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Impact of Freshman Academy Experiences on Student Academic Intrinsic Motivation

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Impact of Freshman Academy Experiences on Student Academic Intrinsic Motivation

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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Shirley C. Sealy under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

Impact of Freshman Academy Experiences on Student Academic Intrinsic Motivation
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This dissertation was designed to explore the transition of a group of ninth-grade students into a large rural upstate South Carolina high school. The primary focus was to ascertain the students' levels of academic intrinsic motivation toward English, math, science, history, and their general orientation toward school learning, and to explore those freshman academy experiences that the students felt most directly impacted these attributes. The freshman academy at this school was implemented in 2006 as a district initiative to strengthen the transition to high school and ultimately increase the graduation rate.

This was a mixed methods case study in which the researcher sought to gain insight into the students' academic intrinsic motivation toward subject areas as well as their general motivational orientation. Data were measured quantitatively by administering the Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (CAIMI) to a group of current ninth graders enrolled in the freshman academy at a South Carolina high school.

The students' scale scores on the CAIMI measured their levels of motivation across five subscales—English, math, science, history, and general orientation toward school learning. Qualitatively, the researcher conducted three student focus groups, four teacher interviews (one teacher from each of the four subject areas), and an administrator interview with the assistant principal in charge of the freshman academy. Additionally, the researcher conducted a review of the written descriptions of the freshman academy.

The results from this study led the researcher to conclude that the students, teachers, and administrator perceived the overall impacts of the freshman academy on ninth-grade transition as positive and supportive, thus easing the transitional challenges of its students from middle school to high school. All participant categories perceived the academy's structure and program design to have diminished the possible deleterious effects of the academic, procedural, and social challenges experienced by the students as they transitioned to high school. All participant categories perceived the teachers to be primary motivational sources for their students. Students indicated that, although this impact had been mostly positive for them as learners, in some cases, the teachers' impact had been to decrease their desire to learn. CAIMI subscale scores were low in all four subject areas, as well as toward school learning in general. This indicated a possible disconnect between what the teachers did to motivate their students to learn, and what the students perceived as motivating. The researcher's recommendations were for the school to assess the motivation levels of their incoming freshmen and to use this data to guide them in design and implementation of their instructional programs and schedules. In addition, the school should develop and implement professional development on intrinsic motivation theory and practical implications for the classroom teachers.

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Introduction	1
Problem Statement	6
Purpose	7
Research Questions	11
Researcher's Role	12
Significance	12
Chapter 2: Literature Review	14
Locality of Learning Incentives	27
Challenges of High School Transition	34
Transforming High Schools	40
Case Study	47
Summary	48
Chapter 3: Methodology	51
Introduction	51
Participants	52
Research Design	52
Instruments, Procedures, and Data Collection	55
Delimitations	65
Limitations	65
Summary	66
Chapter 4: Findings	67
Description of Community, School, and Freshman Academy	67
Results	70
Description of the Sample	71
Descriptive Statistics of the CAIMI Raw Scores	73
Summary of Quantitative Data	85
Focus Group and Individual Interviews	86
Academic, Procedural, and Social Challenges Encountered	92
Summary of Freshman Academy Transition	98
Research Question 1	102
Research Question 2	105
Research Question 3	108
Research Question 4	110
Summary	113
Research Question 5	115
Motivation for Challenging/Difficult Assignments	120
Students' Perceptions of Freshman Academy Teachers	123
Do Freshman Academy Teachers Work and Plan Together?	127
Do Freshman Academy Teachers Discuss Their Students?	129
Summary of Student Focus Group Interviews	130
Teacher and Administrator Interviews	131
Understanding of Freshman Academy	132

Summary of Focus Groups and Interviews....155
Freshman Academy in Written Form....157
Chapter 5: Conclusions, Discussions, and Recommendations....160
Introduction....160
Summary of the Study....162
Interpretation and Discussion of Results....163
Limitations....183
Summary of Findings....183
References....185
Appendices
A Informed District Consent....208
B Student Permission Letter....210
C Permission to Use CAIMI-HS....212
D Scoring CAIMI/Profile Report Form....215
E CAIMI Percentiles and Normalized T-Scores....217
F Sample CAIMI Completed Profile Report Form....220
G Student Focus Group Questions....222
H Teacher Interview Questions....224
I Administrator Interview Questions....226
J Staff Permission Letter....228
K Freshman Academy Website....230
L Freshman Survival Guide....233
Tables
1 Upstate South Carolina High School Total Student Ethnicity Demographics....9
2 Upstate South Carolina High School Ninth-Grade Student Ethnicity Demographics....10
3 Upstate South Carolina High School Report Card Data: 2006-2011....11
4 Ethnic Makeup of Student Sample....71
5 Cross-Tabulation of Student Demographic Variables....72
6 Descriptive Statistics for CAIMI Raw Scores....79
7 Correlations Between CAIMI Raw Scores....81
8 Overlapping Motivation Scores....83
9 Counts of Different Motivation Scores....84
10 Cross-Tabulation of Motivation Scores....85
11 Motivating Experiences to Learn English....103
12 Motivating Experiences to Learn Math....105
13 Experiences that Decreased Motivation to Learn Math....107
14 Motivating Experiences to Learn Science....108
15 Experiences that Decreased Motivation to Learn Science....110
16 Motivating Experiences to Learn History....111
17 Experiences that Decreased Motivation to Learn History....113
18 Description of Teachers Interviewed....132
19 Teacher and Administrator Understanding of Freshman Academy....133
20 Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of Freshman Academy Transition....135
21 Teacher and Administrator Roles....142
22 Statistical Analysis of Motivation Factors....146

Figures

1 English CAIMI Raw Scores....74
2 Math CAIMI Raw Scores....75
3 Science CAIMI Raw Scores....76
4 History CAIMI Raw Scores....77
5 General CAIMI Raw Scores....78
7 How Do You Know You're in a Freshman Academy?....89
8 How is the Freshman Academy Different?....91
9 Ninth-Grade Academic Transition Experience....93
10 Ninth-Grade Procedural Transition Experience....95
11 Ninth-Grade Social Transition Experience....97
12 Freshman Academy Made High School Transition Easier....99
13 Freshman Academy Not Made High School Transition Easier....100
14 Motivation to Learn, by Subject Area....102
15 Reasons Behind Student Motivation to Learn Subjects....114
16 Experiences that Decreased Student Motivation to Learn Subjects....115
17 Motivating Experiences—General Orientation toward School Learning....116
18 Motivation to Complete Challenging/Difficult Assignments....120
19 Do Your Freshman Academy Teachers Care About You?....124
20 How Do You Know Your Freshman Academy Teachers Care About You?....125
21 Do Academy Teachers Work Together to Plan Lessons?....128

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Educators today face numerous challenges because students are often unprepared to stay on track academically in order to graduate. At least one in five students drops out of high school (Hurst, Kelly, & Princiotta, 2004). Each year, only about three-quarters of students graduate on time, leaving nearly a million students who fail to do so, and among 18-24 year olds, an estimated 4.9 million lack a high school diploma (Laird, Cataldi, Ramani, & Chapman, 2008). The high school dropout problem is not only large, but it is also growing. Since the high school graduation rate peaked at around 80% in the late 1960s, it has dropped four to five percentage points, and this decline has contributed to the recent drop-off in college attendance, particularly among males (Heckman & LaFontaine, 2007). Individuals who drop out of school will earn less money during their lifetimes and are more likely to be unemployed, incarcerated, in need of public assistance, and in poor health (Belfield & Levin, 2007). They are more likely to be single parents and to have children who will also drop out of high school (Martin & Halperin, 2006). In 2005, the average annual income for a high school dropout was $17,290, compared with $26,933 for a high school graduate (Balfanz, Fox, Bridgeland, & McNaught, 2009). Additionally, these individuals are less healthy than high school graduates; on average, a high school graduate will live 6 to 9 years longer than a dropout (Amos, 2008).

The high school dropout problem affects all states; no state has higher than an 88% graduation rate, and 10 states have rates below 66% (Laird et al., 2008). These problems come with a high price tag for all communities, states, and the nation. Each dropout costs the public sector $209,100 over a lifetime as a result of reduced tax

payments, increased public health and welfare costs, and the likelihood of criminal behavior (Levin, Belfield, Muennig, & Rouse, 2007). If dropouts from the class of 2007 had graduated, the U.S. economy would see an additional $329 billion in income during these students' lifetimes (Balfanz et al., 2009). Furthermore, with the nation ranking 20 out of 28 among industrialized democracies on high school graduation rates, the dropout problem is a substantial drag on the nation's economic competiveness (Princiotta & Reyna, 2009). Unfortunately, the increase in the dropout rate has occurred at a time when there seems to be such a large emphasis on getting not only a high school diploma, but also a college degree, in order to better compete in a global world (Neild, Balfanz, & Herzog, 2007). This problem is not just economic, however; dropouts are less likely than high school graduates to vote, volunteer, and contribute to their communities (Harris, 2009). One of six objectives identified by the president and nation's governors in *Goals 2000 Educate America Act* was to increase the high school graduation rate to 90% (Goals 2000). Unfortunately, although the year 2000 has come and gone, the goal has not been met, and the problem of students failing to successfully complete secondary school remains unsolved (Fulk, 2003). In 2001, the national graduation rate was 75% with only about half of the African Americans and Latinos making it to graduation day in the traditional amount of time (Thornburgh, 2006).

To effectively address this problem, schools need to know who drops out and why. The 2004 Dropout Prevention Act identifies variables that may indicate potential dropouts. These include poor attendance, low grade point average, low standardized test scores, low reading and math scores, special program placement, grade retention, discipline referrals and suspensions, low socioeconomic status, frequent school moves, teen parenthood, and certain kinds of family status, such as coming from a single-parent

family (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Research studies by Stillwell (2009) indicate that one of the more obvious reasons for dropping out is academic failure, which involves failing courses or high school exit exams. Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, and Thompson (2004) cited reasons for dropping out that include problematic behaviors inside or outside of school that interfere with learning, and the result of life events such as becoming pregnant, getting a job, or caring for an ill family member. Sparks, Johnson, and Akos (2010) conducted a study in a large southeastern U.S. school district in an attempt to determine which academic and behavioral variables would best predict dropping out. Results of their research, with ninth graders as subjects, indicate that the three largest determinants of dropping out are being retained in any grade, kindergarten through ninth grade, scoring below grade level on the North Carolina end-of-grade math test in eighth grade or failing Algebra I, and receiving a long-term suspension. Demographic factors, however, are not destiny. In fact, they are by no means the most important indicator of dropping out. Once attendance, behavioral, and academic factors are considered, demographics explain little, if any, variation in dropout rates (Balfanz & Legters, 2004).

