grand Total			172

Student demographics. Six students volunteered to be interviewed for the study. There was an even distribution of male and female students. In terms of race and ethnicity, two students identified as Hispanic, two as white (non-Hispanic), one as Black/African-American and one as Asian-Pacific Islander.

Working on a full or part time basis is common among community college students. Among the student interviewees, half of the students were employed part-time, working less than 30 hour per week. Three students were not employed while enrolled.

Three of the six students received maximum financial aid awards while three did not receive federal or state financial aid (Table 3).

Table 3

Student Demographics

	Gender	Race	First Year Student	Financial Aid	Employed
Juan	M	Hispanic	Y	Y	Y
Stan	M	Asian/Pacific Islander	Y	Y	Y
Rachel	F	African American	Y	N	N
Esther	F	White Non-Hispanic	Y	N	Y
Cathy	F	Hispanic	Y	Y	N
Charles	M	White Non-Hispanic	N	N	N

Data Sources

This study used data from six sources: 1) A faculty developed and department approved final exam that contained embedded questions reflecting course learning outcomes; 2) the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ); 3) a Survey Perceived Competencies (SPC); 4) data from the college's student information database, Colleague; 5) focus groups conducted in the three accelerated and three traditional sections, and 6) one-to-one interviews with six students, three enrolled in the accelerated sections of the student success course and three in the traditional sections (Table 4).

Table 4

Data Sources and Purpose

	Student Demographics	Academic Progress Data	Student Experiences	Interview Selection	Mot./Lear.Str.	Mastery of LO's
Final Exam		X		X		X
MSLQ				X	X	
SPC				X		X
Colleague Database	X	X		X		
Focus Groups			X	X		
Interviews	X		X		X	

Final Exam

A 50-item final exam had been created and approved by the faculty in the department. Direct method of assessment involved students answering multiple choice final exam questions that were directly tied to the learning outcomes of the Course. The course learning outcomes were developed by full-time faculty who taught the course in fall 2008. Following a review by full-time and adjunct faculty, the learning outcomes and content areas received departmental approval. During the academic year 2009-2010, full time faculty created a standardized syllabus for the course that clearly stated the course's learning outcomes and content areas. An exam was then created and approved

for use as the final examination by the faculty (Appendix B). The exam consisted of 50 multiple choice questions which addressed the course's learning outcomes and course content areas (Appendix C).

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)

The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) is a self-report instrument based on a social-cognitive view of motivation and learning strategies (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, and McKeachie, 1991). The MSLQ is comprised of 81 items in two sections that measure motivation and learning (Appendix D). Thirty-one items define the motivation section and assess student's goals and value beliefs in a course as well as their perceptions of success and test-anxiety. Specific to the motivation scales are 1) Value Components as defined by Intrinsic Goal Orientation, Extrinsic Goal Orientation, and Task Value; 2) Expectancy Components defined by Control Beliefs and Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance; and 3) Affective Components as defined by Test Anxiety. Similarly, 50 items comprise the learning strategies sections and are divided into two general scales: Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies, and Resource Management Strategies. Specific to the Cognitive and Metacognitive scales are 1) rehearsal; 2) elaboration; 3) organization; 4) critical thinking; and 5) metacognitive self-regulation. The Resource Management strategies are defined by 1) time and study management; 2) effort regulation; 3) peer learning; and 4) help-seeking (Pintrich et al.1991). I received permission to use the MSLQ from Dr. Wilbert McKeachie prior to administering the instrument (Appendix E).

Precursors to the MSLQ included assessments that focus on learning styles as well as personality-type indicators such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Artino,

2005). Lack of theory and clarity led Duncan and McKeachie (2005) to develop an instrument that would assess students' motivation and use of learning strategies thus allowing faculty to improve student learning. These objectives were the impetus for developing the cognitively based MSLQ. Most noteworthy to the MSLQ is its theoretical base which sees the student actively in control of how information is processed and

> whose beliefs and cognitions mediate important instructional input and task characteristics. The social cognitive theoretical framework on which the MSLQ was founded assumes that motivation and learning strategies are not traits of the learner, but rather motivation is dynamic and contextually bound and that learning strategies can be learned and brought under the control of the student. That **is,** that students' motivation varies for different courses (e.g. more interest or value in an elective course vs. a required course; more efficacy for an easier course in psychology in comparison to a difficult mathematics or physics course) and that their strategy use might vary as well depending on the nature of the academic task (e.g. multiple choice vs, essay exams). Also, the MSLQ was designed to focus on the course level, with the reasoning being that the course was the most appropriate level of analysis, situated between the very general and global level of all learning situations and the impractical and unwieldy level of every specific situation within the course. (p.117-118)

Historically, student success courses have been viewed with some skepticism by faculty, administration and students. Although in recent years, they have gained popularity and support from these constituents, there remains a perception that these courses are academically less rigorous than their social science counterparts and therefore

rarely carry general education credit status or are required for graduation. Student perception of the course hovers between helpful, a waste of time, repetitive, and boring. At the College, these courses can be disliked because they are viewed as extraneous and even a waste of time since they are not included in the course requirements for many programs of study and in some cases, do not transfer, and yet are required of students who test into two or more developmental education areas. Through experience, practitioners know that it is often only after students experience several additional semesters of college that they reflect back on their experiences in a student success course and realize that the course content was helpful, and at times prophetic. In the context of these wavering perceptions, along with its social-cognitive theoretical basis, the MSLQ's focus on course level analysis makes it an appropriate and useful tool to assess motivation and use of learning strategies between accelerated and traditional course modalities.

Survey of Perceived Competencies (SPC)

In 2008, the College created course abstracts that contained newly revised course descriptions, learning outcomes, content areas and outlines bringing consistency to all courses offered by the College. Also, an initiative was undertaken to recreate and tailor all course and program learning outcomes to better align with manageable assessment plans. These efforts are supported by Kuh and Ewells' (2010) definition of assessment as the "systematic process of gathering evidence of the extent to which groups of students…perform in the aggregate in attaining particular levels of knowledge or skill, in order to judge the effectiveness or improve provision" (p.11). Recently, accreditation agencies and funding sources are looking for hard evidence that students are meeting

course objectives. Access and affordability have been mainstays of the community college mission statement, but now, success is equally, if not more important to all constituents.

In 2010, the curriculum coordinator of the Student Success Course in the History and Social Sciences Department created and administered a self-assessment survey, called for the purposes of this study, the Survey of Perceived Competencies (SPC). The survey consisted of five statements that asked participants to indicate their competence on the course learning outcomes. A five-point Likert scale was used to score the responses where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 5 equaled strong agreement. This assessment had been used as part of the Department's assessment plan since the fall 2010. In this study, the survey was used to assess students' mastery of course learning outcomes (Appendix F). Kuh and Ewell (2010) reported that The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) surveyed 1,518 provosts or chief academic officers of regionally accredited, under-graduate-degree-granting, two and four year public, private, and for-profit institutions in the United States regarding assessment activities at their institutions. Of the 209 (53%) institutions that participated, the survey found that "assessment approaches and uses of assessment results vary systematically by institutional selectivity…and the most common use of assessment data is related to accreditation" (Kuh & Ewell, 2010, p.18-19). Institutions with open or less competitive admission policies report using their assessment data more frequently than more competitive institutions. Also, community college and other associate degree-granting institutions reported "using outcomes for aligning curricula across sectors, determining

student readiness for college work, improving instructional performance, and allocating resources to academic units – all encouraging findings" (Kuh & Ewell, 2010, p. 19).

Using data to access student learning is a now reality for post-secondary leadership. (Edgecombe, 2011; O'Gara et al., 2009; Wlodkowski, 2003; Zeidenberg et al., 2007). Accrediting agencies, such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, as stated in the Characteristics of Excellence, measure an institutions' ability to verify students' mastery of courses with embedded learning outcomes tied to course competencies. Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning states that "assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points; the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals" (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2009). These proficiencies, expressed in terms of learning outcomes, were incorporated into course syllabi allowing students to be fully cognizant of course expectations from the first-day of the semester.

In this study, both the traditional and accelerated student success course modalities were aligned with the department approved course content areas and learning outcomes.

Student Record Database

Using the College's computerized student database, term grade point average was collected on the entire sample (N=172). Term GPA was a better determiner of student performance than cumulative GPA since the latter measure does not include developmental course grades. Since all but two of the participants in this study were enrolled in at least two developmental courses in reading, writing and/or mathematics,

term GPA is a better analysis of students' performance in all of their first-semester courses.

In January 2011, the student records database was used to determine retention rates from the fall 2010 to spring 2011 semester (N=172). Of the sample, 88 students were in the accelerated course sections and 84 were in the traditional course sections.

Focus Groups

Class size and scheduling influenced the size and duration of the focus groups. Each semester, the enrollment cap in the accelerated and traditional student success courses was approximately 25 students. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) suggest that focus groups optimally contain between eight and twelve participants.

Due to the existing class size, two focus groups of approximately 8-12 students were conducted per section of the course (6) equaling a total of 12 focus groups. This decision allowed for all students to be included if they were in attendance while simultaneously adhering to the recommended focus group size. A total of 108 students participated in 12 focus groups.

The protocol consisted of two parts, part 1 asked for students' opinions on the positive and negative experiences in the traditional and accelerated courses while part 2 focused on motivation and use of learning strategies (Appendix G).

Interviews

An interview protocol was created for two purposes. First, to collect data and explore the differences, if any, in motivation and use of effective learning strategies between students enrolled in the seven-week accelerated student success course and the 14-week traditional student success course (Research Question 3). Second, to collect

data and analyze how students' experiences varied, if at all, between the seven-week accelerated and the 14-week traditional student success courses (Research Question 4). Each interview was recorded and transcribed, then coded and analyzed using a combination of manual coding processes and NVIVO (Appendix H).

Quantitative Data Collection

Data collection for the quantitative phase of my study began as I introduced students to its purposes, and distributed and collected completed informed consent forms. Data collection consisted of a pre and post-test of the MSLQ, completed final exams, and the Survey of Perceived Competencies (SPC). Additionally, data on grade point average and retention were collected at the end of the traditional and accelerated semesters.

Introductions and informed consent. On the first day of class, I attended all six sections of the student success course to explain the purpose of the study and to ascertain students' interest in participating in the study. Those who agreed completed a letter of informed consent which was collected, verified for complete information, and signed by the researcher with a copy returned to each student. Two letters of consent were used. Students were given a letter that addressed their legal age as a minor (Appendix I) or as a student 18 and older (Appendix J). The original letters were kept in a locked filing cabinet for the duration of the study.

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). On the first day of class, students were given the MSLQ in order to explore potential differences in their motivation and use of learning strategies at the onset of the course. The MSLQ was also administered as a pre and post-test to determine if there was a difference from the beginning to the end of the semester in motivation and use of learning strategies between

the traditional and accelerated course sections. Of the 172 participants in the study, 99 participants completed both the pre and post tests of the MSLQ. For the accelerated course-sections, the post-test was administered on either the next-to-last or last day of class in mid-October 2011 and for the traditional course sections the post test was administered at the same time in December 2011.

Seventy-three (73) participants' surveys were eliminated since they were either absent on the first day of class for the initial administration of the survey or were absent from the second administration at the end of the semester. Only participants who completed both the pre and post survey were included in this analysis.

Final exam and the Survey of Perceived Competencies (SPC). In October, during the seventh and final week of the accelerated semester and in December, during the 14th and final week of the traditional semester, the final exam was administered by the instructor teaching the course. Final exam scores of 90 students were included in the study. The number of participants whose final exam grades were included in the study was lower than anticipated. Forty-three (43) students in two of the traditional sections and 47 students in two of the accelerated sections completed the final exam. Due to circumstances beyond my control, I was unable to access final exam grades in one traditional section and one accelerated section. Therefore, I used only the final exam grades for four of the six sections that participated in the study.

On the same day of the final exam, in each section of the Course, the SPC was administered directly before the final exam to ascertain students' perception of their mastery of course learning outcomes. A five-point Likert scale was used to score the responses where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 5 equaled strong agreement.

Term grade point average and fall to spring retention. Term grade point average was collected using the College's student record database, Colleague, approximately ten days after the last day of final exams in order to allow all grades to be posted by the Registrar's office. Data on retention from fall to spring was collected after the 10th day of the following spring semester (2012).

Quantitative Data Analysis

As stated, the seven and 14-week courses were compared on two variables, initial scores on the College's placement test, Accuplacer, and levels of motivation and use of learning strategies, to see if there were statistically significant differences between the groups at the beginning of the semester. First, participants' initial placement test scores were extracted from the College's student information database and individually reviewed for placement into the Course based on the College policy that states that students who place into two or more developmental areas are required to enroll in the Course. Second, analysis was conducted using an ANOVA on the results of the MSLQ to explore potential differences in their levels of motivation and use of learning strategies at the onset of the course.

ANOVA's were conducted to find if there were significant differences in the achievement of learning outcomes based on the final exam grades and on the results of SPC. As stated earlier, the 50-item multiple choice final exam contained questions that reflected faculty approved course learning outcomes. Of the 172 participants, 99 participants completed the survey including 45 students from the 14-week traditional sections and 54 from the seven-week accelerated sections.

ANOVA's were also conducted using data on term grade-point-average and retention from the College's student record data base, Colleague.

In order to examine whether the class format (accelerated vs. traditional) influenced these variables while controlling for any teacher effects, the teacher variable was included in the analysis and treated as a "condition". Thus a 3 (teacher; teacher 1, teacher 2, teacher 3) X 2 (class format; accelerated vs. traditional) ANOVA was conducted on each of the dependent variables. This analysis was important as it is documented that community college students primary place of interaction was within the classroom, during class-time, with the faculty teaching the course, rather than through outside classroom interactions such as participation in clubs, organizations, and living on campus (Liao, Cantata, Ferdenzi, and Edlin, 2012).

Qualitative Data Collection

Data collection for the qualitative phase of my study consisted of 12 focus groups and 6 interviews. The timing of the academic semester influenced when the focus groups were conducted. Student interview protocol was created based on the quantitative findings which further influenced the direction of my study.

Focus groups. Participants were invited to be a part of the focus group via a letter of informed consent distributed on the first day of class after I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the study. The focus groups were conducted on the last or next to last class session in October for the accelerated sections and at the same time in December for the traditional sessions. The duration of each focus group was between 35 and 45 minutes. During the focus group, light refreshments were provided. As an

incentive for participating, a $20 gift certificate to the College's bookstore was given to one student chosen randomly at the conclusion of each focus group.

Since the focus groups were conducted at the end of both the accelerated and traditional semesters, and several weeks had passed since I first asked the students to participate, I asked instructors to remind the students about my request as the focus group date approached. Also, on the day of the focus group, I reminded the students about the letter of informed consent and asked if they were still willing to participate and all agreed to do so.

I asked colleagues who had some experience in facilitating and recording focus groups to conduct them as well to prepare and submit a transcript within 24-hours of its conclusion. This arrangement insured that all focus groups were completed on time. Prior to conducting the focus groups, I reviewed the purpose of my study, research questions and the interview protocol with the team of six professionals. Before the focus group began, the facilitator explained the purpose and ground rules to all who were participating. Ground rules included encouragement for all students to participate, issues of confidentiality and respect, and the importance of responding one at a time and listening to each participant's responses.

Careful consideration was given to the purpose and development of the focus group protocol. Stewart and Shamdasani's (1990) assertion that the universal purpose of a focus group is to explore thoroughly and expansively a subject for which we know very little, pertains to accelerated student success courses. Although student success courses and acceleration have been written about for decades, together, little, if any research is available on accelerated student success courses. The protocol was created to capture

students' experiences in both the accelerated and traditional modalities of the student success course, as well as to determine if there was a difference in students' motivation and use of learning strategies. Underlying the structure of the focus groups was a reliance on what Stewart and Shamdasani refer to as the "emic mode of data collection" (p. 13) In designing the focus group protocol and when reviewing the protocol with the facilitators and recorders, emphasis was placed on how the participants "structure the world," not on what the facilitators knew about student success courses, acceleration or student retention (p.65).

The semester calendar dictated the dates on which the focus groups were conducted, for example, the last day of class in October for the accelerated sections of the Course and for the traditional sections, the last day of the course in December. As a result, analysis of the quantitative data was not possible prior to conducting the focus groups. For example, the post-test of the MSLQ was administered during the same week as the focus groups were conducted. This was a scheduling obstacle that could not be avoided. As stated earlier, when creating the focus group protocol, I paid close attention to the study's research questions. Since research questions #3 and #4 respectively asked if differences existed in motivation, use of learning strategies, and student experiences between the two course modalities, students' stories would either bear out the quantitative results, provide opposing viewpoints, or lie somewhere between supporting some of the quantitative findings and not others.

The facilitator used a flip chart to document the participants' responses. After the participants responded to all of the questions, the facilitator reviewed the responses to discover possible consensus, disagreement, and to determine clarity on the benefit or

drawback of the topic. The number of students who agreed, disagreed, or expressed neutrality or no opinion each topic was recorded. The recorder either hand wrote or word processed the focus group conversation, and when needed, provided clarification for the facilitator and/or the participants to insure a mutual understanding of the question(s) or responses being discussed.

At the conclusion of each focus group, transcriptions of the 12 focus groups were completed and submitted within 24 hours. Brief meetings were held with the facilitators to discuss any concerns with the protocol or other anomalies that may have occurred during the focus groups.

Interviews. As a sequential mixed methods study, the findings from the first phase of the study determined the nature of the qualitative data collection which consisted of the focus groups and interviews with students enrolled in each section of the traditional and accelerated course modalities. The findings from phase one of the study, my theoretical framework, and the themes from the 12 focus groups informed the interview protocol. The interview protocol was created to capture students' experiences in both the accelerated and traditional modalities of the Course, as well as to determine if there was a difference in students' levels and orientation of motivation as determined by phase one of the study.

During the 2012 spring semester, I contacted every student who had competed the informed consent letter using their college email address. I responded immediately via email and telephone to those who answered affirmatively, with date, time, and location suggestions. I also responded to those who said they would rather not be interviewed, thanking them for responding. Approximately 10 students answered the original email

responding that they would agree to participate. In order to insure that I reached the targeted number of interviews (12), I sent two additional emails to those students who had not responded to the initial email. I placed multiple telephone calls to students chosen randomly in order to determine interest in participating in the interview.

Results of these efforts were disappointing. First, it was difficult to leave messages with students due to the high volume of wrong or disengaged numbers, or full voice mailboxes. Repeated attempts resulted in 10 students who agreed to be interviewed. I set up appointments with six students who kept their appointments and were interviewed. Two students failed to show for their schedule appointment on two separate occasions, and two students could not set an appointment time citing work, family, and transportation challenges. Several attempts were made via email and telephone to reconnect with these students, but I was unsuccessful in securing an interview.

Although unplanned, the identification of students to be interviewed resulted in three students from the accelerated modality and three from the traditional. One-to-one interviews were conducted with six students in an office on campus. When each student arrived, they were asked to complete a one-page questionnaire that contained questions regarding demographic information including gender, high school graduation date, ethnic background, employment status, and the number of hours the student was working if applicable. Open-ended questions focused on influences to attend the College and primary motivating factors. Students were asked to provide their ID number and name on the questionnaire (Appendix K).

Qualitative Data Analysis

The following section provides the methods used to analyze the data collected from the 12 focus groups and 6 interviews. It is important to remember that as a sequential mixed methods study, the findings of the quantitative phase had informed my qualitative data collection.

Focus groups. As stated earlier, the sequential mixed methods design of my study required me to analyze the data from the results of the final exam, the MSLQ, the SPC, term grade point average, and retention data prior to coding the focus group transcripts and subsequently analyzing the data that emerged. Once the first phase of the study was completed and prior to analyzing the focus group data, I created a pre-code book based on three influences: 1) the findings of the MSLQ, 2) my research questions and their hypotheses regarding motivation, learning strategies and student experiences, and 3) acknowledgement, for potential bias, of my experiences working with first-year students and teaching student success courses.

I used a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) product, NVIVO, primarily for organization, followed by first cycle coding processes as suggested by Bazeley and Jackson (2013), Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014); and Saldana (2013). In NVIVO, coding is stored in "nodes"[2] and for the purposes of this study, the terms codes and nodes were used interchangeably. With my pre-codes in mind,

[2] In NVIVO, a node is made for each concept to be stored and Bazeley and Jackson (2013) compare this computerized process to "designating a hanging file for the cut-up photocopies in a manual coding system (p.75).