High school dropouts that are interviewed are far more likely to say they left school because they were unmotivated, not challenged enough, or overwhelmed by troubles outside of school than because they were failing academically (Gewertz, 2006). Many dropouts point to disinterest in school as a key reason for missing classes and ultimately leaving school. Almost half of the dropouts surveyed in a national poll indicated that the main reason they left school was because classes were not interesting (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morrison, 2006). Additionally, a survey of 1,879 students listed in Who's Who Among American High School Students, three-fourths of whom had A

averages, indicated that their level of motivation was not particularly high. More than half of them reported that they studied no more than 7 hours each week, and three-fourths of them indicated that they would not increase their study time even if a proposed national achievement test became a reality (Renchler, 1992). Educational research clearly indicates that motivation is a key factor in promoting academic success, and Sanacore (2008) stressed that intrinsic motivation is especially important for developing autonomous learners. To reduce dropout rates, schools are obviously faced with the challenges of reform efforts that are designed to help turn reluctant learners into inspired learners.

The dropout crisis is especially acute during the first year of high school, evidenced by a bulge in ninth-grade enrollments and a dip in tenth-grade enrollments. More students fail ninth grade than any other grade and remain ninth-grade students for multiple years. Disproportionate numbers of students fail to be promoted to or drop out before tenth grade (Gray, Sable, Dalton, & Sietsema, 2006). In high schools with large low-income student populations, up to 40% of students drop out after ninth grade (Cohen & Smerdon, 2009). Ninth-grade students exhibit higher rates of failure in courses, more declines in test scores, and more behavioral problems than students in all other grade levels (Smith, 2006). Hertzog and Morgan (1998) and Roderick and Camburn (1999) contend that course failures, suspension and expulsion rates, and high school dropout rates are higher in the ninth grade than any other high school grade levels. A number of educational researchers have identified ninth grade as the pivotal point for intervention in the educational process to increase motivation and prevent dropping out (Akos, 2004; Ascher, 2006; Reents, 2002).

The ninth-grade year is often targeted as the make or break year for completing

high school. Transferring to a new school creates a transition period that is frequently marked by declining academic performance, increased absences, and increased behavior disturbances. These factors put freshman more *at risk* than any other school-aged group (Fritzer & Herbst, 1996). In fact, students who fail to make a smooth transition to high school dropout as early as the end of ninth grade (Cooper & Liou, 2007). Substantial academic and social differences between middle school and high school, coupled with the adolescent age of the ninth-grade students, contribute to the transition difficulties. Ninth graders are also introduced to new stresses and different expectations for which they are often not prepared (Smith, Akos, Lim, & Wiley, 2008).

Research on school reform indicates that the dropout problem could stem from the structure of traditional high schools and lack of personalization—"students are shuffled to several classes a day and teachers see more than 100 students in seven hours" (Srofe, 2009, p. 4). Pantleo (1992) reported a decline in grades and attendance resulting in an increase in the number of failures in the ninth grade (as cited in Chapman & Sawyer, 2001). Understanding the problem of high school dropouts requires looking beyond the limited scope of individual student characteristics to include school factors in students' decisions to stay in or leave school (Knesting, 2008). Attention needs to be given to the influence that schools, their organization, leadership, and teachers may have on a student's decision to stay in or drop out of school (Rumberger, 1987). Taking the initiative to change the pattern of failure by thinking outside the traditional educational box is essential to change the pattern (Marshall, 2003, p. 8). Cohen and Smerdon (2009) argued that every high school reform initiative should include a focus on the middle to high school transition and successfully moving students through ninth grade.

Freshman academies have emerged as a popular reform effort for high schools as

they attempt to increase their graduation rates and better prepare their graduates for the world beyond high school. The concept of a freshman academy is relatively simple. The academy operates as an autonomous program under the direction of the central office or the host school's principal. The academy has its own culture, program, school space, and may use common space with the host school. Ideally, students are grouped together to take core subjects with the same group of teachers, thus increasing the support students receive from teachers, peers, and other adults. Academy teaming organizes groups of teachers across departments so teachers share the same students rather than the same subjects (Oxley, 2005). The freshman academy operates under the philosophy that smaller groups will behave and achieve at higher levels of performance, similar to that of students attending smaller high schools (Cotton, 2001).

Problem Statement

Although official estimates vary, a growing consensus has emerged that approximately one-third of today's students are leaving high school before earning a diploma (Barton, 2005). "With a national graduation rate of 71 percent, millions of young people are out of school and grossly ill-equipped to compete in the 21st century workforce and economy" (Association of Career and Technical Education [ACTE], 2006, p. 2). "Transition is the psychological process that people go through to come to terms with the new situation" (Bridges, 1991, p. 3), and in the world of K-12 education, youngsters face several critical transitions that either make them or break them, and the ninth-grade year is one of those critical times (Morton, 2005). Reents (2002) posited that ninth grade has been identified as the most critical point to intervene and prevent students from losing motivation, failing, and dropping out of school, adding that entering ninth grade can be one of the most emotionally difficult, most academically challenging times in children's

lives. With the realization of the strong relationship between student motivation and academic success comes the responsibility for today's high schools to closely examine their programs' capacities to motivate their student learners.

With the current focus on high school reform as a means to increase graduation rates, many districts are investing substantial time and resources in creating freshman academies. Researchers such as Dewees (1999) and Ready, Lee, and Welner (2004) support the conclusion that studies are either nonexistent or limited as to the effectiveness of this reform model. Because of the strong link between student intrinsic motivation and academic success, the need exists to research the relative impact that freshman academy experiences may have on student intrinsic motivation to learn.

Educational research supports that intrinsic motivation is among the most powerful determinants of students' success or failure in school (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Reeve, 1996; Ryan & Connell, 1989). Intrinsic motivation has been defined as (a) participation in an activity purely out of curiosity, that is from a need to know more about something (Gottfried, 1983); (b) the desire to engage in an activity purely for the sake of participating in and completing a task (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991); and (c) the desire to contribute (Mills, 1991). Gottfried (1985), developer of the Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (CAIMI), stressed the importance for schools to understand that intrinsic motivation has been cited as an important educational goal, and because intrinsic motivation is a significant construct in children's education, the school learning environment should foster this important motive.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to research freshman academy experiences of the ninth graders currently enrolled at Upstate South Carolina High School (pseudonym) and

to determine their perceptions of how these experiences impacted their intrinsic motivation to learn English, math, science, and history, and their general orientation toward school learning. This study also sought to determine the teachers' and administrator's perceptions of how the freshman academy impacted the students' motivation to learn and how the academy helped transition its students from middle to high school.

The freshman academy at this school was implemented in 2006 as a district initiative to strengthen the transition to high school and ultimately increase its graduation rate (Anonymous, personal communication, September, 2011). The school district implemented a freshman academy program with extended time for math and English for all ninth and tenth graders in 2003-2004, but it was not until 2006-2007 that a facility was built to house the ninth graders separately from the main building. As this research examined current freshmen at the school and their individual experiences during the 2011-2012 school year related to their intrinsic motivation to learn, data presented reflects only that of the academy as a separate facility. Several researchers have conducted research in this academy to examine graduation rate trends since 2003-2004 (McCraw, 2010; Wooten, 2006). Additionally, a research case study was conducted in this academy in 2011 that examined student self-efficacy (Wilson, 2011). However, no studies had been conducted in this academy that examined the impact of freshman academy experiences on the students' motivation to learn.

According to student data gathered from the Power School database, the study school has an ethnically diverse population of 2,021 students, representing 12 different ethnic subgroups (Table 1).

Table 1

Upstate South Carolina High School Total Student Ethnicity Demographics

Ethnicity Subgroup	# of Students	Percentage of Total Population (%)
Asian Male	8	0.40
Asian Female	6	0.30
African American Male	294	14.55
African American Female	315	15.59
Hispanic Latino Male	54	2.67
Hispanic Latino Female	46	2.28
American Indian Male	0	0
American Indian Female	1	0.05
2 or More Races Male	2	0.09
2 or More Races Female	6	0.30
White Male	642	31.8
White Female	647	32.0
Total Male	1,000	49.5
Total Female	1,021	50.5
Total Students	2,021	100

The current freshman class has a similarly diverse population of 644 students, representing 11 different ethnic subgroups (Table 2).

Table 2

Upstate South Carolina High School Ninth-Grade Student Ethnicity Demographics

Ethnicity Subgroup	# of Students	Percentage of Total Population (%)
Asian Male	3	0.47
Asian Female	2	0.31
African American Male	97	15.1
African American Female	96	14.9
Hispanic Latino Male	16	2.48
Hispanic Latino Female	11	1.71
American Indian Male	0	0
American Indian Female	1	0.16
2 or More Races Male	2	0.31
2 or More Races Female	6	0.93
White Male	214	33.2
White Female	196	30.4
Total Male	332	51.6
Total Female	312	48.4
Total Students	644	100

Performance values in Upstate South Carolina High School's achievement in the areas of adequate yearly progress (AYP), graduation rates, retention rates, older than usual for graduation rates, and dropout rates are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Upstate South Carolina High School School Report Card Data: 2006-2011

Year	AYP	Graduation Rate	Retention Rate	Older than Usual for Grade	Dropout Rate
2006	No	71.3%	8.6%	6.8%	3.0%
2007	No	62.8%	9.1%	2.9%	3.9%
2008	Yes	77.1%	6.5%	5.5%	9.6%
2009	No	78.1%	6.7%	7.1%	6.3%
2010	No	77.0%	6.9%	8.1%	2.5%
2011	No	78.8%	5.2%	6.5%	0.9%

Note: AYP is defined as adequate yearly progress.

Table 3 illustrates that since 2006, the only year that this school has met AYP is 2008, and during that same year, its dropout rate was the highest, at 9.6%. This table also shows that for the years 2006-2011, this school had its highest graduation rate, lowest retention rate, and lowest dropout rate in 2011.

Research Questions

Based on a review of the literature and the purpose of this case study, the following guiding research questions were posed.

1. How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn English?

2. How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn math?

3. How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn science?

4. How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn history?

5. How do freshman academy experiences impact student general orientation toward school learning?

Researcher's Role

The researcher is principal at a middle school located in the same school district as the study high school; this middle school, along with two other middle schools, feeds into the study high school. The researcher has a positive, professional relationship with the principals and assistant principals at the high school, having worked in the same district with all of them for at least 5 years. The relationships are mutually supportive and respectful. It is believed that these positive relationships benefitted the study.