I used broad-brush or bucket coding considered helpful to initially see what the focus group transcripts were or were not saying (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013, p. 71). This first-round of coding the focus group transcript, and the several repetitions that followed, resulted in a coding structure that included 15 parent nodes. It became apparent that there were similarities, but also differences between what I expected to learn from the focus group transcripts and what was actually emerging. I was careful to stay true to the sequential mixed methods research design by exploring the focus group data for confirmation or disagreement with the findings from the first phase of the study. I initially used NVIVO to create a visual of the parent nodes. I used the original coding structure created in NVIVO to carefully and repetitively review the transcripts for instances of agreement or disagreement within the data, with my initial code book, and made note of codes that were becoming more robust, or conversely, those that were simply weak or not reflected in the focus group transcripts.

As my coding structure began to grow and have some definition, I chose to employ manual coding instead of using NVIVO. Manually I used In Vivo coding to further the analysis process (Miles, et al., 2014; Saldana 2013). Saldana (2013) states that In Vivo "as a code refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative record" (p. 91). He also suggests that In Vivo coding is helpful for first-time qualitative and practitioner researchers (p. 91). As a practitioner/researcher, I was particularly sensitive to hearing the participants' voice as suggested by Saldana (2013) and Stringer (1993), since my study concerned the influences of habitus and cultural capital on the transition to college. I sought to understand participants' self-perception as

they transitioned into the first-year of college. Stringer (1993) provides perspective for the researcher on listening and interpreting participants' discourse.

> Researchers and facilitators can ensure that explanatory frameworks are sufficiently rigorous to move people past stereotypical or simplistic interpretations of their situations, but they must be grounded in the reality of their everyday lives. They must acknowledge the experiences and perspectives of those to whom programs and services are directed, rather than of those who deliver those services. (p. 92)

I was familiar with this perspective since I am careful to be cognizant of first-year students' level of understanding of the vocabulary used within higher education and the subsequent interpretations that may emerge. Stringer cautions that inquiry and interpretations not be spoken "in terms derived from academic disciplines or professional practice" (p.91).

Hypothesis coding was used to test my "researcher-generated, pre-determined" list of codes on my hypotheses concerning students' level of motivation, use of learning strategies, and students' experiences in both course modalities (Miles,et al., 2014, p. 78).

This iterative process was helpful in guiding my analysis and resulted in the creation of a coding rubric that contained 19 parent nodes and 70 child nodes[3]. Since "focus groups produce data that are strongly influenced by group process," I chose to begin coding interview transcripts at this time to determine if the patterns that were emerging from the focus group transcripts were apparent or missing from the interview

[3] Parent and child nodes are NVIVO terms for categories and subcategories (Bazeley and Jackson,2013).

data (Bazeley, 2013, p. 54). At this point in the coding process, I anticipated that analysis of interview data would provide confirming, disconfirming, or new evidence of emerging patterns. Together joint analysis and reflection would provide themes that answered the study's research questions. This process represents the "zig-zag" process of research, or a weaving of the data as it emerged to form patterns and themes (Merriam-Webster).

Interviews. As stated previously, prior to coding the focus group transcripts, I developed a pre-code book using the hypotheses that I created which were influenced by my experiences as a counselor, student success course instructor, and administrator. As analysis continued, I utilized the auto coding feature of NVIVO to allow for the grouping of interview data by the interview protocol. For example, all participant's responses to Question #1, "Why did you come to the College?" were grouped under the heading Reasons for Attending the College.

Similarly to the coding process for the focus group data, I employed bucket coding, hypothesis, and In Vivo coding (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013; Miles et al, 2014). I used hypothesis coding midway through my analysis of interview transcripts "to confirm or disconfirm any assertions, propositions, or theories developed thus far" (Miles,et al, 2014, p. 78).

I was also influenced by Miles et al. (2014) and Saldana's (2013) references to magnitude coding. Magnitude coding is very useful in mixed methods research undertaken in social science and educational settings. Giving alphanumeric codes to data that was previously coded into themes, provided deeper insight into the meaning of the data. (Miles, et al., 2014; Saldana, 2013). In suggesting the benefits of magnitude coding, Saldana (2013) states, "Sometimes words say it best; sometimes numbers do; and

sometimes both can" (p.59). For the purposes of this study, magnitude coding helped me to not only visualize, but to quantify participant habitus as they transitioned into the College. Drawing these associations was accomplished by notating and measuring three conditions: 1) the age in which students knew they would attend college, 2) their level of awareness regarding the nature and importance of the college placement test, Accuplacer, and 3) their overall experiences while in high school (Appendix L). I used both demographic data collected prior to the interviews, as well as transcripts from participant interviews, to initially code for cultural capital. This process helped me to see potential connections that could be verified or discarded between my theoretical framework and the themes that my analysis was generating. It also allowed for a richer understanding of students' past experiences, especially as these experiences influenced students experiences as they transitioned to college. It portends the power struggle that Bourdieu's theory described. Furthermore, the symbolic essence of cultural capital that emanated from educational credentials, habits, and linguistics (Berger, 2000) and whose value existed in its ability to be manipulated or invested (Mutch, 2006) allowed me to create a portrait of the students as they transitioned to higher education. These confirmations were important to my study since cultural capital embodies a type of knowledge that members of lower socioeconomic groups do not naturally learn or possess while members of the upper classes possess as a natural part of their lifestyle and upbringing (Berger, 2000; Lareau, 2011; Mullen, 2010). Finally, magnitude coding allowed me to view students' pre-college experiences independently from their experiences as first-year students and reduce the size of the overall coding structure. The results of this coding process will be presented in Chapter 4.

Focus Group and Interviews - Combined Analysis

After completing applying broad brush, in vivo, hypotheses and magnitude coding to the interview data, my coding structure became too large to manage (Appendix P). Patterns were emerging, so I entered a second cycle of coding by reviewing the structure of codes that had evolved and cross-checking them with the original transcription of focus group and interview data for similarities, repetitions, and consistencies as well as for inconsistencies. Pattern codes are "meta-codes. … ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation. They pull together a lot of material from First Cycle coding into more meaningful and parsimonious units of measure" (Miles, et al., 2014, p. 86). I used pattern coding to address the large coding structure that had evolved and to "condense large amounts of data into a smaller number of analytic units" (p.86.). Memo writing and journaling became even more important at this time. From the first day of data analysis, I wrote memos and kept a research journal which allowed me to return to earlier observations for comparisons and/or expansion on categories that were emerging from my coding. Daily analysis and writing began with a review of my research journal. I followed Rossman and Rollis' (2003) suggestion "to think of a category as a *word* or *phrase* describing some segment of your data that is *explici*t, whereas a theme is a *phrase or sentence* describing more *subtle and tacit* processes" (as cited in Saldana, p.14).

Pattern coding resulted in data that was now themed in light of the study's quantitative findings, research questions, and theoretical framework. I eliminated data that may have been interesting, but did not pertain to the study's research questions and purpose.

The Research Setting

At the College, the student success course was a three-credit course required of all first-year students who have tested into two or more developmental areas. The College's history with freshman seminar courses was considerable in both length of time and curriculum content. The course began in the 1980's as a non-credit course which was developed, taught and administered by the Counseling Department specifically for students participating in a federally-funded program for students with learning disabilities. Additional sections of the course were offered to students who, because of the number of developmental courses needed, were unable to enroll in courses that carry graduation credit, and yet needed to be full-time students due to health insurance or financial aid regulations.

In 2001, the College received a Title III grant to support its efforts to expand the services provided to low-income students. Through substantial financial support, Title III seeks to advance the academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability of eligible institutions (Title III Evaluation of Programs, 2000). As a result of the 2001 grant, a credit-bearing student success course received institutional approval. In the following semester, fall 2003, 24 sections of the student success course were offered by the Psychology and Education Department. Professional development for full-time and adjunct faculty was offered each semester including teaching strategies, course activities and assignments. A syllabus template was created by the Department's faculty and provided to instructors. The course contained three core concepts: career exploration, information literacy, and student success strategies.

Fall 2010 enrollment in the student success course totaled 1,592 students in 58 sections, totaling 48.7% of 3,198 new students registered for classes that fall. Of the new students who completed the student success course in fall 2010, 935 (62.8%) earned a C or better in the course. The number of students who either withdrew or received a D, F, or I (incomplete) totaled 555 (37.3%). Of the students who earned an A, B, or C, 76.8% also passed their developmental courses.

In 2009, the History and Social Science Department (formally the Psychology and Education Department) chose to revise the curriculum in order to promote connectivity to student support services, imbed learning outcomes in course content areas, and insure effective methods to assess the course. A student success course tied to support services such as advising and library services are in line with Tinto's (2002) assertion that

> when assistance is provided, it is typically connected to the classroom, not isolated from it. In this way, assistance is contextualized in ways that enable students to utilize assistance for learning in the settings in which they are attempting to learn. (p.1)

The course included library sessions that taught information literacy and research skills. Students learned how to use the library's online databases to find relevant and appropriate journal articles for the seminar's research assignment. Integrated into the curriculum at the beginning of the semester were sessions with counselors from the Counseling Department that focused on student support services and transition to college-level learning. Biannually, in October and March, when the College routinely opens advisement and registration for the following spring and fall semesters respectively, the Advising Center provided in-class advisement and early registration support for all

course sections. This was an intentional intervention that reached approximately 1200 – 1500 students (J Kruszewski, personal communication, February 26, 2013). Most importantly, the Advising Center also offered advisor training to all adjunct faculty who taught the course. This preparation allowed the College to place the instructor in the role of trained advisor and supported research that suggests that the instructor provides more in depth and personal attention than a college advisor who is unknown to the student (O'Gara et al., 2009). This intervention also supported research that found a greater level of student satisfaction with advisement delivered by student success faculty rather than college advisors. (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2009)

Accelerated Courses at the College

Accelerated courses were historically offered as part of the fall and spring semesters in seven and 11-week formats. Additionally, as in many colleges, several courses were offered in an accelerated format during the summer and in a winter session scheduled between the fall and spring semesters. This accelerated schedule began in 1967, when the College offered its first summer courses in a compressed format. Accelerated courses offered in a three-week winter session began in 1996 (L. Lee, personal communication, April 20, 2011). At the time of this study, the summer session consisted of four and seven-week sessions along with a 14-week traditional session. Beginning in December 2011, the College offered an accelerated winter session lasting 13 days. This limited schedule of classes ran five mornings, afternoons or evenings per week.

Since 2008, the College offered Western Civilization I and II as well as courses in the Hotel and Restaurant Management in an accelerated format. Signaling the College's

increase interest in acceleration, in fall 2012, additional courses including Introduction to Psychology, Sociology, and Education, as well as Child Psychology and U.S. Government were offered.

Development and Assessment of Course Learning Outcomes

Emphasis on completion is a new bookend for community colleges, with access and affordability situated at one end and completion of a credential or an associate degree at the other. In 2009, President Barack Obama focused national attention on the failure of the nation's educational system to equip today's students with the adequate education necessary for educational and occupational advancement. In doing so, he clearly stated that educational funding would be tied to data that tracked student progress (American Association of Community Colleges, 2011). This emphasis on using data to make policy and program decisions, while not foreign to community colleges, is challenging and controversial. Whitehurst (2010) states, "investments in improved data, along with structural reforms and innovation, can help restore our leadership in educational attainment and increase economic growth" (n.p.).

In response to a nationwide emphasis on assessment, during the academic year 2009-2010, full time faculty created a standardized syllabus for the Course. In summer 2010, service providers including First-Year Experience, Advising, Registrar, Counseling, the Library, and Enrollment Management were asked for their input on learning outcomes and a standardized syllabus. In fall 2010, when the standardized syllabus was implemented, mandatory training was provided for all adjuncts teaching the Course. The syllabus included mandatory visits to library and counseling center, as well as in-class advising sessions. In-class and out of class assignments were organized

around a student portfolio presentation with assignments designed to help students find and use existing student success research in order to develop personal student success strategies.

Ongoing advisor training was required of adjuncts teaching the course. During this time, service providers and faculty met to discuss the syllabus and learning outcomes. Modifications were suggested including the adaptation of a portfolio model for all deliverables. During the spring 2011, a revised standardized syllabus was implemented. Learning outcomes were slightly modified. Mandatory training for adjunct faculty teaching the course as well as advisor training was continued.

Validity

I relied upon Creswell and Plano-Clark's (2011) definition of validity in mixed methods research to guide my procedures for insuring validity, reliability and recognizing my own bias as I collected and analyzed data for my study.

> We define validity as employing strategies that address potential issues in data collection, data analysis, and the interpretations that might compromise the merging and connecting of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study and the conclusions drawn for from the combination. (p. 239)

To that end, in order to address the unavoidable timing constraints of the accelerated versus traditional semester, the quantitative findings were not used to create the focus group protocol. Instead, I paid close attention to the study's research questions to create the focus group protocol, and for consistency sake used it for both the traditional and accelerated sections. Likewise, the quantitative data informed the creation of the interview protocol that was used with students from both course modalities.

As codes were developed and patterns and themes emerged from the focus group and interview transcripts, I looked for contrary perspectives or disconfirming evidence. "Disconfirming evidence is information that presents a perspective that is contrary to the one indicated by the established evidence" (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011, p.212). By acknowledging the contradictions that emerged as students discussed their levels of and orientation to motivation and use of learning strategies, I was able to confirm that a coding structure was strong or conversely weakened by contrary evidence. This process was especially helpful when analyzing transcripts for levels and orientation of motivation which are complex concepts. Reaching a true representation of the students' perspective on these concepts required triangulation of the data taken from individual results of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), focus group transcripts, interview transcripts, information sheets collected prior to the interview, and information from the student record database. I specifically tried to treat a pattern that was emerging unequivocally with skepticism, focusing on evidence that disconfirmed the emergent themes. Bazeley (2013) refers to this process as "accounting for negative cases" (p. 407).

Interview transcriptions included both verbal and non-verbal communication. For example, enthusiasm, frustration, disappointment, or sadness was noted when a student made audible noises such as a sigh or a laugh, when voice-level changed, or when a student used their hands or eyes to demonstrate reactions during the interview.

I reflected on the stories, statements, or explanations given by the students to insure my understanding of their meaning and this entire exchange was included in the transcript. Students' arrival times for their scheduled interviews were also recorded. These reflections, clarifications, and observations, although minor, allowed me to

triangulate patterns and themes that were emerging with actual behavior. For example, did a student who said that a course modality improved their habit of procrastination provide examples of completing assignments without last minute panic? Did focus group data also reflect these narratives? Did students arrive on time for their appointments? What circumstances influenced their early or late arrival? When viewed together, these observation allowed me to note disconfirming evidence as themes were emerging.

As described previously, indirect data on student learning outcomes was collected using the Course's final exam and the SPC. The MSLQ was used to collect indirect data on student motivation and use of learning strategies.

Final exam. The final exam used in the study was developed by the curriculum coordinator and approved by the Department Of History and Social Science faculty. Prior to participating in the study, all instructors were asked to use the standardized final and they agreed. The exam consisted of 50 multiple choice questions, which addressed all course learning outcomes as well as the course content areas.

In order to determine reliability, I calculated the Cronbach Alpha for the final exam. It returned a negative value for *a*, indicating a negative average covariance among the items. I verified that data and/or reverse coding errors were not responsible. The negative values were likely due to the small sample size and/or limited number of exam questions associated with each learning outcome. This resulted in a sampling error that produced a negative average covariance in the given sample of cases. This does not necessarily indicate that the final exam was invalid, however absolute reliability could not be established (Real Statistics Using Excel). However, I chose to use the final exam

since this had been the instrument developed and approved by the Department. At the time of my study, research had not been conducted on the course's learning outcomes.

Survey of Perceived Competencies (SPC). This 5 statement self-report survey was developed in fall 2010 by a faculty member who was the curriculum coordinator for the Course. The survey was approved by the faculty in the Department of History and Social Sciences. Since the fall of 2010, it was administered to all students who enrolled in the student success course as part of the department's assessment program.

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). As described earlier, the MSLQ is self-report instrument that contains 81 items distributed between two sections: motivation and learning strategies**.** Development of the MSLQ began in 1986 at the National Center for Research on Improving Postsecondary Teaching and Learning at the University of Michigan. Testing of the MSLQ was initially carried out with more than 1700 students and the final version of the survey resulted in an instrument that can be administered in 20 to 30 minutes within a college classroom. (Garcia & Pintrich, 1995).

> Testing of the MSLQ with 380 Midwestern college students, over 14 subjects and 5 disciplines suggest that the MSLQ has relatively good reliability, and confirmatory factor analysis supports the validity of the general theoretical framework and the scales that measure it. …In addition, the predictive validity seems reasonably good. (p.13)

Researcher Bias

As a practitioner, Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) reference to "researcher-instrument" appealed to the multiple roles that I have held in close relation to

improving student success (p. 42). As counselor, instructor, developer of curriculum, and administrator, I understood how this dual role required a combination of expertise-earned-over-time coupled with on-going curiosity as to why student success can be "ill-structured" and pervasive (Braxton, Hirschy & McClendon, 2004).

I recognized that my familiarity with designing and teaching student success courses could have both a positive and negative influence on various stages of my study. I have been designing and teaching some version of what are now commonly referred to as student success courses for more than 30 years. At the heart of these endeavors was my unfailing belief that the relationship between a student and his or her professor has the potential to be life-changing. Having developed curriculum and taught in both two and four-year institutions, one confirming fact has emerged. From my experiences, when student success topics such as college expectations, resources, and learning strategies are introduced within a classroom environment, the institution has the opportunity to reach students in a way that individual student services alone cannot. It is my belief that students, especially community college students, see their professors as representatives of the college and refer to them for academic and general college information as well. A student success course allows for this relationship to emerge with the benefit of curriculum designed to advance students' success by providing opportunities to learn the culture of the college as well as the acquisition of learning strategies and knowledge of college resources.

As my coding and theme generation grew, and as I used various coding strategies, I understood and utilized Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) suggestion that the process of counting would keep me focused on the data and less likely to quickly find

that the hypotheses constructed for the study's research questions were correct. They suggested that counting be used in three cases: 1) "to see rapidly what you have in a large batch of data, 2) to verify a hunch or hypothesis, and, 3) to keep yourself analytically honest protecting against bias" (p.282). I recognized how my own bias toward the subject, the result of years of study and experience, might allow me to be too excited by data that supported a familiar thought or opinion. Counting guided me away from overstating data that supported my own perspective and toward a truer understanding of participants' stories.

Data Storage and Disposition

Responses to surveys and information obtained through focus groups and interviews were kept confidential. Only the researcher had access to the data. Confidentiality will be maintained in the following manner:

Surveys. Only the researcher had access to the data and the researcher recognizes her responsibility to maintaining this confidentiality.

Focus group and interview transcripts. Facilitators and recorders did not use participant names during the focus groups. The facilitator and researcher assured the participants that their comments would be kept confidential. They also stressed that participants should respect each other's privacy and anonymity especially outside the focus group setting.

Grade point average, retention, and demographic data. The researcher continually recognized her responsibility to maintain confidentiality. All data were maintained confidentially and reported with pseudonym only.

All data collected for this study were stored in password protected data files and hard copy surveys were secured in a locked filing cabinet to which only the researcher had access. After three years and the completion of my research, the data that was obtained from this study will be shredded. In the case of electronic copies, all data contained on flash drives and electronic media storage devices will be permanently deleted, and where possible and practical, storage devices will be destroyed.

Summary

When offered in a traditional semester format, the student success instructor, as well as those who design student success course curriculum, face difficult decisions about which topics to address initially and which topics must, by process of elimination, be relegated to the middle or end of the semester. Using an explanatory, sequential mixed method design, this study compared seven-week accelerated and 14-week traditional student success course modalities to study the efficacy of offering an accelerated student success course. Quantitatively, the research questions were written to discover if there was a significant difference in the achievement of course learning outcomes measured by a final exam embedded with questions directly tied to course learning outcomes, a survey of perceived competencies, while term grade point average, and retention from fall to spring data was taken from the College's student record database. Motivation and use of learning strategies were examined quantitatively using the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire and qualitatively through focus groups and interview data. Student experiences were researched qualitatively in the same manner.

In this study, the qualitative approach was given priority to allow for a greater understanding and appreciation of students' habitus and the type and amount of cultural capital they possessed as they transitioned into college throughout their first-year.

A purposive sample of students who, through self-selection, enrolled into either the traditional or accelerated student success course. In total, 172 students initially enrolled into three accelerated and three traditional student success courses. The courses were taught by three instructors each teaching one seven-week accelerated and one 14-week traditional course modality using a standardized syllabus.

I chose to use the final exam and the Survey of Perceived Competencies(SPC) despite being unable to determine reliability. This choice was made based on the fact that the instrument had been developed by the department as part of their overall assessment plan. The MSLQ is considered a reliable and valid instrument for measuring motivation and use of learning strategies.

Analysis was conducted on placement test scores for correct placement into the Course and on motivation to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the students enrolled in the accelerated and traditional sections of the Course at the beginning of the semester. Subsequently, I ran ANOVA's to determine if there were significant statistical differences on the variables studied. For the qualitative phase, bucket, In Vivo, hypothesis, pattern, and magnitude coding were used to analyze focus group and interview data.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the findings from an explanatory, sequential mixed-methods study comparing an accelerated, seven-week and traditional, 14-week student success course. The study was conducted at a suburban community college in the Northeastern United States.

I chose a sequential mixed methods approach because, in essence, student success courses are retention initiatives and the retention of community college students continues to be a complex problem despite the investment of significant resources over several decades (Berger, 2000; Braxton & Hirschy, 2005). Braxton and Hirschy (2005) described retention as "an ill-structured problem," and I was guided by the observation of Miles and Huberman and Saldana (2014) who, when "recognizing the long-standing battle between quantitative and qualitative researchers, emphasized that together, numbers and words are requisite for a better understanding of the world" (p. 40). I followed Bazeley and Jackson's (2013) assertion that qualitative methods are necessary when situations require a deeper examination and understanding of the data than quantitative analysis alone can produce.

In this sequential mixed methods study, the study's quantitative findings were used to create the interview protocol. However, it is important to note that the quantitative findings were not used to create the focus group protocol. This deviation from the typical sequential mixed methods research design was necessary due to the timing of the accelerated and traditional semesters. The focus groups in the accelerated

sections were conducted at the end of the accelerated semester which occurred in mid-October, before all quantitative data had been collected and analyzed. This was a scheduling obstacle that could not be avoided. Therefore, when creating the focus group protocol, I paid close attention to the study's research questions. The focus groups in the traditional sections were conducted in December at the end of the 14-week traditional semester. For consistency, I used the same protocol for both the traditional and accelerated sections.

At the end of the fall semester, I gathered and analyzed the quantitative data. Results from a comparative quantitative analysis of accelerated and traditional students' final exam grades, GPA, retention, motivation, and use of learning strategies was used to create the interview protocol. The same protocol was used to guide the interviews with students from both the accelerated and traditional modalities.

Quantitative data collection consisted of a faculty developed and approved final exam and a Survey of Perceived Competencies (SPC), the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), and term grade point and fall to spring retention data from the College's student information database, Colleague. Qualitative data collection was comprised of transcripts from 12 focus groups conducted in each of the six-sections of the Course and one-on-one interviews conducted with six students, three from the traditional course modality and three from the accelerated.

In order to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the students in both course modalities at the beginning of the semester, quantitative data analysis using an ANOVA was conducted on students' responses to the MSLQ. This analysis allowed exploration of a long-held assumption about the type of student who

enrolls in accelerated courses. A popular belief among faculty suggests that students who enroll in accelerated courses may be more highly motivated than students who enroll in traditional course (Hern, 2010).

Subsequently, to examine whether class format (accelerated vs. traditional) influenced the variables being studied while controlling for any teacher effects, the teacher variable was included in the analysis and treated as a "condition." Thus a 3 (teacher; teacher 1, teacher 2, teacher 3) X 2 (class format; accelerated vs. traditional) ANOVA was conducted on each of the dependent variables. They were: achievement of learning outcomes based on the final exam and the SPC, motivation and use of learning strategies using the MSLQ as a pre and post survey, term grade point average, and fall to spring retention. This analysis is important as it is documented that community college students' primary place of interaction is within the classroom, during class-time, with the faculty teaching the course, rather than through outside classroom interactions such as participation in clubs, organizations, and living on campus (Liao, Cuttita, Ferdenzi, & Edlin, 2012). In this case, interactions between faculty and student are bounded by class meeting times and this factor heightens the importance of the faculty-student relationship in the retention picture.

As stated previously, the qualitative data collection began with 12 focus groups conducted at the end of the semester in each of the course modalities. A facilitator led each focus group with a person recording detailed notes. Interviews were recorded and I transcribed each shortly after they were conducted. I created a short code book based on my personal experiences in curriculum development and teaching student success courses. Analysis began with broad-brush or bucket coding (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013).

Both data sets were then coded and analyzed using a combination of manual coding processes and NVIVO. I used a CAQDAS (Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) product, NVIVO, primarily for organization and first cycle coding as suggested by Bazeley and Jackson (2013), Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), and Saldana (2013). For organization and comparative analysis, I utilized the auto coding feature of NVIVO to allow for the grouping of interview data by the interview protocol.

Since I was comparing motivation between students in the accelerated and traditional sections of the Course, I found magnitude coding very useful (Miles, et al. 2014; Saldana, 2013). Saldana's simple description of magnitude coding describes how I worked to understand the relationship between students' orientation and levels of motivation and their ownership of cultural capital. "Sometimes words say it best; sometimes numbers do; and sometimes both can" (p.59). Magnitude coding of the types and amount of cultural capital ownership allowed for a richer understanding of the participants' lived experiences. Furthermore, the symbolic essence of cultural capital that emanates from educational credentials, habits, and linguistics (Berger, 2000) and whose value lies in its ability to be manipulated or invested (Mutch, 2006) allowed me to create a portrait of the students as they transitioned to higher education. I analyzed both demographic data collected prior to the interviews and participant interviews to initially code for the presence of cultural capital.

Memo writing and journaling became even more important at this time. I returned to memos written during the early days of analysis which allowed me to return to earlier observations for comparisons and expansion. I used pattern coding to address the large coding structure that had evolved and to "condense large amounts of data into a

smaller number of analytic units" (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013, p.86). Pattern coding resulted in themes that addressed the study's research questions and theoretical framework. I eliminated themes that emerged and may have been interesting, but did not pertain to the study's research questions and purpose.

My theoretical framework was informed by social reproduction theory (SRT) and the concepts of habitus, cultural capital and field (Berger 2005, 2000; Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1990; Lareau 2011; Mullen 2010; Mutch 2006) and evolved to include Braxton and Hirschy's (2005) description of retention as an "ill-structured problem…ascribing to the challenge of college student attrition many factors including sociological, psychological and financial" (p.61). In the context of social reproduction theory, my framework takes into consideration students' habitus or "taken-for-granted worldview" (Berger, 2000) along with their level of cultural capital ownership as they attempt to make meaning of their first-year experience in college success and issue of retention in general. My ability to visualize this sense-making was important in terms of the effect that habitus and cultural capital have on first-year student success. It conceptualizes student success as an organic process, that is, a power play involving the habitus and the cultural capital of all players, including students, faculty, administration and staff, within the field of higher education and community colleges in particular.

This chapter will present the findings of my research, and in order to provide context for the findings, background information on the student interviewees, including an analysis of their levels of cultural capital and motivation, are included.

Quantitative

The following findings emerged from the quantitative and first phase of my study. The findings are presented in the order of the study's research questions, and as such, appear in the following order. First, findings on the comparison of final exam grades and students' perceived knowledge of learning outcomes are presented. Second, an examination of term grade point average and fall to spring retention between students in both modalities are displayed. Finally, the quantitative findings conclude with an analysis of student motivation as determined by the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ).

Final exam grades and students' perceived knowledge of learning outcomes. Regarding the comparison of learning outcomes between students enrolled in the seven-week accelerated student success courses and the 14-week traditional student success course, there was a significant difference between the seven-week accelerated and 14-week traditional course modality on final exam performance[4] (Table 5 & 6). Students taking the final exam in the traditional student success sections scored significantly higher than students taking the same final exam in the accelerated sections. Although significant, it is important to note that the mean grade for students enrolled in the traditional classes was less than a half a grade higher.

[4] Analysis revealed a main effect for class type such that students in the traditional class earned higher exam grades (M = 79.4%) than students in the accelerated class, (M = 75.2%, F(1,90) = 5.474, p = .022. There was also a main effect of teacher such that students in teacher A's class earned higher final exam grades (M = 79.6%), compared to students in Teacher B's (M = 74.8%, F(1.90) = 7.034, p = .010. There was no teacher by classtype interaction, F(1,90) = 1.769, p = *ns*.

Students in Teacher A's class earned higher final grades (M = 79.6%) than students in teacher B's class (M = 74.8).[5] There was no teacher by classtype interaction.

Table 5
Estimated Marginal Means: Dependent Variable: Final Grade

Class Type	Mean	Student Error
Traditional	79.4%	.641
Accelerated	75.2%	.668
Teacher A	79.6%	.659
Teacher B	75.2%	.650

Table 6

Estimated Marginal Means: Test of Between Subject Effects

Source	Df	F	Sig
Class type	1	5.474	.022
Teacher	1	7.034	.010
Classtype by Teacher Interaction	1	1.769	.187

[5].There was a main effect of teacher such that students in teacher A's class earned higher final exam grades (M = 79.6%), compared to students in Teacher B's (M = 74.8%, F(1.90) = 7.034, p = .010. There was no teacher by classtype interaction, F(1,90) = 1.769, p = *ns*

At the end of the term, based on the analysis of the SPC, there was no significant difference for students in the accelerated and traditional sections of the course.[6] The mean score for students enrolled in the traditional class was 5.71 as compared to the mean score for the students enrolled in the accelerated class which was 5.86 (Table 7 & 8).

Table 7

Estimated Marginal Means: Dependent Variable: Competency

Class Type	Mean	Student Error
Traditional	5.716	.114
Accelerated	5.863	.107

Table 8

Estimated Marginal Means: Test of Between Subject Effects

Source	df	F	Sig
Classtype	1	.881	.350

[6] Analysis revealed no main effect for classtype, F(1,99) = .881, p =.350) and teacher (F(2,99) = 1.073, p = .346 or classtype teacher interaction F(2,99) = 2.384, p = .098.

Term grade point average and fall to spring retention. At the end of the fall 2011 semester, there was no significant difference between participants in the traditional and accelerated student success courses in terms of grade point average.[7] The mean GPA earned by students in the traditional student success course was 2.17 as compared to 2.0 GPA for students in the accelerated courses (Table 9 & 10).

Table 9

Estimated Marginal Means: Dependent Variable: Term GPA

Class type	Mean	Std. Error
Traditional	2.17	.128
Accelerated	2.0	0.132

Table 10

Estimated Marginal Means: Test of Between Subject Effects

Source	df	F	Sig.
Class type	1	1.269	0.262

[7] There was no main effect for class type, F(1,171) =.1.269,p =.262, for teacher, (F(2,171) =.369, p=..692), or teacher by class type interaction, F(2,171) =1.145, p=.321.

Analysis found that there was no significant difference on the rate of retention from fall 2011 to spring 2012 between the students enrolled in the accelerated and traditional classes[8] (Table 11 & 12). The retention rate of traditional students was 82.8 percent as compared to a 74.6 percent retention rate for students in the accelerated sections of the course.

Table 11
Estimated Marginal Means: Dependent Variable: Retention

Class type	Mean	Std.Error
Traditional	.828	.043
Accelerated	.746	.044

Table 12
Estimated Marginal Means: Test of Between Subject Effects

Source	df	F	Sig
Classtype	1	1.768	.185

[8] Retention data from fall to spring was coded in a dichotomist manner (0 = not retained, 1 = retained). Analysis revealed no main effect for class type, F (1,172) = 1.768, p or p =.185. There was no main effect for teacher F(1,172)=1.484, p = .230 or an interaction F(1,172)=.736, p = .481 in terms of retention.

Motivation. As stated earlier in this chapter, it is important to remember that students in both the accelerated and traditional sections of the course had similar levels of motivation and use of learning strategies for responses on the MSLQ at the start of the semester.[9] The MSLQ was then administered to all students at the end of the semester. There was no significant difference in levels of motivation and use of learning strategies between the accelerated and traditional classes with the exception of one scale, extrinsic goal orientation.[10] (Table 13 & 14). At the end of the course, students in the accelerated classes had more extrinsic goal orientation (M = 6.14) than students in the traditional class (M = 5.62) (Figure 2). An extrinsically motivated student enrolls in college, attends class, studies and completes tasks in general for reasons such as parental or teacher approval, vocational goals, and rewards such grades and scholarships (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991).

[9]Analysis revealed no main effect for class type F(1, 99) = .294, p = .589, teacher F(2, 99) =.145, p = .865, and class type teacher interaction F(2, 99) = 1.748, p = .180

[10] Analysis revealed a main effect for the type of class (class type) such that students in the accelerated class, (M = 6.14) had more extrinsic goal orientation than students in the traditional class (M = 5.62), F(1,99) = 6.30, p = .014. There was no main effect for teacher F (2, 99) =1.29, p =.280 and no teacher type of class (class type) interaction F(2,99)=2.07, p = .132.

Table 13

Estimated Marginal Means: Dependent Variable: Extrinsic Goal Orientation

Class type	Mean	Std. Error
Traditional	0.828	.043
Accelerated	0.746	0.044

Table 14

Estimated Marginal Means: Test of Between Subject Effects

Source	df	F	Sig
Classtype	1	2.07	0.132

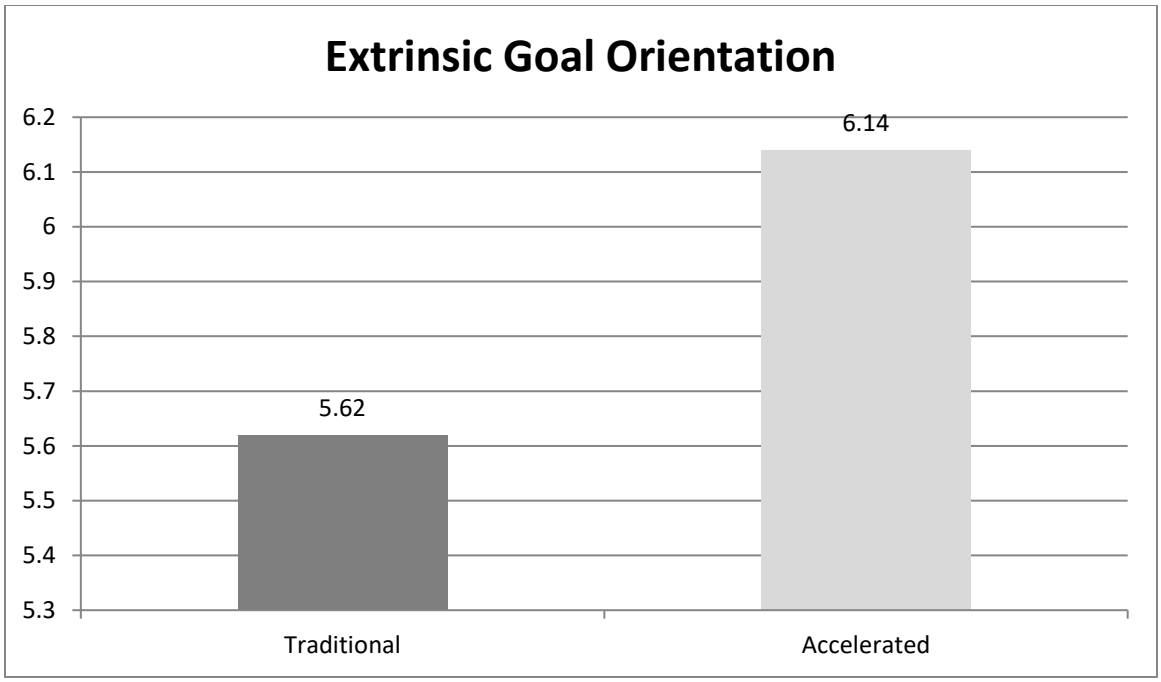

Figure 2. Extrinsic Goal Orientation.

Qualitative

Following an explanatory, sequential mixed methods design, qualitative data collection was informed by the study's quantitative findings. This analysis revealed a significant difference for students in the accelerated sections in that, at the end of the semester, they were more extrinsically motivated than students in the traditional sections. Therefore, extrinsic motivation became the focus of the qualitative phase of the study along with an analysis of students' experiences in both course modalities as determined by the study's fourth research question.

Description of Students

I determined that in order to study a comparison of extrinsic motivation between students in the traditional and accelerated sections of the Course, it was important to view

the student interviewees in the context of my theoretical framework. This framework conceptualized student success as organic and the process by which it occurs as a power play involving the habitus and cultural capital of all stakeholders including students, administrators, faculty and staff (Berger, 2000; Davey, 2009; Lareau 2011; Masse, Perez, & Posselt, 2010; Mullen 2010). Cultural capital plays a significant role in this framework since it is one of the "primary types of commodities used in the social reproduction process" (Berger, 2000, p. 98). Student habitus manifests a shared world view stemming from the ownership of similar amounts and types of cultural capital, therefore I used magnitude coding to determine students' levels of cultural capital ownership in order to examine extrinsic motivation from a social reproduction viewpoint. (Berger 2005, 2000; Braxton and Hirschy, 2005; Lareau, 2011; Mullen, 2010) (Table 15).

I considered three factors for this coding process: 1) the age in which a student recalled knowing that they would attend college; 2) descriptions of their high school experiences; and 3) their knowledge of and performance on the College Placement Test, Accuplacer.[11] This data was collected using three sources: 1) an information form completed prior to each interview, 2) the College's student record database, Colleague, and 3) interview transcripts. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) suggest that this analysis allows the qualitative data to further explain the quantitative findings (p.166).

As stated previously, three student interviewees were enrolled in the accelerated sections (A) of the Course and three were enrolled in the traditional sections (T). They

[11] Accuplacer, a College Board product, is a series of tests used to assess ability in reading, writing and mathematics. All of the interviewees took Accuplacer since they had either not taken SAT's or not earned scores that exempted them from the placement test.

were respectively, Juan, Rachel, and Stan while Esther, Cathy, and Charles were enrolled in the traditional sections. By virtue of their placement test results, all of the students tested into two or more areas of developmental education and were thus enrolled in the student success course. Reported quantitatively, this data did not reveal the complexities of each student's transition to college.

Analysis of the data, especially the interview transcripts, allowed for a rich description of this transitional journey to emerge. Magnitude coding revealed that one of the six students, Stan (A), possessed high levels of cultural capital. In contrast to the other students, Stan had taken several AP courses in high school and had been accepted into a competitive state university. Despite this achievement, he tested into the lowest levels of developmental reading, as did other students in the sample. He reported that he was unaware that low Accuplacer scores would impact his time in College, as well as his finances and therefore he did not take the test seriously.

Stan (A) described very positive high school experiences, unlike three of the students, Juan (A), Charles (T), and Esther (T) who possessed below average levels of cultural capital. In far contrast to Stan (A), Juan (A) , who possessed very low levels of cultural capital, described his academic progression through middle and high school as "having been pushed through." He repeatedly used the word "never" to describe, not only his own, but his parents' and teachers' educational expectations for college attendance. With his heading shaking negatively, he declared, "I was, like, Me? College? No way!" Stan (A), in comparison, reported growing up with a presumption on the part of his parents that he would attend college. "My parents said, 'you are going to college,

you are going to be a better person than I am…it was always assumed [by my parents] that I would go to college."

For Charles (A) and Esther (T) once the decision to enroll in college was made, attending the community college was a foregone conclusion due to insufficient academic preparation in high school as well as personal challenges or distractions. Charles disclosed that he had a learning disability that had historically affected his ability to learn. He was proud of moving out of special education in high school. He reported that when he initially began college, his lack of focus and learning differences impacted his ability to adopt behaviors that resulted in success. Similarly, Esther managed an anxiety disorder as she transitioned to college. She successfully participated in a summer bridge program for reading while placing into writing and the lowest level of mathematics remediation. Unlike Stan's very positive high school experience and Juan's negative encounters, Charles' (T) and Esther's (T) reported moderately good high school experiences. They differed from all of the other student interviewees in terms of college attendance expectations, however. For Charles and Esther, attending college was questionable throughout high school and the decision to attend was made as graduation approached.

Rachel (A) and Cathy (T), scored within the average range for levels of cultural capital. Although they both reported that each decided to attend college "very early," this expectation did not come from their parents. When parental support became evident, the decision to attend college was made during late middle school. Both students reported moderately good high school experiences, however Rachel's (A) knowledge of Accuplacer was greater than Cathy's (T) since she participated in a community sponsored

college preparatory program that addressed placement test expectations. Cathy's (T) high school experiences illustrated the complexity that can characterize high school to college transition. She reported being proud of her academic achievements in high school, but felt constrained by the apathy shown by classmates and teachers. She recognized with enthusiasm the difference between the faculty and students at the College and the teachers and classmates in high school. **"**I did really well in high school… I was in the Honor Society. I didn't like my high school very much. I actually liked only a few of the teachers who helped me. Students were very unmotivated…so it kind of brought everyone's hopes down. Here, I see a lot of people are who are happy. At least they try here. There are some people who never come back to class, but I don't know them. I don't have a connection to them the way I did in high school."