Significance

In spite of the popularity of freshman academies as high school reform efforts, the impact of such freshman academies on student intrinsic motivation to learn is limited, thus providing the impetus for this study. The intent of this study was to increase teachers' and administrators' knowledge of students' intrinsic motivation to learn and how that motivation may be impacted by school experiences. This investigation will further the previous research on student motivation to learn while closely examining freshman academy experiences. Since the freshman academy is a relatively new concept for high school reform, this examination will allow school districts to have a clearer understanding of the impacts of freshman academies on the students they are designed to serve. This information should also prove useful for school districts when trying to decide

whether or not to continue or implement the freshman academy concept as a means for increasing their graduation rates. Additionally, the results should be of significance to Upstate South Carolina High School when considering adaptations to their current freshman academy program in order to best meet the needs of their students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to fully understand freshman academies as a reform effort to decrease dropout rates and such academies' relative impacts on student academic intrinsic motivation, this chapter begins with a discussion of the research related to the nature and needs of the adolescent learner. The transition to high school is explored as it relates to the developing adolescent and the psychological process and changes that are traditionally experienced by ninth-grade students. Next, a research framework for academic intrinsic motivation is presented that includes the following themes: operational definitions; theoretical conceptualizations; orientations; related educational theories and models; and the history of intrinsic motivation research. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research that examines challenges of high school transition, call for high school reform, and the relative implications of academic intrinsic motivation for freshman academies. Additionally, a subsection explaining the rationale for case study methodology is included.

Adolescent development and high school transition. Adolescence is a difficult time for almost all children, characterized by rapid social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development (Letgers & Kerr, 2001). Puberty plays a significant role in the transition to high school, confounding physical and chemical changes with social and emotional changes. On the cusp of adulthood, children in their early teens begin the quest for independence yet they continue to need adult guidance and support (Letgers & Kerr, 2001). In their research study, Alexander and George (1981) found that adolescents tend to place great importance on autonomy and a sense of personal self-worth, but also experience an intense need for a sense of belonging and personal relationships with both peers and adults. Often, students' hormonal changes serve to exaggerate the uncertainty

of high school transition, making the transition that much more challenging. Although many students eventually find that some of their fears about high school are unfounded, the initial social and emotional reactions can be problematic if they are not appropriately addressed (Cohen & Smerdon, 2009).

Adolescent development is a critical factor in how ninth graders make the transition to high school. It is the second most rapid period of human maturation (Checkley, 2004). Issues in self-esteem, developmental changes, and the effects of physical, social, and intellectual change with adolescence add to environmental differences as major changes that 14-year olds will experience during their ninth-grade year (Reents, 2002). Teenagers handle this period of human development differently. Mizelle (1999) found that as young adolescents transition to high school, many view themselves more negatively and experience an increased need for friendships.

Adolescents are challenged to adjust to a new sense of self. Students are going through rapid physical changes and often become focused on their physical appearance (Potter, Schlisky, Stevenson, & Drawdy, 2001). Many of the developmental tasks begun in middle school culminate in high school. With regard to physical maturation, late-maturing boys enter puberty, and many of the pubertal changes are completed for other students. Students need to adjust to a new physical self (Potter et al., 2001). Along with physical maturity comes new sexual concerns, and high school students, in particular, need to learn to manage their sexuality and adopt a personal value system (Potter et al., 2001) For ninth graders, the pressure of making a school transition is amplified by the developmental struggles they are facing as adolescents, leading to a greater chance for negative outcomes (Legters & Kerr, 2001).

Psychological process and changes encountered. Many ninth graders are not

prepared for the *psychological process* of the new situation they will face, nor the sweeping changes that they will experience as they enter high school and begin the last leg of their educational journey in their K-12 experience (Mortin, 2005). Kerr (2001) identified the following:

> Three facets of the high school environment present specific challenges for transitioning students. First, students become part of a larger, more diverse student body in which they can quickly get lost in and lose their identities. Second, the students face for the first time the "credits earned" promotion system. No longer can they just be promoted from grade to grade as they were in elementary and middle school. Third, the social structure in high school is dramatically different. Referred to as the "top dog" phenomenon, ninth graders go from being the oldest, most experienced students in the middle school to the youngest, newest members of the high school population. The change from "top dog" status to "bottom dog" may cause greater feelings of anonymity and isolation, thus hindering students' abilities to become integrated into their new school community. (p. 121)

Young adolescents reveal that when entering high school they look forward to having more choices and making new and more friends; however, they are also concerned about being picked on and teased by older students, having harder work, making lower grades, and getting lost in a larger, unfamiliar school (Mizelle, 1999). Adolescents during this critical developmental stage—the transition to adult life—require above all a sense of belonging and control over their new environment, and it appears that although the factors affecting dropout rates are numerous and complex, these young adults are most concerned about and could most benefit from dependable relationships

with adults, particularly at school (Patterson, Beltyukova, Berman, & Francis, 2007). Jett, Pulling, and Ross (1994) contended that high schools need to recognize that 13- and 14-year-old students have different physical, social, and emotional needs than do older high school students. Walsh (2002) stated that if students have been somewhat disenchanted with school thus far, their experiences in the ninth grade may be a determining factor in whether they graduate from high school.

A watershed study conducted by the National Association of Secondary Principals (NASSP) in 1985 by two leading experts in middle schools at that time, John Lounsbury and Howard Johnston, examined the transition of ninth graders. The study, *How Fares the Ninth Grade*, examined ninth graders in 48 states and the District of Columbia and revealed a disconnecting mismatch between school policies and practices and 14-year-olds' developmental needs (Lounsbury & Johnston, 1985). The following factors were found to be present in poor transitions: (1) most instruction was teacher-centered with the traditional lecture from teachers and passive learning from students, (2) tracking was rampant, and (3) most high schools offered little or no guidance to help ninth graders adjust academically and socially. As a result, many fell by the wayside, feeling that school was pointless and endless (Black, 2004).

Operational definitions of intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation has been defined in various ways, although there have been two measures that have been used most often. Basic experimental research (e.g. Deci, 1971) has rested primarily on behavioral measure of intrinsic motivation called the *free choice* measure. In experiments using this measure, participants are exposed to a task under varying conditions, such as getting a reward or not. Following this period, the experimenter tells participants they will not be asked to work with the target task any further, and they are then left alone in

the experimental room with the target task as well as various distractor activities. They thus have a period of *free choice* about whether to return to the activity, and it is assumed that, if there is not extrinsic reason to do the task, then the more time they spend with the target task, the more intrinsically motivated they are for that task. This measure has been the mainstay through which the dynamics of intrinsic motivation have been experimentally studied (Deci & Ryan, 2000a).

The other common approach to the measurement of intrinsic motivation is the use of self-reports of interest and enjoyment of the activity per se. Experimental studies typically rely on task-specific measures (e.g. Harackiewicz, 1979; Ryan, 1982). Most field studies have instead used more general *domain* focused measures, such as one's intrinsic motivation for school (e.g. Harter, 1981).

Theoretical conceptualization of academic intrinsic motivation.

> Motivation is an internal state that arouses, directs, and sustains human behavior. It plays a fundamental role in learning. Today, more than ever, students' motivation is an area of discussion and debate—an area constantly in need of innovative approaches because the societal factors that play a role in motivation are constantly changing. In order to effectively foster students' motivation, it is essential to understand why students strive for particular goals, how intensively they strive, how long they strive, and what feelings and emotions characterize them in the process (Glynn, Aultman, & Owens, 2005, p. 155).

Psychologists and educators have long considered the role of motivation in student achievement and learning (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). Most everyone who works or plays with others is, accordingly, concerned with motivation, facing the question of how much motivation those others, or oneself, has for a task, and

practitioners of all types face the perennial task of fostering more versus less motivation in those around them (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). There are numerous motivational constructs applied to students' motivation to learn. Which constructs have the best explanatory power is an issue of debate. This issue is difficult to resolve, unfortunately, because the constructs are often unclear in their definitions and functions, as Schunk (2000) critically pointed out: "The field of motivation is beset with a lack of clear definition of motivational constructs and specification of their operation within larger theoretical frameworks. These problems have implications for interpretation of research results and applications to practice" (p. 116). Pintrich (2003) posited that when reviewing student learning and motivation research, four orientations to motivation adopted by educational researchers emerge. These orientations are behavioral, humanistic, cognitive, and social. Although these orientations are discussed separately, it should be kept in mind that many researchers adopt aspects of more than one orientation when studying learning, with hybrids resulting such as cognitive-social orientation (Pintrich, 2003).

Behavioral orientation. Educational researchers with a behavioral orientation to motivation focus on concepts such as incentive and reinforcement. An incentive is something that makes a behavior more or less likely to occur (Glynn et al., 2005). Potential problems with the use of incentives and reinforcements to shape students' learning behaviors have been identified. One major problem is that the students may not develop intrinsic motivation to learn. In some conditions, when students are offered incentives for doing tasks they naturally find motivating, their desire to perform the tasks can actually decrease (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). External incentives also can focus students' attention on the incentives as ends in themselves, rather than serve as a kind of feedback on the progress students are making.

Humanistic orientation. Educational researchers with a humanistic orientation emphasize students' capacities for personal growth, their freedom to choose, and their desires to achieve and excel (Reeve, 1996). Humanists have used various constructs to express students' needs to reach their potentials. Maslow (1968, 1970) described this need as self-actualization. Building upon Maslow's theory, humanists currently investigate students' self-determination (Deci et al., 1991), which is their ability to make choices and control what they do in contexts such as in the classroom.

Cognitive orientation. When educational researchers adopt a cognitive orientation to motivation, they emphasize students' goals, plans, expectations, and attributions (Schunk, 2004). An attribution is an explanation for the cause of a particular behavior (Weiner, 1986, 1990, 1992). When students respond to instructional events, they are viewed as responding to their attributions about these events (Glynn et al., 2005).

Social orientation. Educational researchers with a social orientation to motivation emphasize students' identities and their interpersonal relationships in communities, particularly in the learning communities that increasingly characterize certain educational programs (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Interrelated courses, activity centers, and websites are all examples of learning communities. Students' identities are shaped in communities and a great deal of knowledge can be learned, both intentionally and incidentally, in them. To maintain their membership in their communities, students are motivated to learn the attitudes, values, and behaviors of those communities (Jessen, Ramette, & Balshem, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Related theories/models. The following theories and models were chosen for exploration because they have an established intrinsic motivation component. These theories and models include expectancy-value model, self-determination theory, and

achievement goal theory.