For all of the students except Stan (A), a further complexity of the high school to college transition was evident not only in the amount of required developmental education, but in unaligned levels of academic preparation in conjunction with their choice of major. For example, Cathy's (T) major was biology, yet after completing almost two full semesters of college, she had not yet enrolled in a Biology class. When she did, she would be enrolling in a developmental biology course since the high school biology she had taken did not meet the College's prerequisites for general biology.

Finally, the students who possessed higher levels of cultural capital, Stan (10/12), Rachel, (7/12) and Cathy (6/12) were all accepted at four-year universities and chose to attend a community college for financial and readiness-related reasons. Magnitude coding of student ownership of cultural capital created a richer, more complex indication of habitus and its potential influences on the transition from high school to college.

Table 15

Magnitude Coding: Levels of Cultural Capital

Participant	Course	Age - Decision to Attend College	High School Experience	College Placement Test (CPT) Awareness	Total
Juan	Accelerated	0	1	0	1
Stan	Accelerated	4	3	3	10
Rachel	Accelerated	2	2	3	7
Cathy	Traditional	2	2	2	6
Charles	Traditional	1	2	1	4
Esther	Traditional	1	2	1	4

The study's four findings are presented in relation to the quantitative findings on extrinsic motivation, as well as on the study's research questions concerning motivation, the use of learning strategies and students' experiences in both course modalities.

Acceleration and motivation. The first question asked of all focus group participants (104), regardless of course modality, was to describe their reactions to the Course. They were encouraged by the facilitator to include all reactions, both positive and negative. Facilitators had been instructed not to prompt students about motivation. Instead, they were told to use prompts, as student responses warranted. Analysis revealed clear distinctions between the students in the accelerated and traditional sections. Pattern

coding of the focus group transcripts from the accelerated sections confirmed that students associated the "short course," as they often referred to it, with an awareness of time that increased their motivation. This association included a greater emphasis on consistent attendance and prioritizing assignments.

"The length of the 7-week accelerated class made me want to attend and not miss a day or any work since I knew that the class would be over soon" (Consensus - Accelerated 27).

"I could make up work in other classes, but with this one being so short I couldn't make up the work, I had to do it" (Accelerated 26).

In four of the six focus groups, when asked about their positive experiences, a heightened awareness of time leading to an increase in motivation was the overarching theme.

"It helped because it was shorter; you have to stay on top of it. Everything was due towards the end, so I had to get the resources and do it on my own. I had to focus more" (Accelerated 59).

"It forces you to do your work—it's cool" (59).

"I've been out of school for a while—excited about returning—I like the shorter class. I like positive stress. Having work to do every day, motivated me to attend" (Accelerated 26).

"With only three classes left [when the accelerated course ends], I have more time to focus and dedicate to my other three classes." Eleven students agreed (Accelerated 26).

"I failed the Course (in the past) because I stopped going. If I had had it in seven weeks, I would have gone to class. It forces you to go to class or you miss a lot of work if you don't go" (Accelerated 59).

Analysis of focus group data from one section of the Course (Accelerated 26) found that all students (19) expressed concern that their motivation might diminish because the accelerated student success course was ending. This response was a good illustration of a sentiment heard repeatedly throughout other focus groups and interviews. That is, students in the seven-week modality verbalized a heightened awareness and appreciation of motivation as compared to the students in the traditional course modality. So much so, that while all students in this section (19) agreed that they came into the class with high motivation, seven students indicated that they were less motivated now that the accelerated course was ending.

"There will be too much free time, not as much work, we will not be as focused."

A student indicated that she was also taking a 14-week evening class which meets once a week. She was concerned that her level of motivation would diminish and that she would begin to miss class because she would have "plenty of time to make up the work" (Accelerated 26).

In contrast to this association between time and increased motivation in the accelerated sections, responses in the traditional sections elicited examples primarily related to course curriculum rather than the course modality. Student responses included the benefits of acquiring learning strategies, establishing new relationships with fellow students and the professor. For example, consider these statements regarding the benefits of the course from the traditional and accelerated course modalities respectively: "I

learned how to study" vs. "I was more motivated [to study] in this class. There was an assignment due [after] every class. There is more time in other classes."

Most importantly, it was only when the facilitator prompted participants in the traditional focus groups that the topic of motivation surfaced. However, students responded that they were motivated by their classmates and course activities. These responses were frequent, and consistently referred to class activities that created a welcoming and comfortable class environment and the ability to interact regularly with classmates and the professor. Identifying and using college resources were also mentioned. Consensus (14 students) occurred when a student verbalized the support she received from classmates.

"I got motivation out of the class, not so much from the teacher, but from the other students, they kept me on the ball. When a test would come up or assignments {would be} due, I'd be slacking and they'd remind me and push me to do it." (Traditional 22). Students (30) who described the class as "open" stated that SSC 100 was the only class where they had the opportunity to get to know other students (Traditional 22, 28).

When prompted, one student recognized a change in his motivation due to class environment. "I didn't want to be at [the College]…. I was thinking that all bad students and drug dealers went to the college, I didn't have any motivation to be here, but that [opinion] is all changed now [due to the students he had met]" (Traditional).

When focus group data was analyzed for students' level of motivation, magnitude coding revealed that 90% (53 of 59) of the students participating in the focus groups from the accelerated sections of the Course reported an improvement in their level of motivation at the end of the semester vs. 75.5% (34 of 45) of the students in the

traditional sections. In the traditional sections, when students' were asked directly if there had been any change in their level of motivation from the beginning to the end of the course, there was no mention of the course modality as a reason for these changes. As mentioned previously, students enrolled in the accelerated student success course connected course acceleration with an acute awareness of time that increased their level of motivation. This level of awareness regarding time and motivation was missing in the traditional course modality.

"I was motivated to come to college already, but the class increased my motivation. All (17) students agreed with this statement citing acceleration as the reason. [The accelerated course] made me come to class because I'd miss too much if I didn't" (Accelerated 59).

"If not for an accelerated class, I would have been gone." This student commented that due to the length of the accelerated class, he was motivated to finish (Accelerated 26).

"I was motivated to come to college already, but the [accelerated] class did help to increase my motivation." Seven out of eight students agreed (Accelerated 59).

Magnitude coding of student interview data found, in general, that all student interviewees (6) reported medium to high levels of motivation upon entering the College. At the start of the course, three of the six students, Stan, Rachel and Charles reported high levels of motivation without reservation. Stan and Rachel were enrolled in accelerated sections of the Course while Charles was enrolled in a traditional section. Stan and Rachel chose to attend the College despite having been admitted, directly from high school, to competitive, four year institutions.

Stan: "I came to the College because of the [scholarship] program. …I was accepted at State College, but I actually chose the College even though people said it was like 13th grade. One of my friends…we are equally smart [but he is at State College]. [We] would hang out after school and [I found out] that in the end we were learning the same thing."

Rachel, who was also enrolled in an accelerated section, chose the College because she did not feel ready for a "four-year," as she puts it. She is emphatic and clear in her self-assessment as she graduated from high school. "I was always a good student. I was mature because I was motivated. I didn't feel ready to go to a four-year. I didn't want to go! I thought it would be too challenging…both academically and socially."

Unlike Stan and Rachel, Juan who was enrolled in an accelerated section and Cathy and Esther who were enrolled in traditional sections described themselves as motivated, but, they recounted past educational experiences that caused them to approach the first-semester of college with caution. Juan and Cathy enrolled at the College with high expectations mitigated by disappointment in their high school preparation.

Juan's use of the word, "never," described his experiences in high school, his identity as a high school student, and subsequently, his perspective on attending college while in his senior year.

Juan: "I was like, me, College? No way! College and I don't click. I never even liked school, so I was like, it's *never* going to work out." Regarding his high school experiences, Juan states matter-of-factly, "I guess in high school, I was the kid who was *never* in class. I would never pay attention. If I would go to class, I would be there for 10 minutes and just walk out. …I just wasn't a good student who could pay attention and I

always had trouble learning, too. I felt pressure when teachers would ask me questions. I would get nervous. They gave me a high school diploma, but they just pushed me through. It was the same in middle school."

However, a personal relationship influenced his decision to enroll in the College. After high school, he tried to find a job that met his expectations of a "calm life," which he explains, means a life where he can "support his family, but still have time to be with them and not worried all of the time." He came to the realization, with the support of his girlfriend, that he needed further education.

Juan: "I guess you can say we were talking about having a future together. She [my girlfriend] said, 'Do you want to raise a family when you are working two jobs and you are not home? Do you want to spend time with me?' If you go to school, you have a better career and you only have to work one job and you can provide for the family and spend time with your family. That motivated me."

Cathy, a self-described "good student," says, "I was in the Honor Society. …I didn't like my high school very much. Only a few of the teachers actually helped me. Students were very unmotivated, so it kind of brought everyone's hope down."

Cathy also talked about her significant disappointment in not being able to attend her first-choice college due to financial limitations. When I asked her why she enrolled at the College, she said, "It was really financial. I was supposed to go to [a small, private, in-state school] but after I was accepted, [I discovered] it was too expensive. At first, I was really disappointed…. But after that, when I came here, that changed." I asked what changed and she replied, "I realized that this school wasn't so bad after all…the classes [were good] and the feedback from everyone else was about how good

the school really is. I see people I know graduating and going to really good colleges. So, I thought, 'I am still in college, so it's ok. I want to be in school.'"

In summary, this finding illustrates, that on issues of motivation, a clear distinction arose between the students in the accelerated and the traditional sections of the Course concerning on issues of motivation. Resoundingly, students who were enrolled in the accelerated student success course connected the course modality to an acute awareness of time that they then determined increased their motivation. These connections did not occur for students in the traditional sections of the Course even after they were specifically asked about changes in motivation.

Motivation to complete. The study's focus was influenced and expanded when analysis of the MSLQ found that students in the accelerated sections of the course exhibited more extrinsic motivation than students in the traditional sections. The qualitative phase of my study explored students' orientation of motivation, specifically extrinsic motivation, in both course modalities. Being extrinsically motivated explains an individual's orientation to motivation or why they are motivated and refers to actions that a student takes to receive reward or avoid punishment. (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, and McKeachie, 1991; Ryan and Deci, 2000, 2000b).

The phrase, "to get it done" captures the theme of students' motivation in both course modalities. Repetitively used, the phrase refers to students' desire to complete courses as quickly as possible, earn passing grades, and move on to the bachelor's degree. When I asked Stan if the accelerated course was motivating, he answered before I finished asking the question.

Stan: "Yes, it was … I managed my time because I knew it would end in 7-weeks so I managed my time accordingly. I would have liked to take four 7-week classes and that would be 8 classes in a semester. I might not like to burden myself, but I would have chosen more than one because I wanted to get done more quickly." It is important to note, however, that a few students recognized a potential challenge if the curriculum was different. "Because of the course material, seven-weeks worked, however if it was a History or English class, I would not have been able to complete the work" (Accelerated 27).

Pattern coding of interview and focus group data revealed two primary examples of extrinsic motivation. The first was "paying for college" and the second was earning "the grade." Interestingly, grade achievement was mentioned with less frequency and intensity than financial motivation. The following section presents how students conceptualized the motivating influences of "money" and "getting the grade to move on" in both course modalities.

Regardless of course modality, financial obligations were the most often cited reason for attending class regularly, earning good grades and for general motivation to succeed in their enrolled classes. More than 50% (59 of 104) of the focus group participants, as well as four of the six students who were interviewed, Stan (A), Juan (A), Esther (T), and Cathy (T)) agreed that being responsible for college tuition was motivating them to attend all classes and complete assignments on time. Notably, three of these four students, Stan (A), Juan (A) and Cathy (T) were receiving maximum federal and state financial Aid. Cathy (A) did not work while enrolled in classes, however Stan (A), Juan (A) and Esther (T) did. They worked 25, 28 and 12 hours respectively.

Charles (T), who was not receiving any form of financial aid, did not work during the semester.

Students responded quickly to prompts about what specifically motivated them. Two sections agreed that "money is a constant motivational factor" (Accelerated 27 and 28).

"I didn't have a problem with high school, and was accepted at [State College], but couldn't afford to attend there. Money motivates me" (Accelerated 22).

"Now I actually have something that motivates. The fact that I'm paying for college myself. I actually do my homework now. The class didn't motivate me, it's because I'm paying for it."

"I had to get assignments done and did it. I was not as good a student, but since I'm paying for college, I'm more concerned about doing well" (Accelerated 26).

"I paid for myself. [I want to] get my money's worth. I was working for about a year to pay for college" (Traditional 22).

In another section, all students agreed that being responsible for tuition changes how they viewed education. An astute connection between motivation, time and money was made in by a few students when they were talking about students who did not pay attention in class and repeatedly attempted to side-rail class discussion with interruptions. They referred to this as "high school behavior" and succinctly explained why such behavior is wasteful in terms of time and money.

Participant A: "The professor would repeat a lot.

Participant B: He repeated when someone behaved like they were in high school.

Participant C: “It threw us off track. It wasn’t the professor’s fault. Students participated by interrupting and changing the topic, then the conversation would change. [Referring to that behavior], she said, ‘you can’t get away with that in college…you can get away with things like that in high school. I don’t want to waste money’” (Traditional 60).

Others related their motivation to their financial relationship with their parents and families.

“My motivation is my dad. He makes good money, but he works outside. He’s cold in the winter and hot in the summer. He wants me to have an inside job” (Traditional 28).

I’m not rich—I’m not going to throw money out the window. If my parents had paid, I may not have been motivated.” Another student agreed that when his education and car were paid for by his mother, he had felt that everything had come easily and he hadn’t been as motivated. (4 students agree – Accelerated 26)

“I didn’t do as well as my sisters in high school—planned to become a better student here and get out quickly to go on to a better college—then go out to get a job to make money. Financial aid covered all of my tuition.” (Traditional 22)

The students who were interviewed for the study reached similar conclusions about the motivating influences of financial obligations. Cathy (Traditional) enrolled in the College only after being unable to attend her first-choice institution, because she nor her family were aware of the high costs of attending college. When I asked why she attended the College, she responded, “It was really financial. I was supposed to go to [a small, private, in-state school] but after I was accepted, [I discovered] it was too expensive.”

Cathy entered the College with very low levels of cultural capital. This was most evident when she was had enrolled at a private college and only then understood that she could not attend since she could not afford the tuition. “First, I was really disappointed because I went to the new school and became really familiar with it…, so it was really upsetting.”

Stan (Accelerated) viewed the future pragmatically when it came to his financial well-being in comparison to his father’s. He says, “I mean, what am I going to do? … Right now, I am working at Sears with a minimum wage of $7.24 and its ok for me right now since I am a college student. … I want higher pay, but I know some people at Sears who are working for minimum wage and they have families. That’s hard to believe. It is better if you get a college degree. My dad works for Social Services which is non-profit. [His body language infers that the salary isn’t high.] Everyone has a Bachelors or Master’s degree and he has been there [a long time]. As stated earlier, Stan had been accepted at the State University and chose to attend community college because he was eligible for a state grant that paid full tuition. “I was accepted at State University first, but chose the College because I would save a lot of money.” This achievement places him in a unique position when compared to most of the students in the study. Despite the quality of his past academic achievements, financial concerns motivated him to attend a community college, succeed, and enroll in accelerated classes.

Interestingly, earning passing grades did not emerge from the focus groups with the frequency that I had anticipated as academic achievement is one of the more common examples of extrinsic motivation. Students (19) in the traditional sections (22, 28, and 60) agreed more frequently than students (12) in the accelerated sections (26) that earning acceptable grades were motivating factors. Overall, in the focus groups, students' were more motivated by financial concerns than the achieving passing or high grades. However, students' observations about earning good grades illustrated the effect of early success experiences on levels of motivation.

"I lack confidence, but as I got good grades and went through the syllabus, I started to gain confidence and my motivation improved. My motivation and confidence went up as a result of this class" (Traditional 22).

"You do not want to waste time. You didn't know how much energy it took to do well" (six of 15 students agreed) (Traditional 60).

The student interviews, however, demonstrated that grades acted as important motivators. All of the students spoke about the importance of grades in order to remain motivated, however Charles and Esther, from the traditional sections of the Course responded clearly and without hesitation about how powerful good grades are on motivation.

Charles, upon returning to the College after stopping-out, was adamant about earning high grades and completing his degree. He admitted to having a rigorous study schedule and said that he would study 12 hours per day, if necessary, to earn a good grade. For Charles, achieving good grades was his main motivation. He described a very

demanding study schedule due to a learning disability where he studied up to 8 - 12 hours for one test. I ask what motivated him to work so hard and he replied,

Charles: "THE GRADES [with emphasis]. To get a good grade…it's all worth it. You know I work until it's done…It's all about the grade."

Esther spoke about her surprise at achieving a 3.7 GPA in her first semester of college. "[It] was a good feeling. Success and comfort. It encouraged me." Esther's next remark succinctly expresses how important good grades are to students who are primarily extrinsically motivated. "Well, I think any class is motivating if I you want to get a good grade."

This was not to say that students in the accelerated sections did not admit that grades were both motivating and important in terms of future academic goals. Rachel demonstrated that she understands an important difference between high school and college expectations and the role that grade point average has on transferring to a four-year college while Stan described the momentum gained from achieving high grades. Rachel" "In high school, I know that I had four semesters to bring that one grade up, but in college there is only one semester and it pretty much it effects the GPA dramatically. Since I want to transfer, I know I need a high GPA. You can't play games here in college."

Similarly, Stan reported that his primary motivation for attending college was to "get all A's in my classes with a 4.0 GPA." He confirmed that good grades are motivating because they supply the momentum that is needed to persist. "I'd get a good grade and it made me feel awesome. I am so happy right now that I got A's, I love that…I just want to do better."

Although the quantitative analysis of the MSLQ found that students in the accelerated sections of the course exhibited more extrinsic motivation than students in the traditional sections, qualitative analysis found that students in both course modalities exhibited motivation that was primarily extrinsic, especially in terms of "paying for college" and "earning the grade." Students repeatedly used the phase, "to get it done" which illustrated their desire to complete courses quickly, to earn passing grades, and to move on to the bachelor's degree.

Use of learning strategies. My hypothesis predicted that students in the accelerated section of the Course would report greater or equal use of learning strategies than students in the traditional sections of the Course. Analysis of the focus groups and interview data found that students in both the accelerated and traditional sections of the Course reported similar use of learning strategies. Data analysis of focus group (12) and interview (6) transcripts found that regardless of course modality, students used learning strategies similarly. Data also found that students adopted and applied new and previously known, but untried learning strategies. The acquisition and use of learning strategies was the dominant theme in the traditional focus groups when students were asked to describe the benefits of the course as well as when they were directly asked to describe their use of learning strategies. There was overall consensus in the six focus groups conducted in the traditional sections of the Course that acquired learning strategies helped the students to be more successful.

"People think it's a useless course, but it's not. I really earned a lot. …When I have to read a thick theatre book, I'll use the strategies I learned in the course." (Traditional 22).

"{The course} helped with my other classes. He [the professor] always wanted us to annotate, and I learned how to do that in this course" (Traditional 28).

"We learned about time management" (Traditional 60). Students reached a consensus about learning about how to use time management strategies.

As stated previously, the theme in the focus groups conducted in the accelerated sections was different than the theme in the traditional sections. When students in the accelerated sections of the Course were asked to describe the benefits of the course, the use of learning strategies was mentioned secondarily to the motivational nature of acceleration.

Pattern and magnitude coding allowed me to analyze both the focus group data and the interview transcripts to identify the types of learning strategies students used and how frequently they applied these strategies to courses other than the student success course. Once prompted to describe their use of learning strategies from the beginning to the end of the course, it was clear that the use of learning strategies increased for most of the students enrolled in the accelerated sections of the Course.

"I was excited to learn about what type of learner I am" (Accelerated 22).

All students agreed that they learned to manage their time more effectively (Accelerated 59).

"I learned time-management for my other classes and now have more time for my English and math classes" (Accelerated 26).

Basic study strategies such as highlighting, note-taking, and test-taking strategies were the most often cited strategies that changed throughout the semester. Note-taking strategies emerged most frequently as a learning strategy that students were using and

applying to other classes (10 out of 12 focus groups). Students in both the accelerated and traditional sections reported similar changes in learning strategies from the beginning to the end of the semester.