Expectancy-value model. Expectancy-value models of motivation are built on the assertion that expectancy-related beliefs and subjective task values are most directly linked to individuals' choice, persistence, and related achievement behaviors (Atkinson, 1964). There is no single expectancy-value model, but the model developed by Eccles, Wigfield, and their colleagues (Eccles, 1983) has been explored the most in relation to school achievement. The general Eccles et al. Expectancy-Value model proposes that students' achievement-related choices can be understood as a function of their expectancy for success, defined as beliefs about how well one will do on an upcoming task, and the subjective value they have for a task, which refers to qualities of tasks that increase or decrease the probability of an individual selecting that task (Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Expectancies and values are assumed to play a primary role, though they are influenced by general goals and self-beliefs, affective memories, as well as perceptions of past experiences and others' beliefs. Influences of culture, differences in aptitudes, and the effects of socialization by parents, peers, and schools have direct and interactive effects on students' expectancies and values. The expectancy-value model affirms that the expectation of a positive outcome and the value that is placed on the outcome influences the amount of effort that is exerted towards the goal (Berndt & Miller, 1990). Meece and Holt (1993) and other researchers propose that individuals who adopt performance goals may display different motivational effects such as persistence and risk-taking (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Cury, Elliott, Da Fonseca, & Moller, 2006; Spray, Wang, Biddle, Chatzisarantis, & Warburton, 2006). According to Dweck (1999), the effort put forth and the types of goals that the individual pursues are

also impacted by the beliefs about the nature of academic ability. Subjective task value beliefs focus on the general question, "Why do I want to do this task?" (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Wigfield, Eccles, Schiefele, Roeser, & Davis-Kean, 2006). One of the primary components of subjective task value is intrinsic or interest value, which refers to the enjoyment the individual gets from performing the task, or the subjective interest he/she has in the subject.

Self-determination theory. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), a major theory of motivation is self-determination theory (SDT). SDT describes the components of intrinsic motivation as human needs and the degree to which these needs are met will determine the level of motivation that an individual displays (Ryan & Deci, 2004). Self-determination theory represents a broad framework for the study of human motivation and personality; it articulates a meta-theory for framing motivational studies, a formal theory that defines intrinsic and varied extrinsic sources of motivation, and a description of the respective roles of intrinsic and types of extrinsic motivation in cognitive and social development and in individual differences (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The SDT, put forth by Deci and Ryan (2000, 2002), posited three basic needs—the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy, which present the basis for categorizing aspects of the environment as supportive rather than antagonistic to integrated and essential human functioning. In this way, "to the extent that an aspect of the social context allows need fulfillment, it yields engagement, mastery and synthesis, whereas, to the extent that it thwarts need fulfillment, it diminishes the individual's motivation, growth, integrity, and well-being" (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 9). All three of these needs must be met in order for motivation to be sustained. According to Deci et al. (1991), competence occurs when one is effectively able to meet optimal challenges. Competence, the internal drive to be

effective and master the environment, has been associated with academic performance (Wiest, Wong, Cervantes, Craik, & Kreil, 2001). Harter (1981) and Stipek (1988) found that children who reported higher levels of perceived competence earned better grades than peers who rated themselves as less-competent. The term relatedness refers to how connected to others one feels. Teachers who foster relatedness have students who are more motivated to learn (Ratelle, Guay, Vallerand, Larose, & Senecal, 2007). Autonomy is the feeling that one is self-directed, independent, or in control. Intrinsically motivated activities promote feelings of autonomy (Deci, 1996).

Achievement goal theory. Within the self-determination theory framework, other theorists have defined additional relevant components. Seifert (2004) recognized achievement goal theory as a student's motivation to achieve academic goals. He further delineates this theory by discussing two learning goals: mastery and performance. Students who seek mastery goals strive to understand difficult concepts, and feel pride, satisfaction, confidence, and self-worth when accomplishing these goals. Intrinsic motivation is more closely associated with mastery goals. Students who seek performance goals, conversely are more likely to pursue extrinsic rewards, and to focus on how others view their achievements. Performance-seeking students are more likely to show anxiety, boredom, or dislike for a task.

History of intrinsic motivation research. Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). The concept of intrinsic motivation emerged from the work of Harlow (1953) and White (1959) in opposition to the behavioral theorists that were dominant at

the time (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Their experimental studies of animal behavior found that many organisms engage in exploratory, playful, and curiosity-driven behaviors even in the absence of reinforcement or reward. These spontaneous behaviors, although clearly bestowing adaptive benefits on the organism, appear not to be done for any such instrumental reason, but rather for the positive experiences associated with exercising and extending one's capacities (White, 1959). In humans, intrinsic motivation is not the only form of motivation, but it is a pervasive and important one. This natural motivational tendency is a critical element in cognitive, social, and physical development because it is through acting on one's inherent interests that one grows in knowledge and skills (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Intrinsically motivated behaviors are defined as those that are not energized by physiological drives or their derivatives and for which the reward is the satisfaction associated with the activity itself. Intrinsic motivation thus represents engagement in an activity for its own sake (Deci, 1971). White (1959) suggested that a need for competence underlies intrinsic motivation, that people engage in many activities in order to experience a sense of effectiveness and competence. Later, deCharms (1968) proposed that people have a primary motivational propensity to engage in activities that allow them to feel a sense of personal causation and that this is the basis of intrinsic motivation. Similarly, Nuttin (1973) argued that individuals experience *causality pleasure* when they perceive themselves as the initiator of their behavior. These authors together were thus proposing that the needs for competence and personal causation, which is closely related to the concept of autonomy, are the energizing bases for intrinsically motivated behavior (Vansteenkiste, Duriez, Simons, & Soenens, 2006).

Although, in one sense, intrinsic motivation exists within individuals, in another sense, intrinsic motivation exists in the relation between individuals and activities. People

are intrinsically motivated for some activities and not others, and not everyone is motivated for any particular task. Because intrinsic motivation exists in the nexus between a person and a task, some authors have defined intrinsic motivation in terms of the task being interesting, while others have defined it in terms of the satisfactions a person gains from intrinsically motivated task engagement. In part, these different definitions derive from the fact that the concept of intrinsic motivation was proposed as a critical reaction to the two behavioral theories that were dominant in empirical psychology from the 1940s to the 1960s (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

In the 1970s several researchers examined intrinsic motivation, particularly with respect to the effects of external motivators on intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1971; Kruglanski, Freedman, & Zeevi, 1971; Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973). Deci (1971), in the first of these early studies, rewarded some participants for engaging in an intrinsically interesting activity and observed that rewarded participants enjoyed the activity less and showed less subsequent behavioral persistence than did nonrewarded participants. This finding is particularly interesting because it is an instance in which people are approaching outcomes they value, but the process of doing so has a negative effect on the prototype of their proactive, growth-oriented nature (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Deci (1971) interpreted this undermining of intrinsic motivation as indicating that the participant's behavior, which had initially been intrinsically motivated, became controlled by the reward, so his/her sense of autonomy was undermined.

Initial conceptualizations viewed intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as being invariantly antagonistic (deCharms, 1968; Lepper & Greene, 1978). Intrinsic motivation was considered self-determined, whereas extrinsic motivation was thought to reflect a lack of self-determination. However, later research (Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, & Holt,

1984; Ryan, 1982; Ryan, Connell, & Deci, 1985) has indicated that extrinsic motivation does not necessarily undermine intrinsic motivation and that it may even enhance it (Luyten & Lens, 1981), implying that extrinsic motivation is not invariantly controlled. These findings resulted in a more refined analysis and conceptualization in which extrinsic motivation was differentiated into types of regulation that vary in their degree of relative autonomy (Ryan & Connell, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). With this extension, the primary focus changed to autonomous motivation versus controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation involves the experience of volition and choice, whereas controlled motivation involves the experience of being pressured or coerced (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Intrinsic motivation and well-internalized forms of extrinsic motivation are considered autonomous, whereas poorly internalized forms of extrinsic motivation are considered controlled (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Specifically, various types of extrinsic motivation were distinguished that differ in their degree of autonomy or self-determination, depending on the extent to which people have been successful in internalizing the initially external regulation of the behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Ryan et al., 1985). Internalization, which is a central process for socialization, is theorized by self-determination theory to be energized by the human psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997). A number of studies have documented manifold advantages of autonomous relative to controlled motivation for learning, including decreased drop-out (Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997), more deep learning (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987), greater creativity (Koestner et al., 1984), higher achievement (Boggiano, Flink, Shields, Seelbach, & Barrett, 1993; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005), and enhanced well-being (Black & Deci, 2000).

In the following section, the literature is reviewed as it relates to the locality of learning incentives; a behavioral distinction is made between three broad types of motivation—intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. Next, research that supports academic intrinsic motivation as its own construct and the conceptual foundations of academic intrinsic motivation is reviewed.

Locality of Learning Incentives

Motivation to learn can be described as a current or recurrent desire to acquire knowledge (Artelt, 2005). A person's reasons or objectives for learning are initially incidental; however, a differentiation can be made in terms of the locality of the learning incentives, leading to a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). In the past 2 decades, the vast array of literature on what motivates students in the classroom has delineated the benefits of self-determined regulation in the academic setting (Reeve, 2002; Vallerand et al., 1997). According to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002), behavior can be effectuated through intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. These three broad types of motivation fall along a continuum of self-determination, with amotivation comprising the nethermost extreme. Individuals become more self-determined as they internalize to a greater extent their reasons for executing a given behavior (Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006). Although intrinsically motivated behaviors represent the height of self-determination because they are undertaken freely and with pleasure, extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity for instrumental reasons. In general, self-determined motivation has been associated with various positive outcomes, such as greater cognitive flexibility, conceptual understanding, and active information processing (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987) as well as better academic performance and academic self-concept (Deci et

al., 1991; Reeve, Bolt, & Cai, 1999).

Intrinsic motivation to learn. Ryan and Deci (2004) described intrinsic motivation as self-directed action to achieve a goal for the pleasure that is derived from participating in the task. Individuals who are intrinsically motivated for academic learning seek out new opportunities to explore unfamiliar subjects for the inherent enjoyment in learning. Students who are intrinsically motivated complete activities for the enjoyment and gratification of doing so. As such, intrinsically motivated students do not seek or expect rewards for completing tasks. Intrinsic motivation is associated with deeper understanding of concepts and perseverance with difficult tasks (Barkoukis, Tsorbatzoudis, Grouios, & Sideridis, 2008).

Internal learning incentives can be said to reside within the learner. For example, learners may study primarily because they wish to acquire certain knowledge or because they are interested in a particular topic. Becoming totally absorbed in an activity and losing oneself completely so that both time and self-awareness are temporarily lost is a theoretical concept which Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has termed *flow*. Flow is also an internal learning incentive; it is directly linked to intrinsic motivation, and in order to occur, the appropriate level of skill, challenge, and interest must be present. A student who is intrinsically motivated to learn undertakes an activity for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes (Lepper, 1988). An important component of intrinsic motivation is perceived competence or self-concept. Self-concept is regarded as a multidimensional construct with an overarching general component that is useful for predicting general behaviors and specific components such as academic, physical, and social; this has been found to be useful for examining and predicting specific behaviors such as persistence in homework

and training, and the ability to interact with others (Marsh, Trautwein, Ludtke, & Koller, 2008). Intrinsic motivation in the classroom is especially appealing because it presumably translates into desirable behaviors such as choosing challenging tasks, exerting effort, and persistence (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2002).