The students interviewed (6) for the study reported acquiring new learning strategies regardless of course format. Similarly, course delivery did not factor into whether they adopted new strategies or began to use known strategies for the first time. Analysis of interview data, found that, regardless of course delivery mode, students were sometimes unaware of the learning strategies that they were acquiring and applying. Juan, for example, pointed out that he had had knowledge of learning strategies, but never bothered to use them. "I guess I had heard it all from teachers [high school] before, it doesn't mean that I mastered them. It is just stuff you know...highlight, take notes, use note cards…some of it is helpful, but not all." Interestingly, Juan used help-seeking, a learning strategy which requires asking for help when a student realizes that he or she does not know something. (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, and McKeachie, 1991). Use of this strategy provided an indication that his motivations were changing as he began to internalize alternate reasons for his actions. In Chapter 2, internalization was discussed as a process of consideration where an individual considers and begins to accept a value (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Liao, Edlin, and Cuttita-Ferdenzi, 2014; Malhotra, Galletta, and Kirsch, 2008; Ryan and Deci, 2000, 2000b; Vallerand, Pelletier, Blais, Hriere, Senecal, and Villieres, 1992). When students perform a task with an attitude of "willingness that reflects an inner acceptance of the value or utility of a task" they have begun to internalize the motivation to accomplish the task (p.55). Inner acceptance implicates ownership by the student. For example, when Juan's thoughts and actions began to focus

on factors that contributed to success in college, and less on approvals such as grades and praise, he became more self-determined. As discussed earlier, this is a transitional process for students as their motivation escalates on an extrinsic motivation continuum that includes at the lowest point, external regulation, then moving to introjection, and finally identification (Liao, Edlin and Cuttita-Ferdenzi). They explain this as advancing from basic extrinsic motivations such as grades and approval-seeking, to a more value rich motivation that emanates from the student.

Remember that Juan entered the College with the lowest level of cultural capital having experienced social promotion throughout both middle and high school. By his second semester of college he used tutoring services and sought out the advice of learning center personnel. He used the library to do extra reading about computer science so that when he was in class he was prepared for the challenges of the coursework.

Juan: "He [learning center personnel] told me to do this so that when I go to computer class I will already have an idea and a strong base, and I will be ahead of everyone else. Or else I might get lost…"

Only after we engaged in this conversation, and I pointed out that using the library in this manner was a type of learning strategy, was he able to see that he had adopted new learning strategies.

Juan: "[The Course] also helped me by showing me [how to use] websites like OWL at Purdue University."

I asked if it would be true to say that his use of learning strategies was different now than at the beginning of his first-year in college.

Juan: “Yes, they are very different now, I use the internet, I use the library and I write notes….I use my memory, because my memory has always been good and it has gotten better because now I care.” Juan’s statement the he cares is a clear example of his growing sense of self-determination.

Similarly to Juan, Charles also entered the College with fewer adapted learning strategies, but was enrolled in a traditional section. Yet, he answered very directly and without hesitation when asked what, if anything, was helpful about the student success course.

Charles: “It helped me learn better learning strategies and about college resources. I used ‘read, recite, and review’ and practiced repetition. I would learn the principles behind the information, [take practice tests], try it out, and see how I did. The class taught me to study a lot and that I have to study a lot to do well. I have to do things over and over again for them to sink in.”

I then asked if time management became important once he learned that he had to devote several hours to studying.

Charles: “Oh yes, I now have a study strategy and a plan to attend part time since I need more time to learn. I like to study the week before a test, not too long before, but I need at least a week to prepare and I now know it works.” In this case, Charles used elaboration and metacognition techniques, although he does not refer to them in these terms.

In a different manner, Cathy and Rachel, who were enrolled in a traditional and accelerated section of the Course respectively, answered directly when I ask if they found the course helpful.

Cathy: “Yes I did, for learning strategies,” she replies without prompting. “I use techniques we have learned for memorizing and note-taking. I have used these strategies in my psychology class in particular and they helped because the professor gives real-life examples for all of the definitions. My notes help me better understand the terms because I remember the examples.”

Although Cathy identified this learning strategy as note-taking, one of the most often referenced learning strategies in the study, additional strategies such as elaboration, organization, and critical thinking were employed.

Rachel reported that the accelerated student success course significantly helped her manage her inclination to procrastinate. She entered the College with a good high school academic record and as a result saw herself as “a good student.” Having learned to use effective learning strategies in high school, Rachel found that acceleration motivated her to avoid procrastination. To note, Rachel, as all of the students in the study, were enrolled in a combination of accelerated and traditional courses.

Rachel: “With the 14-week courses, I had time. With the seven-week course, you cannot slack-off since when you slack-off you have to bring it back and then do the work. You can do that in 14-weeks, but not in 7.”

In relation to time management, a learning strategy mentioned throughout the focus groups and other interviews, Rachel replied emphatically that the accelerated course had an effect on learning strategies such as time management, reading, and test-taking.

Rachel: “I had a paper due every week and it required me to read first and then learn how to space out the paper so that there was time to go back and make corrections, then read

for the once-a week-quizzes after the paper, all while focusing on my other [traditional length] courses."

Interestingly, Rachel stated that the accelerated course not only influenced which learning strategies she used, but how she used them.

Rachel: "… if I had been in the longer course, I would not have used half of the strategies I used in the accelerated student success course. I wouldn't have made sure my assignments were done on a certain day or at a certain time and I wouldn't have made sure that I was on pace. I would have slipped. I would have said to myself, 'Oh…you have next week to do it…'" Her descriptions portray a person who has an understanding of time management in terms of prioritization and is using learning strategies to manage both accelerated and traditional length courses.

Esther and Stan, who were enrolled in a traditional and accelerated section respectively, could identify numerous learning strategies that they either learned in the Course, or used differently or more often than they did in high school. Both students had the opportunity to attend a more competitive four-year college, but chose to attend the community college. Esther did so because she was unsure of her academic and career goals and Stan enrolled for financial reasons having received a substantial academic scholarship that paid most of his tuition for two years.

Like Rachel who was enrolled in an accelerated section, Esther credited the Course for helping her to avoid procrastination. Where Rachel credited the pace of the accelerated course for keeping her on track, Esther recognized the content of the course curriculum for helping her to create a plan and a study schedule as well as to utilize time management strategies.

Esther: "[The Course] helped me realize how important studying is. You can't just get by in college by not studying and procrastinating. I still do that sometimes, but now I have a plan. I know what I have to do each day and try to do it. This is my big thing to work on now."

Both Esther and Stan who were enrolled in traditional and accelerated sections respectively state that learning about learning styles allowed them to identify the learning strategies that could help them succeed.

Esther: "I have learned that I am a visual learner and that I have to read before I listen to a lecture. Then I listen and take notes."

Stan: "I am a kinesthetic learner and using the read, recite, review reading guidelines help me in my biology class. Learning about the different learning strategies was the best part of the class."

Stan, like Rachel, recognized the accelerated version of the Course for allowing him to manage his time accordingly.

Stan: "I did manage my time because I knew [the Course] would end in seven weeks …I knew I would then have three classes and it would be easier for me [to concentrate on those for the remainder of the semester]. "I would have liked four, seven-week classes, meaning I would have taken eight classes a semester and would have gotten done more quickly." It is important to remember that Esther also credited the traditional modality of the Course for helping her manage procrastination.

In summary, students in both the accelerated and traditional sections of the student success course reported similar use of learning strategies. Note-taking was one of

the most referenced learning strategy followed by elaboration, organization, and critical thinking.

Student experiences. I hypothesized that students in the accelerated sections would recognize the benefits of being exposed to college success information earlier in the semester. This hypothesis stems from more than 25 years of developing and teaching student success courses in various formats. Data analyzed from transcripts of both the accelerated and traditional focus groups (12) and interviews with the students (6), supported the hypothesis. Students recognized the importance of being exposed, early in the semester, to curricula that included learning strategies, accessing college resources, and most importantly, information on how to correct behaviors that are perennial success detractors such as poor time management and procrastination.

Students (17/17) from an accelerated section of the Course reached consensus regarding the timing of the course in relation to their other courses. They suggested offering the Course before the start of the semester. "[Otherwise} we are learning to take notes while we are in other classes trying to take notes" (Accelerated 59).

"I learned all of the essentials when I needed it. Because it's condensed …, you can use all you've learned for the rest of the semester" (Accelerated 59).

There was consensus in one focus group that the accelerated class helped students to understand "the concept of college". They referenced the importance of the first day of class when they spoke about being given information and direction on what to do "to keep on the right track" (Accelerated 27).

"The course helped me learn to study for my other courses" (Consensus - Accelerated 27).

There was consensus that the 7-week class was a skill builder for other classes. “I learned time-management for my other classes and now have more time for my English and math classes” (Accelerated 26).

Students in an accelerated section (26) of the Course also spoke about the positive effects of acceleration on procrastination.

“This class helped with my procrastination because there was always something to do. I still procrastinate in my other classes, but not in this class – I always did this work first. (4 of 9 students agreed) (Accelerated 26)

“I could make up work in other classes, but with this one being so short I couldn’t make up the work, I had to do it.” (Accelerated 26)

Interviews with students in the accelerated sections of the student success course also elicited notable appreciation for the acquisition of in-time information. Stan, who of all the interviewees possessed the most cultural capital, found that the 7-week student success course allowed him to “learn everything quickly.” For Stan, reference to “everything” specifically meant acquiring knowledge of college resources such as advising, library services, and transfer information.

Most importantly, as the interview progressed, he began to recognize that his first impressions about the course and the College had changed. This recognition occurred more than once during the interview as he often paused to think before he answered my questions.

During one such time, he reflected on how he wished he hadn't thought that attending a community college meant that he was in "the 13th grade."[12]

Stan: "I have matured as I have learned [about attending college]."

I ask if he is different now than when he first enrolled at the College.

Stan: "Yes, definitely, because during my first semester I was in the middle of everything. I didn't know what to do, but when I take myself back and think about it, I learned a lot. When I look at myself [and the experiences I had] during the Course and the first-year of college, I learned a lot." His use of the phrase, "in the middle of everything" describes a time when he may not have been able to process his learning, but the passing of another semester has changed his perspective on the applicability and importance of the course.

Rachel's experience was a bit different. During her first semester, in addition to using resources such as the College's Counseling and Advising Center, she attributed a lessening of her propensity to procrastinate to the accelerated course. When Rachel described the Course, she used her hands to demonstrate the crunching of an object, and more than once referenced her battle with procrastination and how taking an accelerated course along with three traditional courses led to less procrastination overall. I asked what effect, if any, the Course had on her use of learning strategies and college resources.

Rachel (said quickly and emphatically): "With the accelerated course, I had a paper due either every week or every other week, and in between those papers, we had a quiz. I had

[12] When used in this context, the colloquial term "13th grade" equates the first year of community college to a continuation of high school as compared to attending a four-year college or university.

to read and I had to learn how to space the paper out so that when I was writing I could go back and make corrections and then read for the quiz and then also focus on my other [traditional length) courses as well….I knew I had a certain amount of time and a deadline to do it and in the accelerated format, if I procrastinated, it would throw everything off…" Emphatically, she reiterated that the accelerated course format helped her change her behavior "in – time" during the in the first-semester of college.

Within the traditional focus groups (6), there was less conversation about the benefits of acquiring college resource information **e**arlier. It was not a predominant topic in four out of six focus groups. Students mentioned using campus resources, acquiring and using learning strategies in other classes, and an awareness that these tools would be used in the future. However, there was little if any reflection on acquiring these tools and "just in time" information. Interestingly, there was consensus in two focus groups within the traditional sections that the course material should be addressed earlier.

"I started applying the study strategies a little too late in my other classes and my grades were starting to improve, but it was too late" (Traditional 28).

"In the beginning of the semester, we went to the library to do the career project, it was a little too early and then when it was time to do the project I couldn't remember the websites" (Traditional 28).

"The course should be taught before we come to school because we learn things that we need to before we started college. [Taking it this way] means you cannot apply it to your current classes. It's helpful for next semester, but not this semester" (Traditional 60).

Students in the accelerated course modality recognized the importance of being exposed, early in the semester, to student success curriculum and the full range of college

resource information. For students in the traditional sections of the course, there was less conversation about these benefits. It is notable, however, that there was agreement in two of the six focus groups conducted in the traditional sections that student success course material should be addressed earlier than later in the semester.

Summary

Overall, nine findings emerged from analysis of the data collected for my study. Included were five findings from the quantitative phrase that influence the direction and subsequent four findings that emerged from the qualitative phase.

These findings were 1) final exam grades between students in the accelerated and traditional course modalities, although significantly different, were similar, 2) term grade point average, 3) fall to spring retention, and 4) the results of the findings of the SPC were not significantly different for students in both course modalities. The fifth finding emerged with one subscale of the MSLQ showing significant difference for extrinsic goal orientation.

Following the study's sequential mixed methods design, extrinsic motivation was explored through focus groups and interviews with students in both course modalities. These findings were 1) students consistently associated the accelerated modality with an urgency for completion that increased motivation, 2) despite course modality, students exhibited similar levels of extrinsic motivation and most students' primary orientation to motivation was extrinsic, 3) students acquired and used learning strategies similarly regardless of course modality, and 4) students recognized the importance of being exposed, early in the semester, to the student success course curriculum.

Chapter 5

Inferences and Discussion

The following chapter contains an overview of an explanatory, sequential mixed-methods study comparing an accelerated, seven-week and a traditional, 14-week student success course, inferences and discussion that emanate from the findings, recommendations for academic and student affairs professionals who work with first-year students, as well as the study's limitations. The purpose of this study was a comparison of an accelerated, seven-week and a traditional, 14-week student success course offered at a community college in the northeastern United States. I wanted to determine if the accelerated modality was optimally situated to transition students with diverse backgrounds into an academic world that could be unfamiliar and intimidating. The two course modalities were compared on the basis of students' achievement of learning outcomes, term grade point average, and retention from fall to spring, motivation, use of learning strategies and students' experiences during the class.

Summary of Research Conducted

Community colleges continue to address a nationwide challenge to increase the number of students who not only enroll in college, but who persist to complete a degree or credential. In 2009, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development reported that after decades of leading the world in degree attainment, the United States was 16th in completion rates for 25 to 34 year-olds. Presently, "at 2-year degree-granting institutions, 29 percent of first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began their pursuit of a certificate or associate's degree in fall 2010 attained it within 150 percent of

the normal time required to do so…" (p. 4). This graduation rate was 20 percent at public 2-year institutions (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015).

This challenge stems from the need to insure that the American workforce is well-prepared to compete globally, now and in the future. For example, in 2015, the Lumina Foundation established a goal for "60% of Americans to hold a college degree, certificate, or other high-quality postsecondary credential" (Lumina Foundation, 2015). Adding to the challenge of successfully educating their communities to create a well-educated workforce, community colleges enroll and struggle to retain large numbers of students who are unprepared for a competitive academic environment. To address this challenge while remaining committed to their open access missions, community colleges, either independently or with funding from public and private foundations, have incorporated numerous interventions to help retain the students they have admitted. One such intervention, and the focus of my study, student success courses, attempt to transition students into an academic world that is potentially unfamiliar and intimidating. Student success courses have curricula, contact hours, and delivery methods that vary (Boudreau & Kromrey, 1994; Derby & Smith, 2004; Duggan & Williams, 2011). At the research site, the student success course was a three-credit course required of all students who tested into two or more developmental areas. Students self-selected into either the traditional, 14-week student success course or the seven-week accelerated course.

The curriculum covered the use of college resources, student success strategies including critical thinking skills and decision-making, and an introduction to using peer-reviewed research articles to learn more about learning strategies.

The research on the efficacy of student success courses has been mixed, however. Recent studies have shown that although the impact of the course may diminish over time, its value is demonstrable (Permzadian & Crede, 2015). Positive effects included higher grade point averages, increased credit earnings, and greater persistence for enrolled students as compared to those who had not taken a student success course (Cho & Karp, 2013; Karp, Raufman, Efthimiou, & Ritzre, 2016).

Accelerated course work has been in existence for more than 150 years (Scott and Conrad, 1992). Most recently, acceleration in varying formats has begun to show promise of shortening students' time to completion in developmental education (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014, 2016; Edgecombe 2011; Hern 2010; Jaggars, et al., 2014). Similar to student success courses, accelerated courses have undergone a significant amount of research that has investigated student and faculty experiences, course grades, and term grade point average (Daniel 2000; Scott and Conrad, 1992; and Seamon 2004). Despite this research, accelerated courses and student success courses remain subject to skepticism by both faculty and administrators (Boudreau & Kromney, 1994; Daniel 2000; Hunter & Lindner 2005; Scott & Conrad, 1992; Wlodkowski, 2003).

Student success courses transition new students into a college environment, and as such, have retention as their underlying objective. For the purposes of this study, retention was viewed within a conceptual framework informed by middle range theories that empirically examine the relationship between particular types of students and their success at certain types of campuses (Berger & Lyon, 2005). As such, social reproduction theory (SRT), constructed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, proposes

that a student's perception of themselves, their place in the world and opportunities to achieve success are determined by social and economic background (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1990; Mullen 2010). Numerous researchers use Bourdieu's work to advance traditional retention theory that includes students from diverse, nontraditional backgrounds (Berger, 2005, 2000; Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Mullen, 2010; Mutch 2006). Berger (2000) asserts that within the context of higher education, "it is the interaction of individual and organizational social reproduction processes that best explains undergraduate persistence from a Bourdieuvian perspective" (p.104). Accordingly, Mullen (2010) states that differences in socioeconomic advantages coalesce to cause inequalities in not only motivation, but academic achievement and students' perception of the entitlements necessary for success in college.

In this study, retention was discussed in terms of three concepts that are central to Bourdieu's social reproduction theory. They were habitus, cultural capital, and field. In order to remain aware of participant habitus throughout the study, student levels of cultural capital were examined using magnitude coding in the qualitative strand of the study. This analytic technique allowed me to continually focus on students' "taken-for-granted worldview" as they transitioned into their first-year of college while analyzing interview transcripts.

Central to this study was the concept of motivation and the potentially different role this concept played in the traditional versus accelerated courses. Research about community college students and motivation is limited and primarily comes from studies conducted at four-year institutions and then generalized to the two-year population (Liao, Edlin & Cuttita, 2014; Liao, Cuttita-Ferdenzi, & Edlin, 2012; Marti, 2008).

I conducted this study because research on accelerated student success courses is virtually non-existent. My study illustrated the efficacy of accelerated student success courses to be motivators. As motivators, they helped create early success experiences that resulted in feelings of accomplishment. My study followed a sequential mixed methods design, which allowed for a deeper understanding of the relationship between student success courses and the complexities of student habitus and motivation and the role these concepts play as a student transitions through the first-year of college. A purely quantitative analysis would have found that there were no significant differences between accelerated and traditional length student success courses in terms of term grade point average and fall to spring retention and use of learning strategies. A 3x2 ANOVA found that the only significant difference on the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) was extrinsic motivation or goal orientation where, at the end of the course, students in the accelerated sections possessed higher levels of extrinsic motivation than students in the traditional sections. Therefore, students in the accelerated sections would have appeared extrinsically motivated, a description that historically is not as valued as intrinsic motivation. However, a sequential mixed methods approach allowed for data collection and analysis of 12 focus group transcripts, six in the accelerated and traditional sections of the Course and six interviews, with three students from the accelerated and three from the traditional sections. This phase, which was determined by the quantitative findings, allowed students to verbalize their perspectives and animate their experiences during the first-year of community college. It allowed students in the accelerated sections to communicate an enthusiasm for, and give examples

of how, the accelerated student success course influenced their motivation to complete assignments, and ultimately the course.

Repetitive stories emerged about acceleration motivating students to use time management skills which allowed them to prioritize their assignments. Additionally, students experienced a sense of accomplishment at having completed a course in the first seven-weeks of the semester while enrolled in two to three traditional-length courses. This accomplishment motivated them to discuss and visualize completion, or, in their words to "get it done." This motivation came from having completed a task within the first seven-weeks of the semester. The students in the traditional sections had no exposure to this accelerated approach to learning and therefore to this feeling of accomplishment.

In terms of motivation or goal orientation, practitioners know how extrinsically motivated students are as they enter college. From my experience, student motivation to attend college is highly related to their career or employment goals despite the presence of academic indecision or unpreparedness. The accelerated treatment of the course not only complemented their extrinsic motivation, it fed their desire to complete coursework quickly. I suggest that this connection between their orientation to and levels of motivation was healthy, especially during the first weeks of the semester. The connection fortifies a productive first-step in a long journey that often begins with enrollment in developmental education courses that do not contribute to the accumulation of credit for graduation. The nature of acceleration motivated them to put time management into practice. Practitioners are often challenged to find ways to motivate students to use time management strategies. The accelerated course accomplished this

innately while simultaneously addressing other learning strategies that students reported adopting and using "just in-time" in their other classes.

The narrow difference in final exam grades, C+ in the traditional sections and a C in the accelerated, indicated influences could have affected final exam performance when students were enrolled in a combination of accelerated and traditional courses. Competing interventions include in-course advising occurring simultaneously with the administration of the final exam and lack of peer group support.

Overall, the promising success of acceleration in developmental education and the results of my study, although limited, indicate a need for accelerated developmental education programs that include an accelerated student success course. This approach would eliminate some of the confusion that competing interventions and simultaneous enrollment in multiple course modalities cause. This research contributed to the literature on accelerated student success courses and their role in increasing success rates in developmental education programs which in turn support our national imperative to improve graduation rates.

Summary of the Findings

The following is a summary of the study's research questions and the key findings that led to the study's inferences and meta-inference.

Research question 1. How do learning outcomes compare between students enrolled in the seven-week accelerated student success courses and the 14-week traditional student success courses? I predicted that there would be little, if any, significant difference in the performance on a final exam embedded with course learning outcomes between the traditional and accelerated versions of the course. This hypothesis

was partially supported. Analysis found that students in the traditional sections of the Course scored significantly higher on the final exam than students taking the same exam in the accelerated sections. Students in Teacher A's class earned higher final grades (M = 79.6%) than students in teacher B's class (M = 74.8). There was no teacher by classtype interaction.

Additionally, there was no significant difference for students in the accelerated and traditional sections on their self-reported understanding of course learning outcomes, as measured by a Survey of Perceived Competencies.

Research question 2. How do students enrolled in seven-week accelerated student success course compare to those students enrolled in 14-week traditional student success courses in terms of semester GPA and retention from fall to spring? I predicted that there would be no significant difference for term GPA and fall to spring retention between the traditional and accelerated student success classes. This hypothesis was supported. There was no significant difference between participants in the traditional and accelerated student success courses in terms of grade point average at the end of the semester. The mean term GPA earned by students in the traditional student success course was 2.2 as compared to 2.0 GPA for students in the accelerated courses. Analysis found that there was also no significant difference on the rate of retention from fall 2011 to spring 2012 between the students enrolled in the accelerated and traditional classes.

Research question 3. What are the differences, if any, in the levels of motivation and use of effective learning strategies between students enrolled in the seven-week accelerated student success courses and 14-week traditional student success courses?

At the beginning of the semester, pre-test results found no significant difference in motivation and use of learning strategies between the accelerated and traditional classes. I predicted that students enrolled in the accelerated sections of the Course would have greater or equal motivation and use of learning strategies than students enrolled in the traditional sections of the course as measured by the MSLQ. Although my hypothesis held true for use of learning strategies, at the end of the semester, the post test of the MSLQ found that students in the accelerated classes had more extrinsic goal orientation than students in the traditional class.

As determined by my study's methodology, qualitative data collection and analysis was then conducted on extrinsic motivation and use of learning strategies and found that students described themselves as being more aware of time and therefore motivated by the accelerated modality. This analysis also revealed that despite course modality, students were primarily extrinsically motivated. Students in the traditional modality did not, however, associate the traditional course modality with motivation.

In regard to use of learning strategies, students in the accelerated sections did not mention using learning strategies until prompted by the facilitator, however, qualitative analysis found little if any difference between students in the accelerated and traditional course in regard to using learning strategies.

Research question 4. How do student experiences vary between the seven-week accelerated student success courses and the 14-week traditional student success courses? I hypothesized that students would report an appreciation of receiving student success information during the first seven-weeks of the semester. This hypothesis was supported. Students from both course modalities acknowledged the importance of learning student

success skills early on in the semester. For instance, students indicated that learning about new learning strategies, college resources, and time management were needed early in the semester.

Inferences

The following section presents the inferences and discussion that evolved from the study's findings in the context of my theoretical framework. Using a sequential mixed methods design required that the findings from the first strand, in this case the quantitative strand, determined the design and direction of the second, qualitative strand (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, p. 153). Inferences and recommendations were drawn using Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) suggestion to "look across the quantitative results and the qualitative findings and [make] an assessment of how the information addresses the mixed methods questions in the study (p. 212). Following the suggestion of Creswell and Plano-Clark and Teddlie and Tashakkori, I used the term *inferences* to describe the conclusions drawn from each research strand and the term *meta-inference* to describe the overall conclusion that originated from the study.

Inference 1: The accelerated student success course contributed to an early sense of accomplishment for extrinsically motivated students. Many students come to the community college with the goal of graduating or transferring to a four-year college in pursuit of the bachelor's degree (2013 Noel Levitz Research Report; Smith, 2016). Acceleration allows students to accomplish this goal more quickly which in turns feeds their extrinsic motivation. Acceleration of course work appeals to their "get it done" mentality. In essence, students in the accelerated course had successfully completed a

college level course by the end of October, seven-weeks into their first semester of college.

Recently, when referring to the positive outcomes experienced by students in the California Acceleration project, where student time in English developmental education courses was accelerated, Hern (2013) states, "When we share results like these with faculty, the most common explanation we hear is that it must be student motivation; students who choose the accelerated course must be more highly motivated" (p. 8). Contrary to this belief, my study found the students began the semester with similar levels of motivation as determined by the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) administered on the first day of class in both course modalities.

When focus group transcripts were reviewed with facilitators at the conclusion of every focus group, they indicated, without prompting, that students were excited and animated about having completed the course. This sense of accomplishment likely contributed to their higher levels of extrinsic motivation.

Inference 2: A heightened sense of urgency fostered higher levels of extrinsic motivation to accomplish learning tasks. Another factor that likely fostered higher levels of extrinsic motivation for students in the accelerated course was students' heightened sense of urgency to accomplish learning tasks. According to Greenbank and Hepworth (2008), students take a serial approach to academics. In other words, students place a priority on tasks that must be completed in the immediate future, highlighting the importance of assignments in accelerated coursework. Since most students enrolled in the College are taking traditional classes, many of the students in the accelerated courses have completed a course before most of their peers. Faculty also likely experienced a

sense of urgency in the accelerated course and as a result, it is probably safe to assume that students received more timely feedback. Feedback is a powerful motivator. Bercher (2012) identified two types of feedback: cognitive and outcome feedback. While students can benefit from cognitive feedback when studying (ex. taking a practice test), it is also very important for students to use outcome feedback (ex. grade in a course or on an assignment). Students in the accelerated course were given more outcome feedback and this feedback was provided much earlier than others who were taking only traditional courses. This timely feedback could have also played a role in the increased levels of extrinsic motivation.

Meta-inference: Acceleration influenced an intensive focus on time management early in the first semester of college. As students recounted their high school experiences, explained when they first realized that they wanted to attend college, and described their preparation for Accuplacer, their stories defined their taken-for-granted worldview as they transitioned into the first-year of college. This ideation was one of many critical moments in time focused on student habitus, begging an answer to what was, or wasn't "for the likes of them" (Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1990; Lareau 2011; Mullen 2010). Indicative of this habitus, was students' positive association between the accelerated course modality and their goal of graduating and/or transferring from the community college to a four-year institution as quickly as possible. Inherent to the accelerated course modality was an alignment between student habitus, partially defined by extrinsic goal orientation, and the goals of the course which were to assist students in learning about themselves in relation to a college-level learning environment. It was this alignment that positioned the accelerated student success course as an intentional

intervention that successfully transitioned students into an unfamiliar academic environment. For this reason, the accelerated course modality excited students, appealing to their extrinsic motivation and made accomplishing new tasks a reality.

Overall, my research inferred that the accelerated course modality heightened students' awareness of time early in the semester. This convergence of curriculum and accelerated delivery immersed students in behaviors that motivated them to prioritize their assignments. The course acted as a conduit for adopting learning strategies closely associated with effective time management skills such as prioritization, that, when experienced in light of early course completion, created a sense of accomplishment. In other words, the time management switch was flipped for students enrolled in the accelerated student success course and appealed to their extrinsic goal orientation to "get it done." Practitioners know that time management is an important learning strategy with which students struggle despite countless hours of instruction using calendars, to do lists and other organizers. The students in the accelerated modality reported being compelled to focus on this elusive skill as soon as the semester began. This attention was not the focus in the traditional modality since students were not enrolled in any accelerated courses.

My study adds to the literature showing that students in accelerated student success courses performed at the same level as their peers who enrolled in the traditional modality thus addressing the skepticism about accelerated course work (Daniel, 2000; Scott and Conrad, 1992; Wlodkowski, 2003). Institutions can offer accelerated student success courses knowing that student achievement in terms of learning outcomes, term grade point average, and retention are consistent with the success rates of students in

traditional courses. As such, the accelerated modality motivated students by allowing them to experience success early in the traditional semester, appealing to their extrinsic motivation, and in doing so recognized this important component of their taken-for granted worldview as new students.

Recommendations

The majority of students entering community college require multiple levels of developmental education in reading, writing or math (Bailey, 2009). These students often fail to accumulate any college-level credit after several semesters of enrollment, never mind complete a credential (Bailey, Jeong and Cho, 2010; NCES 2015). Both student success courses and acceleration are experiencing some success in shortening students' time to reaching gateway courses in English and math (Edgecombe, Jaggars, et al., 2013; Cho, Kopko, et. al 2012; Edgecombe, 2011; Center for Community College Research, 2016, 2014; Hern, 2014, 2013, 2010; Hodara & Jaggars, 2014; Karp, Bickerstaff et al, 2012; O'Gara et al., 2009). My study supports long-standing research that indicated few differences between the outcomes of accelerated and traditional courses. (Cross 2003; Seamon, 2004; Scott 1996, 1995, 1994, Scott & Conrad, 1992; Wlodkowski, 2003). However, the research on accelerated student success course is virtually non-existent. This study contributed to the literature on the efficacy of accelerated student success courses.

The findings and inferences of my study support the following recommendations for academic and student affairs providers and senior level administrators for developing and implementing accelerated student success courses.

Recommendations for research. The recommendations for future research are presented below.

1. Research is needed on motivation and community college students. Most research on college student motivation has been conducted with students attending four-year institutions and generalized to the community college population. Discerning levels and orientation of motivation is complex when linked to student and organizational habitus and empirical research is lacking on this relationship.
2. Research is needed on the relationship between accelerated student success courses and their ability to sustain motivation. In this study, students' reported that their motivation might diminish when the course ended. This observation aligns with past research suggesting that the positive effects of student success courses weaken over time.
3. In light of research that has produced mixed results regarding student success courses' ability to positively affect retention and completion rates, longitudinal studies should be conducted to determine if there have been even minimal improvements in these areas. Even small improvements in student persistence and graduation rates could be fiscally beneficial to community colleges and the communities they represent (Permzadian & Crede, 2015; Padgett, Keup, & Pascarella, 2013).
4. Research should be conducted within community colleges that vary in size, location, and population characteristics on the relationship between student and institutional habitus and college completion. What happens when institutional habitus takes priority over student habitus? An understanding of the capital that

contributes to institutional habitus in relation to the habitus of students entering the college can guide institutional decision-making on academic programs and student support services.

Recommendations for practice. Recommendations for future practice are presented below.

1. Colleges should be aware that students enrolled in an accelerated student success course may not perform as well on a final course assessment as students enrolled in a 14-week, traditional modality for multiple reasons. First, the exam in the accelerated student success course was the first exam these students took since beginning college seven weeks earlier. Second, when the Course's syllabus was examined in light of the College's academic calendar, it was apparent that intentional interventions that had been created to improve first-year student success were competing for students' time and attention as they prepared for their first, college final exam. For example, in all accelerated sections of the Course, advising and registration for the upcoming spring semester was conducted during two class sessions in mid-October. The timing of this retention initiative meant that these students, while preparing for their final exam, were required to focus on their academic schedule for the upcoming spring. Although well-intentioned, these sessions could have been a distraction that affected students' ability to adequately prepare for and take the final exam.

   Third, since the College only offered a few accelerated courses during the fall and spring semesters, it is safe to assume that the students' peer group was not in final exam mode in October. Social context of learning suggests that others, including

the students' peer group, may not have been supportive of studying since this situation did not pertain to them (Goswami, 2008; Harrington, 2016; Woolfolk, 2013). Offering an accelerated approach to developmental education, including an accelerated student success course, could allow students to establish a peer group for support and reflection.

2. Colleges should give careful consideration to what course or programs should be accelerated and which should not. There is research that suggests that English-as-a-Second-Language and science courses with laboratory requirements do not work in accelerated modalities (Community College Consortium for Immigrants (Nov. 2011; Scordaras, 2009).
3. Every attempt should be made to insure that student success course curriculum when accelerated is delivered differently than in its traditional format. Course design should include assignments that actively engage students in in-depth learning activities during the accelerated time period (Guentler, 2010; Swenson, 2003).
4. At the College, adjunct faculty teach the majority of student success course sections and may not be familiar with the culture, policies and daily functioning of the College, and as such, should be provided with support to develop and sustain the accelerated student success course.

Limitations

Sample size. The sample size for this mixed-methods study was small. Six sections of the College's student success course were included with a total of 172 students. A total of 84 students were enrolled in the accelerated sections and 88 were

enrolled in the traditional sections. Random assignment into course sections was impossible to accomplish since new students self-select into their first-semester courses during registration. Several attempts were made via email and telephone to arrange interviews, but with limited success.

Additionally, of the 172 total participants, the final exam scores of 90 students were included in the study. There were 43 students in the traditional sections and 47 students in the accelerated sections who completed the final exam.

Duration of the study. This study was not non-longitudinal so conclusions cannot be drawn about the long-term impact of the accelerated vs. traditional courses. It would be interesting to know if students were retained to degree completion.

Instructor influence. This study did not take into account teacher-effect per se. I did control for classtype-teacher interaction when analyzing the data on final exam scores, perceived competencies, term grade point average, retention and levels of motivation and use of learning strategies to insure there was not instructor/treatment interaction. However, no other consideration for instructor influence was considered.

Course content. This study did not address the efficacy of the content of the student success course.

Implications for Leadership

Together, the findings, inferences and recommendations of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study comparing accelerated and traditional student success courses, strongly suggests that leadership requires, above all else, listening, inspiration and empowerment. The ability to legitimately hear what another person is saying and the

capability to reflect on that listening requires dedicated knowledge and practice. Only then can the energy for inspiration and the resources for empowerment be actualized.

> Leadership is all about the release of human possibilities. One of the central requirements for good leadership is the capacity to inspire people in the group: to move them and encourage them and pull them into the activity, and to help them get centered and focused and operating at peak capacity. A key element of this capacity to inspire is communicating to people that you believe they matter, that you know that they have something important to give. The confidence you have in others will to some degree determine the confidence they have in themselves. (Jaworski, 1998, p. 66)

This perspective provides context and guidance for the role of leadership in community colleges. In community colleges, governance is shared and faculty occupy a sometimes powerful, and always particular leadership role, especially in curriculum development, delivery, and redesign. Therefore, in terms of accelerated course design and an academically rigorous student success course, faculty, academic and student affairs leaders must collaborate to create and clearly communicate a shared vision that addresses the issue of student success in and out of the classroom.

As it pertains to the student success course, my studies' meta-inference suggests that acceleration influenced an intensive focus on time management early in students' first semester of college. In other words, a time management switch" was flipped and as such appealed to their extrinsic motivation to "get it [the work] done." Students' habitus was legitimized in a convergence of student success curriculum and acceleration. Therefore, since they were immersed in behaviors that motivated them to prioritize their

assignments, they positively associated the accelerated course modality with their goal of quickly graduating and/or transferring. In other words, student habitus and the goals of the course were aligned. This result illustrates the importance of connecting curriculum delivery with student habitus. Yet, given the perennial skepticism about both student success courses and acceleration, this meta-inference signals a need for administrative and faculty leaders to sensitize themselves and others to issues of single and double-loop learning, theories of action, and the organizational defenses (Argyris 1990,1991) that perpetually derail attempts designed to solve perennial and long-standing challenges, such as retention and student success.

Argyris (1991) asserts that "those members of the organization that many assume to be the best at learning are, in fact, not very good at it. I am talking about the well-educated, high-powered, high-commitment professionals who occupy key leadership positions…" (p. 4). Learning requires failure, but as Argyris espouses, well-educated and well-meaning professionals are not skilled in admitting that they might not have the answer. He suggests that they lose sight of the feeling of failure and as a result are reticent to place themselves in situations that will require admitting ignorance (p. 4). Double-loop learning requires admitting, "I don't know," rather than camouflaging reactions with blame and accusation of others' deficiencies. Double-loop learning is a

> reflection of how [people] think – that is, the cognitive rules or reasoning they use to design and implement their actions. …Teaching people how to reason about their behavior in new and more effective ways breaks down the defenses that block learning. (p. 5)

Argyris asserts that single-loop learning does not solve problems. It is the process of deeper learning or double-loop learning that honestly and empathetically confronts the matters at hand, the undiscussable, and the potentially embarrassing in a productive, non-threatening, but highly consistent manner, that begins to create effective learning environments. (Argyris, 1990, p. 108).

Leadership to overcome what Argyris refers to as organizational defenses requires the courage to look inward, react honestly and create an environment that inspires others to do so as well (Argyris, 1990, 1991). Timely issues such as accelerated course delivery, student success courses, and accelerated developmental education programs are all examples of intensive interventions that can suffer from defensive reasoning that supports the status quo rather than courageously addressing difficult and politically challenging problems that plague successful degree completion. As suggested in this study, the term "accelerated," when coupled with the term "learning," creates an immediate paradox for faculty, which suggests that another timeframe, usually longer, is a more normal timeframe in which learning can take place. "Therefore, any method that deviates from this standard is likely to be treated with suspicion and may invite summary dismissal of what might otherwise be an effective, innovative approach to designing instruction" (Swenson 2003, p.83). Although this study and others provide very little evidence that a college course must meet several times a week over a traditional semester to meet with success (Daniel, 2000), colleges maintain course scheduling practices that may not align with student needs. Nevertheless, conversations about ineffective advising, low enrollment and ineffective communication take precedence without the required learning to solve a complex problem. Birkholtz (2004) asserts that the lecture format was

delivered under the influences of an agrarian calendar that significantly influenced daily life for centuries. "Academic calendars designed for an agrarian society are anachronisms in the digital-age, where more than half of all students work full-time, year-round and instruction can take place regardless of time and place" (p.84). Yet, although we espouse commitment to completion, we often blame student behavior and disregard complex issues of habitus and levels of cultural capital.

Argyris' (1990, 1991) concept of theories of action explains this behavior and lies at the nexus of single-loop learning and the proliferation of organizational defenses. Theories of action are best explained in the context of people's attitudes about commitment to improvement and the change that supports improvement. Community college professionals work hard to improve retention. They want improvement. Argyris (1991) asserts that their defensiveness lies not in attitudes about change, but "…in the way they reasoned about their behavior and that of others" (p. 7).

> Ask people in an interview or questionnaire to articulate the rules they use to govern their actions, and they will give you what I call their 'espoused' theory of action. But observe these same people's behavior, and you will quickly see that this espoused theory of action has very little to do with how they actually behave. …When you observe people's behavior and try to come up with rules that would make sense of it, you discover a very different theory of action – what I call the individual's 'theory in use.' (p. 7)

Perhaps, defensive reasoning in organizations and these inconsistent theories of action bear responsibility for lagging completion rates, poor retention and unsuccessful attempts to transition first-generation students into higher education. Combatting

organizational defenses requires leadership at all levels to "guide and integrate the autonomous, but interconnected work of highly skilled people" (Argyris, 1991, p. 5). Faculty, student affairs professionals, and administrators working together, acutely aware of theories in use, single-loop learning and organizational defenses, have a better chance of leaving skepticism behind and moving forward to honestly confront the fear that accompanies suggestions of change. The accelerated course modality excited students, aligned with their habitus, appealed to their extrinsic motivation and made accomplishing new tasks a tangible reality resulting in the completion of their first college level course. It was this alignment that positioned the accelerated student success course as an intentional intervention that successfully transitioned students into an unfamiliar academic environment.

Summary Statement

Community colleges are faced with an imperative to develop strategies to meet the national goal of increasing the number of students who earn a marketable credential or college degree, thus meeting the workforce needs of our communities while simultaneously ensuring our global competitiveness. This imperative is exigent especially in light of the population of students community colleges serve. Many individuals enter our colleges with high expectations of improving skills and bettering their lives, yet do so with skills that are underdeveloped and habitus unfamiliar with the demands and organizational habitus of college.

My study contributed to the literature on the efficacy of the accelerated student success courses that transitioned students into an academic environment despite low levels of cultural capital and a habitus unfamiliar with the demands of college. Students

in the accelerated modality transitioned to college with a greater appreciation of and experience in time management that, if nurtured, could result in greater levels of retention.

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Appendix A

Course Syllabus

Professor Contact Information

Text:
1. Orientation to College Learning by van Blerkom
2. College Catalog (available on-line)
3. College Planner

If you need accommodations due to a disability, contact Disability Services in

South Hall Room 100, 800732.555.1222

To foster a productive learning environment, the College requires that all students adhere to the Code of Student Conduct which is published in the college catalog and website.