Factors contributing to intrinsic motivation have developed from a variety of experiences, observations, and attitudes. Student motivation is driven by needs for love and belonging, respect, autonomy/power, mastery, challenge, fun, and meaning; successful learning experiences are designed to meet as many of these needs as possible (Williams, 2003). Gottfried (1985) included in her definition of intrinsic motivation a joy for learning and effectively approaching challenging tasks. Specifically in the context of academia, intrinsic motivation includes developing a love of the learning process, curiosity, the ability to learn and approach difficult tasks, the ability to develop persistence, and involvement in learning tasks (Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 1994). Stipek (1998) contended that, notably, one of the most important elements of intrinsic motivation is enjoyment of learning. Critical to intrinsic motivation, an enjoyment of learning helps develop persistence by enabling the student to employ more problem-solving strategies and creativity. Additionally, Gottfried (1985) stated that intrinsically motivated students will also have a better perception of how competent they are in their academic abilities, and thus, because of being motivated internally, will neither need nor desire as many extrinsically-oriented awards.

Extrinsic motivation to learn. External learning incentives, in contrast, reside outside of the learner and are based on the behaviorist notion of reinforcement. Extrinsic motivation to learn is characterized by the desire or intention to engage in a learning activity because it has positive outcomes or can help the learner to avoid negative

outcomes; these outcomes have nothing to do with the learning activity itself or the topic of study (Artelt, 2005). Law (2011) found that extrinsically motivated students are more apt to learn a concept superficially. Such students adopt strategies that allow them to complete a task, and thus be rewarded, but do not fully engage in approaches that would allow for deeper meaning of concepts.

The effect of extrinsic consequences on children's intrinsic motivation has received considerable attention (Gottfried, 1990). Research studies (Lepper & Greene, 1978) were among the earliest to demonstrate that extrinsic rewards had a detrimental effect on young children's intrinsic motivation. Subsequent work has painted a more complex portrait of the impact of extrinsic consequences on children's intrinsic motivation (Gottfried, 1990). Not all extrinsic contingencies have been shown to be detrimental to intrinsic motivation. The types of rewards and contingencies, and the manner and context of presentation, have been studied (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gottfried, 1983, 1986b; Ryan & Stiller, 1991). The literature supports the view that the impact of extrinsic contingencies on children's intrinsic motivation depends on the degree to which they are perceived by the recipient as being (a) indicative of incompetence versus competence and (b) externally controlling behavior versus promoting autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci et al., 1991; Gottfried, 1983, 1986b; Pittman, Boggiano, & Ruble, 1983). Task contingencies that are perceived as imposing external control or indicating task incompetence result in lower intrinsic motivation; task contingencies that are perceived as promoting self-engagement in tasks or task competence result in enhanced intrinsic motivation (Gottfried, 1990). Tangible and salient rewards have typically been associated with lower intrinsic motivation because they tend to promote external perceptions of reasons for task engagement. However, any contingency can potentially

produce decrements and increments in intrinsic motivation to the extent that it alters the individual's perception of the reason for engaging in an activity or perception of effective performance (Gottfried, 1986b). A contingency presented within an autonomy-supporting context may facilitate intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Stiller, 1991).

Amotivation to learn. Amotivation, by contrast, is described as an absence of motivation (Legault et al., 2006). The central tenet to amotivation demarcates the class of behaviors that are either executed for reasons unknown or not executed at all. Amotivation can be defined as a state in which individuals cannot perceive a relationship between their behavior and that behavior's subsequent outcome (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Amotivated individuals cannot predict the consequences of their behavior, nor can they see the motive behind it. They may feel disintegrated or detached from their action and will thus invest little effort or energy in its effectuation. Such individuals will perceive their behavior as outside of their control. The state of amotivation has been likened to that of learned helplessness (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978; Barkoukis et al., 2008), wherein students refuse to complete a task because of a belief that they do not have the skills necessary to complete.

In their examination of self-determination theory (SDT), Legault et al. (2006) explored the reasons for amotivation, particularly among high school students. They found if a student feels he or she does not have the skills to accomplish a task or the confidence to maintain the desired exertion needed for the task, then he or she will not likely feel motivated to participate in the task. Similarly, if a student does not care about the task itself or perhaps even associates parts or the entire task with negative feelings or outcomes, then the student may choose not to engage in the task. Researchers have found that a self-determined classroom environment (with an emphasis on student choice) leads

students to the other end of the motivation continuum—from amotivated to highly motivated (Johnson, 2008; Legault et al., 2006).

Academic intrinsic motivation as its own construct. Academic intrinsic motivation comprises enjoyment of school learning characterized by an orientation toward mastery, curiosity, persistence, task endogeny, and the learning of challenging, difficult, and novel tasks (Gottfried, Marcoulides, Gottfried, & Oliver, 2009). This type of academic motivation plays a particularly important role with regard to school learning and achievement because of its inherent relatedness to cognitive processing and mastery (Berlyne, 1971; Gottfried, 1985; White, 1959).

Gottfried et al. (2009) posited that in the realm of academic motivation, intrinsic motivation has had a longstanding presence as a construct in its own right. It continues to be studied as a distinct motivational construct across the literature such as flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamedeh, & Nakamura, 2005), as a motivation dimension independent of extrinsic motivation in educational and developmental research (Lepper, Corpus, & Iyengar, 2005; Lepper & Henderlong, 2000), and with regard to developmental change and academic performance (Gottfried et al., 2009).

Academic intrinsic motivation specifically focuses on school learning (Gottfried, 1985; Gottfried et al., 1990). When the construct of academic intrinsic motivation was first proposed it was based on intrinsic motivation theory and research, including pleasure derived from the learning process itself (Berlyne, 1971), curiosity (Berlyne, 1971; Maw, 1971), the learning of challenging and difficult tasks (Lepper, 1983; Pittman et al., 1983), persistence and a mastery orientation (Harter, 1981; Lepper, 1983), and a high degree of task involvement (Brophy, 1983; Nicholls, 1983). Further recognition of the significance of intrinsic motivation to the field of academic motivation is that other contemporary

theories incorporate intrinsic motivation in their formulations. For example, in self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation is presented as the prototype of autonomous and self-determined behavior; in achievement-goal theory, mastery goals incorporate intrinsic motivation processes; and in expectancy-value theory, intrinsic task value is one of four task values, the others being attainment, utility, and cost (Gottfried et al., 2009).

Conceptual foundations of academic intrinsic motivation. Academic intrinsic motivation is based upon three conceptual foundations, each having important implications for the role of the environment in its development. These include cognitive discrepancy, competence mastery, and attribution. According to cognitive discrepancy theories, intrinsic motivation results from encountering stimuli that do not match existing cognitive structures, thereby creating motivation to reduce this discrepancy. Stimuli and learning materials that produce cognitive discrepancy produce intrinsic motivation as curiosity or exploration. Such stimuli would include those that are novel, complex, incongruous, and surprising, and with a variety of experience provided (Gottfried, 2008).

Competence/mastery theories of intrinsic motivation concern children's experiences of effectiveness in interaction with their environment. Children seek to interact effectively with their environment, and to the extent that they experience mastery, their intrinsic motivation is enhanced. Central to this theory is the child's sense of autonomy or being in control—that is, being a causal agent or influencing the environment by producing successful and noticeable outcomes (Gottfried, 1985).

The attribution conceptualization concerns the impact of extrinsic consequences for learning on intrinsic motivation. Much has been written and published on the adverse effects of providing rewards for children's learning and performance on their intrinsic motivation. Such rewards often have adverse consequences for the development of

intrinsic motivation because they affect children's reasons for their engagement in an activity. If children believe they are engaged in an activity in order to receive the extrinsic consequence, their focus of motivation is likely to shift from the process of learning to the receipt of the reward. Hence, their academic intrinsic motivation would be reduced (Gottfried, 1986a).

Challenges of High School Transition

In the following sections, various aspects of high school transition will be explored. The literature on high school transition will be examined in terms of academic challenges of the ninth grade, procedural challenges of the ninth grade, and societal challenges of the ninth grade.

Academic challenges of ninth grade. Schiller (1999) defined academic transition as a process during which institutional and social factors influence which students' educational careers are positively or negatively affected by this movement between organizations. The transition to high school has been accompanied by negative consequences for some students including dips in academic achievement and dropping out shortly after entering high school, falling behind, or failing to graduate on time (Akos, 2004; Alspaugh, 1998; Copeland, 2006; Mizelle & Irvin, 2000; Walsh, 2002). For a number of students, negotiating the transition is particularly difficult when it comes to academics (Anderson, 2008). In a study by Akos (2004) 320 ninth-grade students responded to a questionnaire asking them to list the top three things they feared the most about going to high school. Numbers one and two shared a concern with academics. The number one concern was the amount of homework followed by a fear of "hard homework." Students put these academic concerns regarding the difficulty and amount of homework above procedural and social issues. Research by Mizelle and Mullins (1997)

found that ninth graders wanted to know what high school would be like, and they wanted to understand high school programs, choose the right courses, and understand the long-term implications of their choices. Students moving into high school found that there were more assignments and distractions; they worried about the expectations of the teachers, amount and nature of homework, taking tests, and getting good grades (Potter et al., 2001). According to a study by Graham and Hill (2002), the particular aspect most troubling to ninth graders in relation to school work was the increase in homework, and that in later phases of the first year of transition, the academic issues took precedence over social and procedural issues leading students to express dissatisfaction and disappointment (Graham & Hill, 2002; Kirkpatrick, 2004). Earlier research (Roderick, 1995) found there was a decline in student achievement following a school transition. The author's research found an average drop of 18% following the transition to high school. Alsplaugh's (1998) research shows that in general, the fewer educational transitions, the better students perform. Students enrolled in school districts where they attended a K-8 school and then transitioned into a 9-12 environment consistently outperformed students from similar demographic backgrounds who attended a distinct middle school.

It is also during the ninth-grade year that many students for the first time have to earn passing grades in core courses (Fulk, 2003). Satisfactory completion of core courses is often required for graduation from high school, and these core courses are typically some of the toughest and most rigorous academic classes a student has to take in high school (Smith et al., 2008). Wagner (1989) posited that students who fail their classes are likely to begin questioning their ability to make graduation requirements, lose interest in school, and consequently drop out of high school. Furthermore, the rising use of

standardized examinations to measure school performance, and exit examinations required to earn a diploma, add to the difficulty and importance of doing well in school (Schemo, 2004). As a result of the increased demands of high school, the statistics generated from the freshman year are concerning. Ninth graders have the lowest grade point average, the most missed classes, the majority of failing grades, and more misbehavior referrals than any other high school grade level (Fritzer & Herbst, 1996). Most high school dropouts fail at least 25% of their ninth-grade courses; more than one semester F in core subjects and fewer than five full course credits by the end of the freshman year are key indicators that a student is not on track for graduation (Allensworth & Easton, 2005). Only 8% of their peers who eventually graduated had similar difficulty (Roderick, 1993).

Cohen and Smerdon (2009) posited that a growing number of incoming ninth-grade students are entering high schools in which the rules have changed; students are being pushed hard to learn challenging content and prepare for college, and high schools are hemorrhaging adolescents at an alarming rate. Academically, students are often entering new schools in new locations which are larger with an increased number of adults to be accountable to in the process. Class workload and homework loads are new, different, and often harder (Mizelle, 1999). Students whose cognitive skills do not develop as quickly as the norm may become frustrated as academic demands increase (Potter et al., 2001).

States that have felt the pressure to compete globally have raised their graduation requirements. Students moving into the ninth grade are the first to experience the effect of any increase in state-mandated high school graduation requirements. For many ninth graders, such rigorous requirements are a noticeable change from middle school

expectations (Fulk, 2003). As a matter of fact, the data on course offerings in middle schools have suggested that most middle school students are not offered challenging academic courses (MacIver & Epstein, 1992). Unfortunately, some ninth graders simply do not realize the importance of the ninth-grade year. When asked, students who fail one or more classes during ninth grade state that they wish they better understood the importance of the freshman year on graduation. If this had been the case, they claim that they would have worked harder to achieve higher grades (Zsiray, 1996).

Procedural challenges of ninth grade. As educators desperately seek alternative strategies to ease transition challenges that leave too many students behind, the most obvious of these challenges is the physical environment. As of 2004, approximately half of all high schools had enrollments greater than 1,500 and many urban high school enrollments exceed 5,000 (Werblow & Duesbery, 2009). In his research study, Akos (2004) found that the third of the top three concerns students feared in transitioning to high school was the fear of getting lost. Identifying lockers and being responsible to get necessary materials for classes and arrive at the next class on time are primary concerns from the student's perspective (Anderson, 2008). Some worry about getting on the right bus to go home (Schumacher, 1998). Students also worry about the rules in the new school, including knowing the school rules and consequences for breaking them, and how they are expected to behave in each class (Diemert, 1992). The institutional shift for adolescents is not merely perceptual; there are real structural and organizational differences between middle and high schools that likely contribute to their difficulties in transitioning from one institution to another (Cohen & Smerdon, 2009). High schools tend to be much larger organizations and more impersonal and competitive; they provide many more choices in their curricular and extracurricular offerings (Eccles, Midgley, &

Adler, 1984). Coming from a smaller-sized middle school to a larger-sized high school can be overwhelming for students (Butts & Cruzeiro, 2005). Subsequently, ninth graders often find themselves in a time masked with feelings of loneliness, isolation, and disconnection (Cooper & Liou, 2007).

For many urban school districts, the response to the dehumanizing condition of the large urban high school has been the creation of smaller learning communities (Patterson et al., 2007). The impressive benefits of smaller learning communities have been well-established in the literature, with increasing examples of success across the country (Cotton, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2002). Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) cited that as schools get larger, they become more impersonal and less able to care for their students: "Some critics have likened secondary schools to overcrowded airports where students rush between lessons like dashing between flights, and where they have little or no space, no place to belong of their own" (p. 12). Small school researchers are careful to assert, however, that shrinking the size of schools is not a panacea; rather, smaller environments make it easier to give kids the things they really need to succeed: collegiality among teachers, personalized teacher-student relationships, and less differentiation of instruction by ability (Cotton, 2001; Gladden, 1998; Raywid, 1999).

Social challenges of ninth grade. High school represents both an opportunity to develop in new directions as well as the risk of being perceived in terms of ethnicity and academic competence (Oxley, Croninger, & DeGroot, 2000). The critical transition from middle to high school occurs as students are experiencing the pain of adolescence (Queen, 2002). The move from a middle school to high school often involves disrupting relationships with peers as well as teachers while students are attempting to gain personal independence (Schiller, 1999). Potter et al. (2001) cited that the degree to which an

adolescent is able to make friends and be part of an accepting peer group is a major indicator of how well the adolescent will adjust in other areas of social and psychological development. Akos (2004) added that adjusting to the social aspects of transitioning from middle school to high school may be equally as important as adjusting to academic demands. Adolescents not only tend to place great importance on autonomy and a sense of personal self-worth, but also experience an intense need for a sense of belonging and personal relationships with both peers and adults (Alexander & George, 1981). The large, bureaucratic nature of most high schools often is not supportive of incoming ninth graders with weak social and academic preparation (Letgers & Kerr, 2001); in some cases, this has led to depersonalization and a lack of sense of community at a time when community is so important (Lee & Smith, 2001). The impact of an impersonal bureaucracy on the successful transition to high school was also evident in a study by Newman, Lohman, Myers, and Newman (2000) and Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman, and Smith (2002). Eighth-grade students in the Young Scholars Program (YSP) of Ohio State University perceived teachers in high school as expecting them to be more mature and responsible and as needing less monitoring of schoolwork (Newman et al., 2000). In a subsequent study, the students also reported that high school was harder than eighth grade and that some teachers were unapproachable, too busy, and belittling (Newman et al., 2002). Boutelle (2009) found that often, students who dropped out of school said all it would take to make the difference between staying in school and dropping out was the knowledge that someone, even just one adult, really cared about them and their futures. Cauley and Jovanovich (2006) stated:

> Socially, adolescents worry about having friends and getting along with their peers and teachers. While schools generally understand the need to address

> academic and procedural concerns, they seem to ignore the social concerns. However, social goals of students will not go away, and if the schools do not address these social needs, students will put energy into dealing with those issues. Ultimately, concerns about social goals will detract from the academic focus of students. (p. 15)

Transforming High Schools

Research related to the need to transform high schools is explored in the following sections. The first research area of emphasis presented is the criticism of the traditional high school. Discussed next is the importance of students' interpersonal relationships during the freshman transition. Thirdly, research on school size and its relative impact on ninth-grade students is discussed. Finally, literature surrounding the emergence of freshman academies as a high school reform effort is presented.

Criticism of the traditional high school. Since the 1983 study, *A Nation at Risk*, the high school has been a focus of criticism from the educational and business communities, with both groups insisting on reform efforts in the high schools because of the poor quality of graduates that high schools turn out each spring. Noguera's (2004) article *Transforming High Schools* identified five variables shown by researchers to be the causes of the problems high schools experience.

- High schools suffer from organizational flaws, including fragmentation, insufficient attention to quality control in programs and services, and a lack of coherence in mission (Annenberg Foundation, 2003).
- The school curriculum typically offers a broad but disconnected variety of courses that lack depth and intellectual rigor (Hill & Celio, 1998).

- Teachers tend to rely on a lecture format and emphasize delivery of content without looking for evidence of learning or mastery of knowledge and skills (Cohen, 2001).
- Pervasive student alienation, boredom, strained relationships between adults and students, and anti-intellectual peer cultures undermine efforts to raise student achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).
- Many schools are too large and overcrowded to provide students with the support and attention they need (Ayers & Klonsky, 2000). (p. 26)

These variables compared to the 1985 NASSP study on ninth-grade transition show many of the variables are exactly the same: teacher lecture and passive student learning; large, impersonal high schools that do little to support students and student alienation with no close ties to the adults in the school. These likenesses in variables suggest that the ninth-grade transition problem is just a microcosm of the larger high school problems (Mortin, 2005). Steeped in tradition and dependent on practices that have long outlived their usefulness, high schools are in dire need of reform (Noguera, 2004).

High schools tend to be much larger organizations and more impersonal and competitive; they provide more choices in their curricular and extracurricular offerings (Eccles et al., 1984). Midgley and Maehr (2000) examined the progress of 800 students through the fifth- to sixth-grade and the eighth- to ninth-grade transitions. In their study, Midgley and Maehr (2000) found "that students' grade point averages declined significantly as they moved from middle school into high school" (p. 2). High school teachers were interviewed and the findings revealed that teachers felt they had little

impact on students' academic performances. They also spoke about the difficulty of making personal connections with the large number of students they taught every day. Donohoe and Zigmond (1990) found similar results in their study of students with learning disabilities, contending that ninth graders experienced difficulties, whether they were disabled or not.

> In ninth grade, for the first time, students must earn passing grades in core courses that carry credits required for graduation. At the same time, ninth-grade students are faced with increased demands both in terms of independent study skills, and in the amount of content covered in each class. Some students who are at risk for failure may have advanced through earlier grades due to individual teacher attention and vigilant monitoring that may not be possible or desirable within the larger secondary school culture. (Donohoe & Zigmond, 1990, p. 9)

The extent to which students are behaviorally and cognitively engaged in classroom and learning activities is widely recognized as a key determinant of their academic success (DiPerna, Volpe, & Elliott, 2002; Skinner, Pappas, & Davis, 2005; Wigfield et al., 2008). Although extreme forms of academic disengagement, such as dropping out or truancy, represent a significant challenge to school districts and society as a whole, a significant and relatively common concern among educators often involves the large number of students who do attend school but struggle to motivate themselves or to put forth the necessary effort to succeed (Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, & Wallingsford, 2002; Cleary, 2006). Seeking to understand the reasons why students lose interest in school or choose to disengage from classroom activities is an important endeavor for all school-based professionals, but in particular for those providing direct academic interventions with youth (Cleary, 2009). Maehr (1976) wrote that fostering a willingness

or desire to learn should join academic achievement as an explicit goal of schooling, yet Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) reported an abysmal pattern of intrinsic motivation in school.

Interpersonal relationships. Within the school setting, recent reform efforts have also focused on interpersonal relationships. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation identified five recommendations for systemic change in its research on effective schools, two of which involve curriculum and instruction. The remaining three promote building relationships that (1) help students feel safe, (2) identify individual adults that students can go to with problems, and (3) focus on communication between parents and the school (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

The research of Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2007) supports the importance of relationships to high school students. There was a major difference found in the degree of interaction between staff and students when the Kentucky high schools with a low percentage of dropouts were compared to the Kentucky high schools with a high percentage of dropouts. The researchers concluded that even though schools cannot change the socioeconomic factors affecting the lives of their students, they can reduce their risk of dropping out by "providing a positive and safe learning environment; by setting high, yet achievable academic and social expectations; and by consistently facilitating academic and social success" (Christle et al., 2007, p. 334).