Teaching Statement: Customize

Welcome! I am very excited about the opportunity to work with you this semester. Believing in your ability to perform well, the course requirements will be academically and personally challenging yet accomplishable. It is my expectation that you will grow as a learner this semester via increased knowledge and the ability to think critically, applying and integrating information learned. It is also my hope that you will experience success now and in the future. You can expect this semester to be filled with lively discussions, activities, and challenging assignments. It is important for you to know that support is available to you. To assist you in meeting with success, I am available via office hours, e-mail, and phone. You can also access additional support through peer tutoring (South hall), Counseling and Career Services (Franklin Hall), and the library. Forming in-person and on-line study groups are also wonderful ways to expand your academic support system.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the program or course, students will be able to

1. Discuss and apply study skills and student success research to daily practices as a college student.
2. Identify and critically evaluate information related to success in college.
3. Develop personally meaningful oral, visual, and written summaries of student success concepts.
4. Identify and engage in productive and ethical student behaviors.
5. Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills in groups and connections outside of the classroom.

Course Content Areas:

Getting to Know Middlesex County College: Campus Website, College Catalog, Resources (Professors, Tutors, Counselors, Academic Advisors, Library, Student Activities), College Policies, Curriculum and Degree Structure, Getting Involved

Personal Student Success Factors: Setting Goals, Motivation, Power of a Positive Mindset, Effective Decision Making, Self-Efficacy, Relationships, Career Exploration, Balancing Work and School, Stress Management, Time Management, Professional and Ethical Behavior

Academic Student Success Factors: Academic Integrity, Study Strategies, Memory Skills, Note-Taking Strategies, Identifying and Evaluating Information, Writing Papers, Test Taking Behaviors and Strategies, Presentation Skills

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: To be successful in this course, you will need to participate in class, perform well on exams/quizzes and thoroughly complete a personal portfolio.

Participation: Class participation in discussions and activities is expected. This is particularly important in a student success class. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to complete the personal portfolio project if you are not in class.

Exams/Quizzes- 40% (60 points Can be quizzes/exams or combination)

Personal Portfolio -60%

Each part is worth 10 points for a total of 90 points. (Note: some will be done as in class activities). Some portfolio assignments will be typed and others will be done as informal

oral presentations during class. At the end of the course, you will have a completed portfolio containing the information from all of the assignments.

Part 1: Academic Autobiography

Think back to all of your educational experiences. Describe your journey as a student. Address both in and out of the classroom experiences. What went well? Describe at least 5 successful experiences. What challenges did you encounter? How did you cope with these challenges? What school experiences helped motivate and prepare you for college? What is your personal reaction to your academic journey thus far? How did your first week of college go? What are your 3 favorite memories so far? Is there anything you would do differently? If so, what will you do differently at the start of the next semester? How would your professors describe you? What is your reaction to college so far?

Part 2: Setting Goals and Believing in Yourself

What motivated you to attend college? What do you want to achieve? How will you know that you are successful? Write down one personal and one academic goal. Be specific! Rate your confidence in your ability to successfully achieve these goals. Find and describe evidence to support your thinking (ex. Grades in high school). What predicted success in the Carden, Bryant, and Moss (2004) research study? Based on these research findings, what can you do to gain confidence and get off to a successful start?

Carden, R., Bryant, C., & Moss, R. (2004). Locus of control, text anxiety, academic procrastination, and achievement among college students. *Psychological Reports*, *95*(2), 581-582. Doi:10.2466/PR0.95.6.581-582

Part 3: Making On-Campus Connections

Interview a classmate. Ask them to share what they like about being a college student and what is the most challenging part of being in college. Ask them to share a positive experience or proud moment (ex. Good grade, contribution in class, etc.). Next, visit at least one campus resource (Library, Academic Advising, Counseling and Career Services, Tutoring, Learning Center, Professor) and talk with someone about how they can support you. While there, be sure to pick up a handout or other material and include it in your portfolio. Visit at least one additional resource virtually (website). Summarize how this information can help you reach your goals.

Part 4: Academic Integrity and You

Work in a small group and review the campus policies on academic integrity, plagiarism, cheating, and code of student conduct. Create a handout for the class on why academic integrity is important to your group members and provide specific information on plagiarism, cheating, or code of conduct (choose one topic). Be prepared to verbally share the information with your classmates through a brief, informal presentation.

Part 5: Career Exploration: Identifying Action Steps

Interview someone who has been working in their field for at least 5 years. Ask about their journey. How did they get to where they are today? If they went to college, is their career connected to their college major? Next, identify a career that you are interested in learning more about. Find out what major you should choose at the college if you decided to choose this career path. Find a curriculum sheet that identifies the courses you would need to take in order to graduate with this major. Investigate what additional education or training, if any, would be needed. Make a list of action steps you could take this semester to learn more about this career option as well as other choices.

Part 6: Making Good Decisions

What has been your most challenging decision so far (academic or personal)? How did you handle it? Revisit the goals you identified at the start of the semester. Are you making good decisions that will help you reach your goals (managing time well, asking for help, handing assignments in on time, etc.)? If yes, how is it helping? If not, what decisions can you make today to help you get back on track? Based on the class discussion and reading the article below, identify at least 3 decisions you are making today that could impact your future.

Bohnert, D., & Ross, W. H. (2010). The influence of social networking web sites on the evaluation of job candidates. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 13*(3), 341-347.

Part 7: Doing What Works: Applying Student Success Research to Your Daily Practices

From what you have learned in class and from reading the book, identify and describe what you believe to be the 3 most important study strategies. Evaluate whether you

are using these strategies to your full advantage. Be specific. Identify an action you can take today to engage in better studying behaviors. Read:

McDaniel, M. A., Howard, D. C., and Einstein, G. O. (2009). The read-recite-review study strategy: Effective and portable. *Psychological Science*, *20*(4), 516-522.

Do you currently use this 3R approach? If so, how is it working for you? If not, how could you benefit from using it? How does it compare to the techniques you are currently using?

Part 8: Working Together and Using Information

Work together in a small group to identify a research study on student success (ex. Study strategies that work, managing stress well, the role of friendships, importance of sleep, etc.). Create an interactive Power Point presentation that describes the main finding from the research and how you and your classmates can use this information.

Part 9: Summing it All Up

Package all of the parts together into a portfolio. Write a brief summary of your experience in this class. What was beneficial to you? How can you use what you've learned to help you meet with success in the future?

Extra Credit Opportunity: Getting Involved

Attend at least 2 campus events, one personal/social and one academic. Provide documentation of your attendance at the events. Discuss why you decided to attend these events. What was the benefit of attending? Will attending these events help you reach your goals? Why or why not?

FINAL GRADES:		**Your Grades:**
Exams	40% or 60 points	_____
Personal Portfolio	60% or 90 points	_____
Extra Credit Opportunities	*up to 10 points*	_____
Total Points:	**100% or 150 points**	_____

A = 93 -100% or 139-150 points

A- = 90 – 92% or 135 - 138 points

B+ = 87 - 89% or 130 - 134 points

B = 83 – 86% or 124 - 129 points

B- = 80 - 82% or 120 - 123 points

C+ = 77 – 79% or 116 - 119 points

C = 70 – 76 % or 105 - 115 points

D = 65 – 69% or 97 - 104 points

F = 64% or below or 0-96 points

Suggested Course Outline: All dates are subject to change

Note: Schedule and due dates are suggested- modify so it fits for your class. You'll notice that not all chapters are covered- you may cover additional chapters if you'd like, but we're asking everyone to cover the topics below.

Date	Topic/Activity
Week 1	Course Introduction
	Getting to Know You Exercise
	Chapter 1 Getting Ready to Learn
Week 2	Chapter 2 Goal Setting
	Building Self-confidence and Thinking Positively
	Carden (2004) research article
	Part 1: Academic Autobiography Due

Note: You will be scheduled for a workshop at Counseling and Career Services between week 3-5.

Week 3	Chapter 3 Time Management
	Part 2: Setting Goals and Believing in Yourself Due
Week 4	Making Connections and Campus Resources
Week 5	Professional and Ethical Behaviors and Academic Integrity
	Part 3: Making On-Campus Connections Due
Week 6	Chapter 4: Memory and Learning
	Part 4: Academic Integrity and You Due
Week 7	Registration Preparation, Campus Policies, Curriculum
Week 8	Registration (date to be scheduled), Career Development

Note: Library session will be scheduled during week 9-11.

Week 9	Finding and Evaluating Information and the Value of Research Studies
	Part 5: Career Exploration: Identifying Action Steps
Week 10	Personal Decision Making
	Bohnert & Ross (2010) research study
Week 11	Chapter 5: Note-taking
	Reading: McDaniel, Howard, & Einstein (2009) research on the 3R technique
	Part 6: Making Good Decisions Due
Week 12	Chapter 10 Preparing for Exams
	Part 7: Doing What Works: Applying Student Success Research to Your Daily Practices Due

Week 13	Stress Management
Week 14	Presentations
	Part 8: Working Together and Using Information Due
	Part 9: Summing It All Up Due

Appendix B

Final Exam

Name: _____ ID #: _____
(Please print name clearly)

1. Tips for reducing anxiety and improving performance include:
   a) Keeping a positive mindset before the test by thinking about your successful experiences.
   b) Writing down at least one of your success experiences.
   c) Keeping it in perspective by knowing how much the test or assignment counts towards your final grade.
   d) All of these are effective strategies.

2. One of the best ways to deal with performance anxiety is to:
   a) Take a deep breath.
   b) Prepare well.
   c) Focus on external reasons for success.
   d) Believe you can do well even if you didn't spend much time on the assignment.

3. Which of the following statements is true about academic stress management?
   a) Exercising, eating right and getting a good night's sleep can help reduce anxiety related to academic performance.
   b) Exercising, eating right and getting a good night's sleep are good strategies to deal with general anxiety but do not have much value when it comes to academic stress.
   c) The only effective way to deal with academic stress is to meet with an academic counselor.
   d) Academic stress is a part of college life and there's not much you can do about it.

4. When making your college schedule, it is important to:
    a) Schedule several back to back classes to maximize the use of your time and allow you to have free days to work.
    b) Make independent academic decisions, not seeking help from parents or advisors.
    c) Consider course difficulty level and your other responsibilities.
    d) Place the highest priority on graduating as soon as possible since this is the most important goal.

5. Your friend Sal has circles all over his notebook with many lines connecting the circles. What note-taking method is he using?
    a) Linear
    b) Concept map
    c) Matrix
    d) Outline

6. To get the most out of class time:
    a) Read the chapter and other assigned readings prior to class.
    b) Complete all written assignments prior to class.
    c) Ask questions to clarify and expand on what you have learned.
    d) All of these are good ways to actively participate in class.

7. You are studying for an upcoming test in your biology class. Which method would help you effectively store the key words in your memory?
    a) Rehearsal
    b) Elaboration
    c) Organization or chunking
    d) All of these are effective strategies.

8. When you e-mail your professor,
    a) Always use a salutation such as Dear Professor Smith
    b) Indicate your course code including section number in the subject line and body of the e-mail
    c) Spell and grammar check your e-mail before sending it
    d) All of these are correct

9. Which of the following mistakes is the best one to make?
    a) Sam fails a practice quiz that does not count toward his grade.
    b) Ted fails a quiz in the classroom that counts for 5% of his grade.
    c) Mark doesn't do his part for the presentation and his group members will now get a lower grade.
    d) All of these mistakes are not good to make.

10. Which section of a peer reviewed journal article provides you with a summary of the study?
    a) Abstract
    b) Introduction
    c) Method
    d) Discussion

11. In a peer reviewed journal, what kind of information can you find in the Method section?
    a) Summary of the article
    b) Purpose of the study
    c) Who participated in the study and what the participants had to do
    d) The results

12. Why is a peer-reviewed journal considered a high caliber scholarly source?
    a) It often contains original research
    b) It has been through a rigorous process of approval before being printed
    c) The information in it is explicitly connected to other work in the field
    d) All of these are correct

13. Which of the following statements about career choice is true?
    a) It is very important that students make a career choice before they enter college.
    b) It is best for college students to actively explore career options, especially during the first year, before making a commitment to a career choice
    c) Since the job market is so unstable, it is not important to make a career decision until your senior year.
    d) Students really need to make a career decision by the end of their first semester.

14. What is the first step you should take when trying to find out information about college policies?

a) Go to the college website.
b) Ask a friend or roommate.
c) Ask an upperclassman.
d) None of these are correct

15. Developmental courses:

a) Are credit bearing courses in reading, writing, and math.
b) Are non-credit courses that help build academic skills.
c) Fulfill ("count") graduation requirements.
d) Must be completed by all students.

16. If a math course is a co-requisite to a business course, this means that you

a) Cannot register for the business course until you have successfully completed the math course.
b) Cannot register for the math course until you have successfully completed the business course.
c) Must take the math and business courses within the same year.
d) Must take the math course before or at the same time as the business course.

17. Which of the following grade point averages is typically the minimum needed to be considered in "good academic standing"?

a) 1.0
b) 2.0
c) 3.0
d) 4.0

18. Which of the following statements about encoding memories is true?

a) Multi-sensory learning (i.e. using auditory and visual strategies) can improve memory encoding and learning.
b) It is best to focus on one modality during the encoding stage.
c) While multi-sensory learning has some value, the investment of time to use this strategy will not produce the payoff you desire.
d) Visual strategies are more effective than auditory ones during the encoding process.

19. Which of the following statements about long term memory is true? (learning outcome 2)

a) Long term memory is best during childhood.
b) Most of our general knowledge is stored in long term memory.
c) Long term memories usually fade within 6 months.
d) As you learn more information, you will lose your old memories.

20. Which of the following is NOT an effective strategy to evaluate a website?

a) Determining who posted the information
b) Evaluating whether the information provided is balanced and not biased.
c) Checking for consistency with other scholarly sources.
d) Looking at whether it is on the top of the list in the results of a Google search.

21. Cheating can be defined as

a) Using non-approved materials or resources when completing an assignment or exam
b) Working independently on an assignment
c) Getting assistance from a tutor as needed
d) All of these are correct

22. Which of the following statements is true?

a) Beginning with a strong opening and engaging your audience members are important aspects of an effective presentation.
b) Humor is the most important part of an effective presentation.
c) If you are nervous, it is practically impossible to improve your presentation.
d) Skilled presenters do not need to practice because being spontaneous is important.

23. To avoid plagiarism, you should cite all of the following except:

a) Paraphrase
b) Quotation
c) General knowledge
d) Specific information about the topic

24. Which of the following is not an effective way to show your professor that you are interested and involved during class?

a) Simply sit back and listen. Don't take notes so you can take all of the information in without distractions.
b) Ask relevant questions about the lecture material.
c) Maintain eye contact with the professor.
d) Take notes, writing down key concepts and examples.

25. Which of the following would be considered plagiarism?

a) Putting your name on the work of someone else
b) Changing a few words in the sentence so you didn't copy it word for word
c) Paraphrasing without citing source
d) All of these are correct

26. What does the research say about getting involved with clubs or activities on campus?

a) It is a good idea to get involved in campus activities during your first semester.
b) It is a good idea to get involved, but you should wait until your second semester because it is important to first adjust to the academic demands.
c) Getting involved with clubs or activities is most important during your junior and senior years because it will look good on your resume.
d) None of these answers are true.

27. What are the advantages of getting involved with a club or campus activity?

a) Connection to other students and faculty advisor
b) Opportunity to learn and practice teamwork and leadership skills
c) Looks good on a resume
d) All of these answers are correct

28. Professors typically prefer that you get your information for research papers from:

a) Peer reviewed journals
b) The Internet
c) Encyclopedias
d) None of these are correct

29. Who can serve as an important part of your support system?

a) Family
b) Friends
c) Professors
d) All of these are important for a solid support system.

30. What is considered the basic building block for all relationships?

a) Love
b) Communication
c) Time
d) Self-efficacy

31. Which of the following is true about having relationships with others from diverse backgrounds and disabilities during your college years?

a) It is a wonderful way to enrich your college experience and increase your critical thinking skills.
b) It is probably better to select a college where you know that everyone comes from basically the same background as you so that you fit in and feel comfortable.
c) There is enough to adjust to in college without the added burden of moving past your comfort zone to include people that are different from you.
d) Is a wonderful way to expand your support system but does not impact your cognitive skills.

32. For a college student, which statement best describes the role of parents?

a) As a college student, independence is important so parents no longer play a significant role.
b) Good parental relationships are important, especially while adjusting to college.
c) The importance of the parental relationship decreases.
d) Parent relationships are most important as graduation nears.

33. Which statement best characterizes the role of faculty?

a) In most colleges, student-faculty relationships are primarily focused on research because faculty need student assistance with their research interests.
b) Faculty members do not typically communicate with students outside of the classroom setting.
c) Research has shown that faculty- student connections are linked to student success and more positive self-concepts.
d) All of these statements are true.

34. According to the research by Carden, Bryant, and Moss (2004), what predicted
positive academic outcomes?

a) Having an internal locus of control, believing you can impact your future
b) Having an external locus of control, believing you cannot impact your future because events outside of you is what matters
c) Studying intensely before the final exam
d) Listening in class

35. According to the research conducted by McDaniel, Howard, and Einstein (2009), which reading technique worked the best in terms of effectiveness and being time efficient?

a) Reading and re-reading the passage
b) Taking notes while reading
c) The 3R (Read, Recite, Review) technique
d) All three methods were equally effective.

36. After reading the Bohnert & Ross (2010) study, what advice would you give your friends?

a. Your image on Facebook does not impact your academic performance
b. Your image on Facebook may negatively impact career opportunities.
c. Your Facebook image is not at all connected to work opportunities.
d. Having a Facebook page will limit your career opportunities.

37. Setting goals in college requires that students:

a) Reach for the stars and set very challenging academic goals.
b) Think in terms of goals being specific and measureable and challenging yet realistic.
c) Write down all goals and keep a written record of progress toward goal achievement.
d) All of the statements are true.

38. Long term goals are goals that:

a) You can achieve by the end of the week.
b) Goals that can take some time to achieve, six months or longer.
c) Goals that you can achieve independently.
d) Are always set by others such as family members.

39. Which of the following statements about short term goals is true?

a) Short term goals can pave the way toward achieving your long term goals.
b) Short term goals are more important than long term ones since most students are present focused.
c) Short term goals are typically more global in nature than long term goals.
d) All of the statements are true.

40. Real listening, often referred to as active listening involves:

a) Giving your full attention to the person speaking.
b) Engaging in single tasking behavior.
c) Sending non-verbal messages like maintaining eye contact and nodding to show that you are truly listening.
d) All of these are important to active listening.

41. Which of the following is not typically a good strategy to reach out to a professor?

a) Use e-mail
b) Go to an office hour
c) Speak to your professor before or after class
d) Text your professor

42. Anticipating answers before looking at multiple choice options is a good idea because:

a) It forces you to focus on the question.
b) "A" students are more likely to use this strategy.
c) You will be less likely to fall victim to distracter items.
d) All of these statements are accurate.

43. Changing answers in testing is:

a) Never a good idea, it's best to stick with your original answer.
b) Usually a good idea, especially if you have a good reason for changing the answer.
c) Always recommended.
d) Suggested by student success professionals but not supported by research.

44. What is the first step of writing a good essay response?

a) Making an outline.
b) Making a strong opening statement.
c) Carefully reading the question.
d) Writing down everything you know about the topic.

45. What is the best advice you could give your friend if she wanted to maximize her study time?

a) Use a color coding system to organize your materials.
b) Study with a friend so that you can quiz one another.
c) Read and review your materials over and over again.
d) Link concepts to one another and put the information into your own words.

46. Goals and decisions are related because:

a) Your goals should guide you as you make decisions.
b) Keeping your goals front and center will help you maked effective decisions that match what you hope to accomplish.
c) Making a decision without consideration of your goals may prohibit you from achieving your goals.
d) All of these statements are accurate.

47. Which is the best study environment?

a) Your room
b) The library*
c) Outside when the weather permits
d) College Center

48. Stress is unavoidable in our lives, however, there are many effective tools to help deal with stress including:

a) Joining a fraternity or sorority so that you can attend campus parties and perhaps have a drink or two to relax.
b) Eating right, exercising and getting a good night's sleep.
c) Making sure all your work is done before you go to sleep, even if it means pulling an "all nighter".
d) Eating at fast food restaurants to save time in meal preparation.