School size, revisited. In an effort to foster a learning environment in which students feel safe and socially connected, researchers have once again explored the issue of school size. In its 2006 publication *Reinventing the American High School for the 21st Century*, the Association for Career and Technology Education (ACTE) offered nine recommendations for high school reform. Recommendation three specifically pointed to

the need of personalization in high school. ACTE (2006) concluded,

> For those adolescents who already have weak family and community connections…enormous schools become places of anonymity that encourages them to withdraw further into the shadows, and make them more vulnerable to the allure of negative peer reinforcements such as drugs, alcohol, sex, and crime. (p. 12)

This organization advocates smaller learning communities as a means of making a large learning environment seem more personal.

Ayers, Bracey, and Smith (2000) agree that smaller schools create a more productive educational environment, and their study of larger comprehensive high schools has identified negative results. The benefits of smaller schools, based on their findings, include increased student achievement, reduction in behavior problems, increased attendance, less isolation, and increased parent involvement and teacher satisfaction. The authors cite Meier, then principal of Seven Hills Schools in Boston, as proclaiming that "small schools come as close to being a panacea for America's educational ills as we're likely to get" (Ayers et al., p. 2). McAndrews and Anderson (2002) referred to studies that substantiate Ayers et al.'s (2000) conclusions. McAndrews and Anderson cite increased attendance and graduation rate, improved behavior, and cost effectiveness as benefits of small schools. Raywid (1997) supported this belief in her analysis of case studies from schools across the United States. She concluded that "national studies confirm conclusively that youngsters learn more in math, reading, history, and science in small schools than in large ones—especially disadvantaged students" (Raywid, 1997, p. 9). In addition, smaller learning communities within larger settings tend to diminish the small school issues of limited course offerings and a sense of

family that may compromise rigor in the coursework.

The Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), two organizations devoted to systemic secondary school improvement, call for structural change that will cultivate academic success. High Schools That Work (HSTW), SREB's primary reform model, which is strongly endorsed in South Carolina schools through the passage of the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA), is based on 10 research-based practices intended to support a culture that promotes student achievement (Bottoms, 2006). Through quantitative data collection and case studies, SREB has developed a body of research that supports implementing HSTW (Southern Regional Education Board, 2000). Breaking Ranks, the NASSP high school reform model, is comparable in that it focuses on increased student achievement (Lachat, 2001). One commonality in both models is the belief that creating a sense of belonging and developing relationships is vital to keep ninth graders interested in learning. Resulting from his work with Boston public schools, Noguera (2007) examined issues with the current structure of American high schools, including lack of student engagement and student isolation combined with "a smorgasbord of courses but little of the intellectual depth and rigor needed to develop a substantive knowledge and higher order thinking skills" (pp. 205-206). In analyzing student response to interview questions used in the Boston study, he identified emergent themes: the need for relationships, the need for students to have motivational goals, the need for feeling safe, and the desire to be prepared for high stakes testing. Students in smaller environments tended to feel safer and were more likely to have clearly articulated goals that they associated with a significant adult in their life, oftentimes a teacher or counselor.

Freshman academies. As many of today's high schools were designed for an earlier era, there exists a strong need to examine the current structure of America's high schools and to seek methods of reorganization that provide students with increased opportunities to graduate from high school. As a result, a national movement to redesign high school has begun (National Governors Association [NGA], 2004). Freshman academies have emerged as one of the reform efforts designed to increase motivation and prevent dropping out, but there is little empirical evidence to support its implementation. Freshman academy provides a framework that focuses on both the affective and cognitive needs of high school freshmen by attempting to place freshmen in an appropriately-sized learning environment that offers support from a team of teachers. Small learning communities are described as ninth-grade academies, freshman academies, schools-within-schools and ninth-grade centers (Ark, 2002). Hertzog and Morgan (1999) posited that attendance, climate, safety, achievement, graduation rates, college attendance rates, and community engagement can all be improved by small learning communities. Oxley (2005) supportively adds that smaller school communities allow teachers to know students and students to know teachers so teachers have the opportunity and the means to make learning more meaningful to students.

The model of a freshman academy is relatively uncomplicated. The academy functions as a self-governing program under the management of the central office or the host school's administration. The academy has its own culture, program, school space, and may use common space within the school (Hendrix, 2007). Students are typically grouped together to take core subjects with the same group of teachers, thus increasing the support students receive from teachers, peers, and other adults. Academy teaming organizes groups of teachers across departments so teachers share the same students

rather than the same subject (Oxley, 2005). The population of a freshman academy typically ranges from 100 to 400 students involved in their own learning community (Cotton, 2001).

Some schools and districts are providing separate wings or buildings just for ninth-grade students that allow for an entire year of transition time before being blended with students from the upper grades (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007). By segregating ninth graders, students become better acquainted with the rigors of the high school curriculum and become more mature and ready for high school in the process (Reents, 2002). High schools are adopting or adapting comprehensive reform models such as Talent Development, High Schools That Work, First Things First, and America's Choice (Cohen & Smerdon, 2009). Freshman academies are being developed that partially separate ninth graders from other high school students so that students are allowed to gradually transition to high school by seeing what they have to deal with before actually *getting there*. Freshman academies function as schools within schools in helping young adolescents make the transition (Cohen & Smerdon, 2009). In South Carolina during the 2006-2007 school year, at least 91 of the 152 schools (60%) reported the presence of a ninth-grade academy as a part of their school's organizational structure (Jordan, 2009).

Case Study

The research explored in this chapter supports the need for investigating the effects that freshman academy experiences may have on students' academic intrinsic motivation. Educators are clearly faced with the problem of declining motivation to learn in their students, which may result in students dropping out of high school. Studying the relationship between freshman academy experiences and students' academic intrinsic motivation is a complex process, and a suitable method for this type of exploration is case

study methodology. According to Creswell (2005), case study methodology is appropriate when the researcher recognizes a complex problem requiring deep exploration. A key strength of the case study method involves using multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process. The researcher determines in advance what evidence to gather and what analysis techniques to use with the data to answer the research questions. Data gathered is normally largely qualitative, but it may also be quantitative. Quantitative data is data in numerical form which can be put into categories, or in rank order, or measured in units of measurement. This type of data can be used to construct graphs and tables of raw data (McLeod, 2008). Tools to collect case study data can include surveys, interviews, documentation review, observation, and even the collection of physical artifacts (Soy, 1997). Case studies allow researchers to gain a fuller understanding of the many aspects of a particular problem, and to analyze qualitative data through description and theme development. As such, case study methodology is an apt method for examining the impact that freshman academy experiences have on the students' motivation to learn.

Summary

Infants and young children appear to be propelled by curiosity, driven by an intense need to explore, interact with, and make sense of their environment; rarely does one hear parents complain that their preschooler is *unmotivated* (Raffini, 1993). Lumsden (1994) stated:

> Unfortunately, as children grow, their passion for learning frequently seems to shrink. Learning often becomes associated with drudgery instead of delight. A large number of students—more than one in four—leave school before graduating. Many more are physically present in the classroom but largely

mentally absent; they fail to invest themselves fully in the experience of learning. (p. 2)

The significance of academic intrinsic motivation for children's learning and development has been increasingly acknowledged due to extensive research indicating that children with higher levels of academic intrinsic motivation are more academically competent from childhood through early adulthood. Such children show higher achievement on standardized tests and teacher assigned grades; take more advanced courses in high school; have a greater sense of academic competence, lower academic anxiety, less extrinsic orientation to learning, and higher educational attainment as young adults (Gottfried, 1985).

Legault et al. (2006) explained how student motivation decreases as students progress through grades, citing that student amotivation—a complete lack of engagement—peaks at the high school level. Because of this, a leading problem facing many high schools is the lack of student motivation (Lawrence, 2011).

Further, research also shows that academic intrinsic motivation is differentiated into subject area domains as well as being a general orientation to school learning (Gottfried, 1985). Therefore, to gain a fuller understanding of children's academic intrinsic motivation, subject areas as well as general motivational orientation must be assessed.

Ninth-grade students, while experiencing the developmental challenges of adolescence, must also adjust to the unfamiliar, and often unanticipated challenges of high school. Coupled, these challenges are often more than the typical adolescent is equipped to handle. The ninth grade has been identified as the gateway year, as many students get off track academically during their ninth-grade years and stagnate here,

before eventually dropping out of high school altogether. By exploring the effects of the freshman academy experiences on students' intrinsic motivation to learn, educators may gain valuable insight into what works and what does not work to keep students on track for academic success and on-time graduation.

This freshman academy at Upstate South Carolina High School is a redesign effort to help meet the diverse needs of its ninth-grade students and to better equip them with the skills needed to stay on track academically toward graduation. This study researched a group of freshmen currently enrolled in this academy to determine the effects of the freshman academy experiences on their intrinsic motivation to learn. Their relative levels of academic intrinsic motivation to learn English, math, science, and history, as well as their general orientation toward school learning, were measured quantitatively by using the Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (CAIMI). Student focus group interviews and individual teacher and administrator interviews were conducted to qualitatively explore current freshman academy experiences as related to an understanding of freshman academies and student motivation to learn. Emergent themes were identified and the information obtained was used to drive the focus of this case study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter addresses the methodology used to answer the following five research questions: (1) How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn English; (2) How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn math; (3) How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn science; (4) How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn history; and (5) How do freshman academy experiences impact student general orientation toward school learning. The chapter begins with a brief introduction and a description of the study's participants. Next, research design, instruments, procedures, data collection, and data analysis are discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's delimitations and limitations, and a brief summary.

Introduction

There are many variables to study when attempting to determine the impact that freshman academy experiences may have on the students' intrinsic motivation to learn, making this problem particularly complex. These variables include the students' relative degrees of academic intrinsic motivation, their individual ninth-grade school experiences, and their perceptions of those experiences that have impacted their academic intrinsic motivation to English, math, science, history, and to school in general. In order to examine the current freshmen enrolled at an Upstate South Carolina High School, a mixed methodology case study was conducted. Quantitative data was collected using the Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (Gottfried, 1985). CAIMI results provided the students' levels of academic intrinsic motivation for the four core subjects and to school in general. Qualitative data was collected via focus group interviews to gain

a deeper understanding of the students' ninth-grade experiences that they felt most affected their motivation to learn. To further triangulate the data, the researcher interviewed four teachers, one from each content area, and the freshman academy's administrator in charge, as well as examining the school's written documentation describing its freshman academy.

Participants

This study looked at a sampling of ninth-grade students currently enrolled at the study high school. At the time of data collection, those students had completed their first semester of high school and could thus evaluate their freshman academy experiences that had impacted their motivation to learn, while still in their transitional year to high school. Additionally, four freshman academy teachers and its administrator in charge were individually interviewed by the researcher. A detailed presentation of the study high school and its freshman academy will be presented in Chapter 4 of this research study.