49. Which of the following statements about reading college textbooks is true?

a) It is not necessary to read them because most of the information you need to learn is covered by the instructor in class.
b) College textbooks should be read in order to get the most out of them.
c) It is best to read at least one chapter during each study session.
d) It is necessary to become an active reader, using techniques such as note-taking or the 3R method

50. Why do students who complete quizzes perform better academically? (learning outcome 2)

a) Quizzes typically focuses on small amounts of information, forcing students to study in chunks instead of cramming for an exam.
b) Performance on quizzes provides important feedback on study habits and can provide students with an opportunity to learn from their mistakes.
c) Both of these are good reasons.
d) Neither of these are good reasons.

Appendix C

Learning Outcomes and Course Content Areas

Course Learning Outcomes

Students will

1. Discuss and apply study skills and student success research to daily practices as a college student.

2. Identify and critically evaluate information related to success in college.

3. Develop personally meaningful oral, visual, and written summaries of student success

4. Identify and engage in productive and ethical student behaviors.

5. Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills in groups and connections outside of the classroom.

Course Content Areas

Getting to Know the College: campus website, college catalog, resources (professors, tutors, counselors, academic advisors, library, and student activities), college policies, curriculum and degree structure, getting involved

Personal Student Success Factors: setting goals, motivation, power of a positive mindset, effective decision making, self-efficacy, relationships, career exploration, balancing work and school, stress management, time management, professional and ethical behavior

Academic Student Success Factors: academic integrity, study strategies, memory skills, note-taking strategies, identifying and evaluating information, writing papers, test taking behaviors and strategies, presentation skills.

Appendix D

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)

Part A. Motivation

The following questions ask about your motivation for and attitudes about this class.

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

1. In a class like this, I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

2. If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in this course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

3. When I take a test I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

4. I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

5. I believe I will receive an excellent grade in this class.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

6. I'm certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for this course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

7. Getting a good grade in this class is the most satisfying thing for me right now.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

8. When I take a test I think about items on other parts of the test I can't answer.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

9. It is my own fault if I don't learn the material in this course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

10. It is important for me to learn the course material in this class.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

11. The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern in this class is getting a good grade.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

12. I'm confident I can learn the basic concepts taught in this course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

13. If I can, I want to get better grades in this class than most of the other students.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

14. When I take tests I think of the consequences of failing.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

15. I'm confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor in this course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

16. In a class like this, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

17. I am very interested in the content area of this course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

18. If I try hard enough, then I will understand the course material.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

19. I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take an exam.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

20. I'm confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

21. I expect to do well in this class.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

22. The most satisfying thing for me in this course is trying to understand the content as thoroughly as possible.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

23. I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

24. When I have the opportunity in this class, I choose course assignments that I can learn from even if they don't guarantee a good grade.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

25. If I don't understand the course material, it is because I didn't try hard enough.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

26. I like the subject matter of this course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

27. Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

28. I feel my heart beating fast when I take an exam.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

29. I'm certain I can master the skills being taught in this class.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

30. I want to do well in this class because it is important to show my ability to my family, friends, employer, or others.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

31. Considering the difficulty of this course, the teacher, and my skills, I think I will do well in this class.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

Part B. Learning Strategies

The following questions ask about your learning strategies and study skills for this class. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. Answer the questions about how you study in this class as accurately as possible. Use the same scale to answer the remaining questions. If you think the statement is very true of you, circle 7; if a statement is not at all true of you, circle 1. If the statement is more or less true of you, find the number between 1 and 7 that best describes you.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

32. When I study the readings for this course, I outline the material to help me organize my thoughts.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

33. During class time I often miss important points because I'm thinking of other things.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

34. When studying for this course, I often try to explain the material to a classmate or friend.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

35. I usually study in a place where I can concentrate on my course work.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

36. When reading for this course, I make up questions to help focus my reading.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

37. I often feel so lazy or bored when I study for this class that I quit before I finish what I planned to do.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

38. I often find myself questioning things I hear or read in this course to decide if I find them convincing.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

39. When I study for this class, I practice saying the material to myself over and over.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

40. Even if I have trouble learning the material in this class, I try to do the work on my own, without help from anyone.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

41. When I become confused about something I'm reading for this class, I go back and try to figure it out.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

42. When I study for this course, I go through the readings and my class notes and try to find the most important ideas.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

43. I make good use of my study time for this course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

44. If course readings are difficult to understand, I change the way I read the material.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

45. I try to work with other students from this class to complete the course assignments.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

46. When studying for this course, I read my class notes and the course readings over and over again.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

47. When a theory, interpretation, or conclusion is presented in class or in the readings, I try to decide if there is good supporting evidence.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

48. I work hard to do well in this class even if I don't like what we are doing.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

49. I make simple charts, diagrams, or tables to help me organize course material.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

50. When studying for this course, I often set aside time to discuss course material with a group of students from the class.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

51. I treat the course material as a starting point and try to develop my own ideas about it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

52. I find it hard to stick to a study schedule.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

53. When I study for this class, I pull together information from different sources, such as lectures, readings, and discussions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

54. Before I study new course material thoroughly, I often skim it to see how it is organized.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

55. I ask myself questions to make sure I understand the material I have been studying in this class.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

56. I try to change the way I study in order to fit the course requirements and the instructor's teaching style.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

57. I often find that I have been reading for this class but don't know what it was all about.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

58. I ask the instructor to clarify concepts I don't understand well.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

59. I memorize key words to remind me of important concepts in this class.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

60. When course work is difficult, I either give up or only study the easy parts.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

61. I try to think through a topic and decide what I am supposed to learn from it rather than just reading it over when studying for this course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

62. I try to relate ideas in this subject to those in other courses whenever possible.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

63. When I study for this course, I go over my class notes and make an outline of important concepts.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

64. When reading for this class, I try to relate the material to what I already know.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

65. I have a regular place set aside for studying.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

66. I try to play around with ideas of my own related to what I am learning in this course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

67. When I study for this course, I write brief summaries of the main ideas from the readings and my class notes.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

68. When I can't understand the material in this course, I ask another student in this class for help.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

69. I try to understand the material in this class by making connections between the readings and the concepts from the lectures.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

70. I make sure that I keep up with the weekly readings and assignments for this course.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

71. Whenever I read or hear an assertion or conclusion in this class, I think about possible alternatives.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

72. I make lists of important items for this course and memorize the lists.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

73. I attend this class regularly.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

74. Even when course materials are dull and uninteresting, I manage to keep working until I finish.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

75. I try to identify students in this class whom I can ask for help if necessary.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

76. When studying for this course I try to determine which concepts I don't understand well.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

77. I often find that I don't spend very much time on this course because of other activities.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

78. When I study for this class, I set goals for myself in order to direct my activities in each study period.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

79. If I get confused taking notes in class, I make sure I sort it out afterwards.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

80. I rarely find time to review my notes or readings before an exam.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

81. I try to apply ideas from course readings in other class activities such as lecture and discussion.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true of me						*Very true of me*

Appendix E

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Permission for Use

From: Bill McKeachie [mailto:billmck@umich.edu]
Sent: Thu 8/11/2011 11:45 AM
To: Picardo, Alice
Subject: Re: Request for permission

I'll be glad to. Just give me your address with zip code.

Bill

On Aug 11, 2011, at 4:37 AM, Picardo, Alice wrote:

Dr. McKeachie,

The IRB at Rowan University is asking for a statement of permission from the University of Michigan in order for me to use the MSLQ. Would you be able to provide me with a letter on letterhead giving me permission to use the questionnaire?

Please let me know if I there is anything else I need to do in order to get permission to use the questionnaire.

Thank you in advance,

Alice

From: Bill McKeachie [mailto:billmck@umich.edu]
Sent: Thu 7/21/2011 11:46 AM
To: Picardo, Alice
Subject: Re: Request for permission

Dear Alice, You are very welcome to use the MSLQ and to modify it in any way that will meet your needs.

Good luck with your research!

Bill McKeachie

On Jul 21, 2011, at 4:47 AM, Picardo, Alice wrote:

Dear Dr. McKeachie,

Thank you for returning my call yesterday regarding my request to use the Motivated Strategies For Learning Questionnaire in my doctoral research. As we briefly discussed, the topic of my dissertation is a comparison of seven-week, accelerated student success courses to the traditional 14-week offering. I believe that the questionnaire will be perfect since I am looking at success in terms of motivation, learning outcomes, retention, etc.

If you would reply to this email with the permission that you so generously granted over the phone , it would be greatly appreciated. I will be happy to send you the results of my study when it is completed.

Thanks again,

Alice Picardo

Director of the First-Year Experience and the Learning Center

Middlesex County College

Edison, NJ

Appendix F

Survey of Perceived Competencies (SPC)

The following questions ask about your knowledge of student success strategies and resources. Remember there are no right or wrong answers; just answer as accurately as possible. Use the scale below to answer the questions. If you strongly agree with the statement, circle 5; if you strongly disagree with the statement, circle 1; and if you more or less agree with the statement, find the number between 1 and 5 that best represents your ability at this time.

1. I am able to identify student behaviors and campus resources that are connected to student success.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree *Strongly Agree*

2. I am able to apply study techniques to daily practices as a college student.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree *Strongly Agree*

3. I am able to Identify and critically evaluate information related to success in college.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree *Strongly Agree*

4. I have developed oral, visual, and written summaries of student success concepts.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				*Strongly Agree*

5. I am able to demonstrate effective interpersonal skills in groups and connections outside of the classroom.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				*Strongly Agree*

Appendix G

Focus Group Protocol

A two-stage focus group will be used to explore the third and fourth research questions.

- What are the differences, if any, in the levels of motivation and use of effective learning strategies between students enrolled in the seven-week accelerated student success course and the 14-week traditional student success course?
- How will student experiences vary between the seven-week accelerated student success course and the 14-week traditional student success course?

A total of six focus groups, one for each section of the Course, will be conducted during the last week of the course. These focus groups will be conducted during class time. The instructor may be present and may conduct the focus group. Due to the presence of a facilitator and a recorder, focus group participant responses will be kept confidential. Facilitators and recorders will not use participant names during the focus groups. They will verbally assure participants that their comments will be kept confidential and they will stress that participants should respect each other's privacy and anonymity especially outside the focus group setting.

The facilitator will explain the purpose of the focus group, as well as ground rules for all who are participating. For example, ground rules will include directions that all responses are anonymous and the importance of responding one individual at a time.

The recorder will use flip charts to document the participants' responses.

Stage 1

The first stage will seek to answer research question 4, "How will student experiences vary between the 7 and 14-week version?" The format will be a traditional focus group using general, open-ended questions to gather student-generated information regarding their experiences in the different versions of the course.

The facilitator will ask the group the following open-ended questions:

- What were the benefits of the seven/14-week course?
- What were the drawbacks of the seven/14- week student success course?
- Are there any additional comments?

Stage 2

The second stage will address research question 3, "What are the differences, if any, in the levels of motivation and use of effective learning strategies between students enrolled in the seven-week accelerated student success courses and 14-week traditional student success courses?" This stage will target student generated responses on motivation and learning strategies.

The facilitator will ask the group the following questions:

- Tell me about (describe) your levels of motivation at the beginning and end of the course.
- Tell me about the learning strategies that you've learned about and used during the semester.

After the participants have had a chance to respond to all of the questions, the facilitator will go through each recorded item, asking all participants whether that topic was a benefit or drawback. The number of students who agree with each item will also be recorded. This discussion will tell us how many students had a similar experience

with the course. The same process will be used to collect consensus on levels of motivation and use of learning strategies.

At the conclusion of each focus group, the recorder will compile a report within 24 hours. Once all six focus groups and reports have been conducted and written, the reports will be combined into one report for the 7 week version (including all three student success course sections) and one report for the 14 week version (including all three student success course sections).

Appendix H

Interview Protocol

Purpose

This interview protocol was created for two purposes: 1) to collect data and explore the differences, if any, in the levels of motivation and use of effective learning strategies between students enrolled in the seven-week accelerated student success course and the 14-week traditional student success course and 2) the data collected will allow me to collect data and analyze how students' experiences varied, if at all, between the seven-week accelerated and the 14-week traditional student success courses.

Process:

When a student arrives for the interview, each will complete a one-page questionnaire containing questions regarding demographic information including gender, high school graduation date, and ethnic background. Open ended questions focused on influences to attend the College and primary motivating factors are also included. Students will be asked to provide their ID number and name on the questionnaire.

Students will be welcomed and thanked for their participation and I will use an ice breaker to create a supportive atmosphere conducive to a conversation about their experiences in the Course. Each interview will be recorded and transcribed.

Questions:

1. Why did you come to MCC?
2. Who influenced your decision to attend college?

3. How did [blank] influence your decision?
4. Where do you live? (Insert at the appropriate and best time in the interview)
5. When did you decide to attend college? (your earliest memory?)
6. Think back to last semester, since you made the decision to come to College, and this College in particular, have your feelings about being in college changed in any way?
7. Tell me about your experience in high school (if not already discussed).
8. How are your high school experiences impacting what you are doing in college?
9. Did you take Accuplacer®?
    a. Prompt: Encourage conversation about students' experiences with Accuplacer®. For example, can you talk about placing into [blank]? Prompt for detail about experiences and knowledge of the test.

       Note: Reflect back, do not lead.
10. What courses did you take last semester? This semester?
11. Do you receive financial aid?
12. What is your major/career?
13. Tell me about your experiences in the student success course.
    a. Prompt: How was it helpful or not?
    b. Prompt with observation or questions etc.
    c. REFLECT their story back to them – prompt for clarification, inquire about potential inconsistencies, and confirm your understanding.

14. Let's talk about that motivation.

    a. Prompt for specifics: explain what motivates you to attend, do well, finish?

    b. Prompt with observation or questions etc.

15. What were the highs and lows of the student success course?

16. You were in 7-week course…. or …You were in the 14-week course…

    a. Please describe your experiences in the class in terms of the timeframe.

    b. For those in accelerated course modality, compare taking an accelerated course with a traditional course.

        i. Which do you prefer and why?

        ii. Did you learn as well in the 7 as in the 14? Please give an example of how you learned in both.

        iii. Prompt with observations or questions, reflect etc.

    c. For students in the accelerated sections: What if the subject matter was different and there was an accelerated course, for example, in English, would you take that? Why?

        i. Look for detail and prompt with observation or questions.

17. Use a different approach for traditional sections: You were in 14 week courses.

    a. Are you aware that there are accelerated courses?

        i. That is, courses that cover the same amount of material, but in a shorter time frame? In 7 weeks for example…

18. How did you approach the 7 week class vs. the 14 week class?

19. How did the accelerated/traditional course effect your motivation?

20. Explore connections.
    a. Did you make friends in the Course?
    b. Did you get to see them know other students in or out of the course? “It sounds like [fill in the blank].” Is that correct?
    c. Do you study with them?
21. What were the high and lows of the semester?
    a. Prompt with observation or questions for detail, detail, detail. Clarify for understanding
22. In the focus groups, students said that the course helped them to learn to use resources. If this was true for you, how so?
23. What about getting to know the professor? For students in accelerated sections: Was there a difference in how this happened between the traditional and accelerated courses?
24. Do you feel as if you belong at MCC?
    a. Prompt with observation or questions such as “You feel like you fit?” or “it sounds as if you do not feel as if you belong here…”
    b. How does that feeling contribute to your motivation to continue?
        i. Have you always felt this was or have you had different feelings about your place here at the College?
        ii. Has it changed in any way or has it be a consistent feeling?
        iii. Was there anything in particular, or what might have helped you feel a part of things sooner…?

25. Who helped you feel connected to the college?
    a. Was it a resources like tutoring rather than a person? Or both?
    b. How did that happen?
26. What was the most significant change you went through (in the Course) (the first semester)?
    a. Prompt: Quickly review conversations and go back to clarify, etc. Listen for motivation
    b. Prompt about motivation and the kind of….
27. Let's talk about the learning strategies…
    a. How have you used learning strategies this semester?
    b. Where did you learn them?
    c. What role did the student success course play?
    d. Would it be true to say that your use of learning strategies are very different before and after the first semester?
    e. What two learning strategies do you use the most? How do you study?
    f. How do you study for tests? How do you study in the Course? Other courses, mention them
28. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for taking time out of your busy day for this interview and helping me earn my Ed.D

Appendix I

Letter of Informed Consent (Minors)

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Alice Picardo and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Department at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ. I will be conducting a research project at Middlesex County College as part of my doctoral dissertation on the differences between student success courses offered in seven weeks and those offered over a traditional, 14 –week semester. Your child is enrolled in one of the sections that has been identified for this study, and I am requesting permission for them to participate in this research. The purpose of this study is to explore the usefulness of offering accelerated student success courses.

Each student will complete the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSQL) which will be administered at the beginning of the semester and when the class ends. During the last week of the class, they will also complete a survey about what they have learned in the course and they will participate in an in-class focus group about their experiences in the course. All focus groups, questionnaires, surveys will be conducted during class time. Information on grades and retention will be reported without students' names or ID numbers. The professor will not be present for the focus group.

Your decision about whether or not to allow your child to participate in the study will have absolutely no effect on your child's grade in the class. Information obtained from this study may be used for publication or education but with no identifying information. At the conclusion of this research, a summary of the results will be made available to all interested parents.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact Alice Picardo at APicardo@middlesexcc.edu or 732-516-7820. My office is located at Middlesex County College, 2600 Woodbridge Ave. Edison, NJ, in the Technical Services Center, Rm. 203B.

"Subject's Initials_____"

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Associate Provost for Research at:

Rowan University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Office of Research

201 Mullica Hill Road

Glassboro, NJ 08028-1701

Telephone: 856-256-5150

Sincerely,

Alice L. Picardo

Please indicate whether or not you wish to have your child participate in this study by checking the appropriate statement below. Please ask your child to return this letter to their student success instructor by the next class.

____ I grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

____ I do not grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

_____ _____

(Parent/ Guardian Signature) (Date)

Appendix J

Letter of Informed Consent (over 18 years of age)

Dear _____,

The purpose of this study is to explore the usefulness of offering accelerated student success courses. As part of my study, students are being asked to participate in the following activities which will be conducted during the student success course.

Please review the statements below to acknowledge your understanding.

- I understand that I will be required to complete the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) at the beginning and end of the course.
- At the completion of this course, I understand that I will complete a survey about what I have learned in this course.
- At the completion of this course, I understand that I will participate in an in-class focus group about my experiences in this class. The professor will not be present for the focus group and the results will be presented with no identifying information.
- My participation in the study should not exceed three in-class hours during the fall 2011semester.
- I understand that my responses will be kept confidential. The answers I provide will not be shared with my professor.
- I understand the GPA and retention information will be reported with pseudonyms only. Actual student names will not be used.
- I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used for publication or education provided that I am not identified and my name is not used.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without negative consequences. All of the information and the results will be presented with no identifying information**.** The answers you provide will not be shared with your professor and will only be accessible to the researcher. If you have any questions about this study, you may contact Alice L. Picardo at APicardo@middlesexcc.edu or 732-516-7820. My office is located in the Technical Services Center, Rm. 203B.

"Subject's Initials _____"

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Associate Provost for Research at:: *Rowan University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects*, Office of Research, 201 Mullica Hill Road, Glassboro, NJ 08028-1701.

I understand the nature of this study entitled "Exploring the Effectiveness of an Accelerated Student Success Course" and agree to participate.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator Date

Appendix K

Demographic Information Sheet

Please take a moment to complete the following questionnaire. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

All of the information and the results will be presented with no identifying information.

1. Gender (circle one) Male Female

2. What year did you graduate from high school? _____

3. Ethnic Background (Circle One):

- White (Non-Hispanic)
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other
- Hispanic
- Black

4. How many hours per week do you work? _____
   or
   I did not work during the fall semester. _____

5. Who or what influenced you to attend the College?

_____

_____.

6. What is your primary motivation for attending the College?

_____

_____.

7. How many hour per week did you study for SSD 101? _____

8. How many hours per week did you study in general? _____

Name_____ ID#_____

Appendix L

Magnitude Coding

Magnitude Coding - Levels of Cultural Capital

Code	Age: Decision to attend College[1]	High School Experience[3]	College Placement Test (CPT) Awareness
0	Very Late	-	None
1	Late	Negative	Some
2	Middle Range	Mixed	Minimal
3	Very Early	Positive	Moderate
4	Pre-Determined	-	Maximum

Note. [1]Pre-determined = student cannot remember not knowing or students say that parents would accept nothing less than attending college; Very Early = elementary school or earlier; Middle Range = grades 6-8 grades; Late = grades 9 -12, and Very late = student did not considered college attendance following high school graduation

[2]Coding based on participant interviews

[3]Maximum = Student is able to give examples of why the college placement test was important and prepared for the test; Moderate = Student possessed some awareness of college placement test and may have prepared for it in high school; Minimum = Student is aware but unprepared to take the test; little or no preparation beforehand; Some = little awareness other than the knowledge that a test is required by the College; None = no knowledge that a placement test exists