Research Design

The research relating to the freshman academy at this large rural Upstate South Carolina High School is a mixed-methodology case study. Case study methodology allows researchers to study complicated situations by looking at the *how* and *why* in a real-life circumstance (Yin, 2003). Breslin and Buchanan (2007) posited that case studies have a rich history for exploring the space between the world of theory and the experience of practice. Creswell (1998) identified a case study as an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection, and clarified bounded to mean specifically separated for research in terms of time, location, or physicality. In education, case studies often include the study of an individual or several individuals, such as students or teachers. Creswell (2005) supported the use of triangulation in order to

increase the accuracy of case study findings. He defined triangulation as the process of authenticating data collection by using multiple sources to identify themes. Using an array of data collection methods (e.g., surveys, interviews, observations, and document analysis) permits the researcher to create an account that is valid and reliable.

Traditionally, education research has been conducted choosing from the use of quantitative or qualitative designs (Isaac & Michael, 1981). A mixed-methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and *mixing* both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study to understand a research problem; it is a legitimate inquiry approach (Brewer & Hunter, 1989). When one combines quantitative and qualitative data, we have a very powerful mix (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Wiersma and Jurs (2005) posited that quantitative research tends to be structured and prescriptive with the results expressed largely in numbers. Quantitative research has its roots in positivism which advocates that features of the social environment constitute an objective reality that is relatively constant across time and settings; this methodology is used to describe and explain features of this reality by collecting numerical data on observable behaviors of samples and by subjecting these data to statistical analysis (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

Conversely, qualitative research is a holistic inquiry approach with the purpose of exploring and understanding a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2002). In qualitative research, the researcher asks broad, general questions, records the data as mostly text, and then subjectively analyzes the responses for themes (Creswell, 2005). Qualitative research most often takes place in a natural setting without the intervention of the researcher and requires flexibility and tolerance for adjustment as the research progresses (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). Researchers using a qualitative methodology approach are

encouraged to use descriptive narrative accounts of the studied phenomena in their natural settings; the epistemology of qualitative research puts focus not only on the techniques and procedures for the research but includes the importance of the perceptions of those being studied and to include this information in the research (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). Student motivation is one such area that would be well-served by a qualitative research design or a mixed-method approach (Beltman, 2001; Pressick-Kilborn, Sainsbury, & Walker, 2005; Turner & Patrick, 2008; Yeager & Sommer, 2007). Qualitative studies have provided information about student motivation unattainable by quantitative methods alone; using mixed methods and blending the positive traits of each provides researchers with empirical strength while providing rich data that may include information outside the researcher's original scope (Cocks & Watt, 2004).

Both qualitative and quantitative research have their own apparent strengths. A mixed-method research design allows the researcher to analyze a topic in depth, and it provides interaction and the ability to observe the multidimensional contexts of student motivation (Merriam, 1998). Cocks and Watt (2004) contended that a mixed-methods design, using the qualitative to give depth to the quantitative research, is the best means to researching student motivation. Overall, quantitative methods provide data about general patterns ad trends, whereas qualitative tools like focus groups, observations, and interviews allow for a more detailed look into the topic of student motivation (Klassen & Lynch, 2007). For these reasons, a mixed methodology case study research design was used for this study. The CAIMI provided quantitative data to measure students' levels of academic intrinsic motivation toward English, math, science, and history, and in general toward school. Student focus group sessions provided a richer description for exploring those aspects of the freshman academy experiences that students believed to most impact

their academic intrinsic motivation. Teacher and administrator interviews added perception and general understanding data related to freshman academies as reform efforts designed to effectively transition students from middle school to high school. Examining how the school writes about its freshman academy also assisted in data triangulation and further strengthened this research study.

The first step toward collecting necessary data was to obtain the district informed consent by seeking written permission from the district superintendent and participating principal to study the students (Appendix A). Upon documentation of necessary approvals, the researcher selected the students enrolled in the freshman academy for study by employing systematic random sampling. Once selected, the students were given a consent form for themselves and their parents in order to ensure they were allowed to participate in all facets of the study (Appendix B). The researcher explained to parents and students that confidentiality would be maintained at all times in order to solicit honest, accurate responses concerning their academic intrinsic motivation to learn English, math, science, and history, and their general orientation toward school learning. Additionally, confidentiality was maintained for similar reasons during the focus group interviews as the researcher attempted to ascertain qualitatively those freshman academy experiences perceived by the students to impact their intrinsic motivation to learn. Study participants were also informed that they could opt out of the study at any point during the research process.

Instruments, Procedures, and Data Collection

The student study participants were first given the Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (CAIMI). The CAIMI was developed by Gottfried (1986a) to specifically measure the academic intrinsic motivation in upper elementary through

junior high school students (ages 8-14). The CAIMI is the first instrument developed to measure children's academic intrinsic motivation in a comprehensive manner across school subject areas and as a general orientation toward school learning. The conceptualization of academic intrinsic motivation as distinguished into subject areas as well as a general orientation was due to the scientific evidence that motivation exists both as a differentiated construct and a general orientation (Gottfried, 1985; Rubenstein, 1986) and the recognition that school curriculum is generally organized into subject areas with important implications for children's motivation (Gottfried, 1986a).

The CAIMI was developed by Gottfried (1986a) to measure academic intrinsic motivation in reading, math, social studies, and science. It also quantifies a general orientation toward school learning, for a total of five different scales across which academic intrinsic motivation is valued. The CAIMI is comprised of 44 questions that encompass a total of 122 items. There are 26 items in each subject area and 18 items in the General Scale. CAIMI items measure enjoyment of learning, an orientation toward mastery, curiosity, persistence, and the learning of challenging, difficult, and novel tasks. Students write their responses to Likert scale items directly in the 12-page booklet; responses range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. High CAIMI scores correspond to high intrinsic motivation.

The internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the CAIMI have been well established, resulting in quite substantial reliability. Internal consistency coefficients range from .83 to .93, and 2-month retest coefficients range from .66 to .76. Additionally, CAIMI reliability has been demonstrated with no disparity established as a function of race, sex, or IQ. The CAIMI appears to be a reliable and unique measure of an attribute labeled academic intrinsic motivation (Posey, 1989).

The researcher needed to receive permission from the publishing company to use the course names English and history, which are representative of high school courses; when these course names are used, the version of the CAIMI is referred to as CAIMI-HS (Appendix C).The original version of CAIMI uses the course names reading and social studies, respectively, which are more indicative of elementary and junior high course titles. The directions and administration of the measurement follow the same guidelines as the original.

Four English classes were selected for CAIMI administration by employing the systematic random sampling method. In systematic random sampling, every nth individual is selected until the desired sample size is reached (Creswell, 2005). The researcher determined that because there were eight freshman English classes being taught during any one class period, there were approximately 200 students *available* to survey. The researcher next referred to a published statistical data table and ascertained that a sample size of 134 is required to attain a +/- 5% precision level where the confidence level is 95%. Realistically, due to the cost incurred by the researcher to purchase the CAIMI and the limited availability of students to survey at the same time, the researcher concluded that a sample size of approximately 100 (four classes of students) should suffice. The researcher supported this conclusion by using an online statistical sample size calculator to calculate that a sample size of only 92 students would provide a +/- 7.5% precision level where the confidence level is 95%.

The classes surveyed were selected by securing a list of the English teachers' last names in alphabetical order, and choosing every other one, starting with the first one listed and continuing until four different classes had been selected. English classes were selected because they are 90 minutes long; all other freshman classes are 45 minutes

long. This allowed ample time for completion of the CAIMI and focus group interview sessions at single settings, rather than starting and stopping, which may have unnecessarily delayed the data collection processes.

These classes were surveyed during the same class period to control for the variable of time; in other words, students may perform differently if they are surveyed in the morning as compared to being surveyed in the afternoon, and the researcher wanted to ensure that any data differences could not be attributed to students being surveyed at different times of the day. The teachers whose classes were selected to be studied each received a manual for administering the CAIMI and were trained by the researcher the week prior to testing. It took approximately one hour for group completion of the CAIMI. Students were anonymous to the researcher during the surveys, but each student test booklet was coded by the test administrator as the booklets were turned in by the students upon completion. They were coded for teacher, student gender, student ethnicity, and class track (honors, college-prep, or gifted/talented). There were no other student identifiers used. The researcher referenced and transferred this coding information when recording and profiling the scores from across the CAIMI scales.

Scoring of CAIMI items followed the procedures outlined in the CAIMI manual. Student responses were scored by first observing the arrows located in the scoring boxes. The scoring boxes are located to the right of the responses on each page of the student booklet. Ratings are assigned via a Likert scale format. If the arrow points to the right, 1= strongly agree; 2= agree; 3= don't agree or disagree; 4= disagree; 5= strongly disagree. If the arrow points to the left, the items are scored in the reverse order, with 1= strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= don't agree or disagree; 4= agree; 5= strongly agree. For items 43 and 44, there are only two possible ratings. Question 43 items were scored as 2 or 1 in

the reverse-scored direction (arrow points to the left) and question 44 items are scored as 1 or 2 in the normal direction (arrow points to the right).

Next the numerical ratings for each item response were recorded on the horizontal lines located in the scoring boxes of the student booklets. Each column of ratings is indicated by R for English, M for math, SS for history, Sc for science, and G for school in general. Once the students' ratings were recorded, each column was totaled and the totals were recorded in the designated areas at the bottom of each score box. Finally, the total raw score was determined for each scale and totals were determined across all pages of the booklet, and these values were entered on the profile report form in the row marked "Raw Scores" (Appendix D).

CAIMI scores were interpreted normatively via percentiles and T-scores; these allowed the researcher to determine the students' levels of academic intrinsic motivation relative to the normative group both across the CAIMI scales and with normative scores of other instruments. For example, if a child's percentile rank is 40, then the child's score falls at a point at which 40% of the children score below him or her. T-scores are standardized scores which have a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10, allowing the researcher to know the distance of a score from the mean. An example of this is a T-score of 30, which falls two standard deviations below the mean of 50. Raw scores from each profile sheet were used to determine the percentiles and T-scores for each student by locating the corresponding raw score values on Table A3 in the CAIMI manual (Appendix E). For example, if the math raw score is 99, the student's percentile is 53, and his or her T-score is 51. Students' T-scores and percentiles for each CAIMI scale were then recorded on the Profile Report Form in the indicated areas.

Once the T-scores and percentiles were recorded on the Profile Report Form, the

T-scores were recorded in the graph area on the form. For each of the five CAIMI scales, standard errors of measurement are found in Table A4 on page 24 of the CAIMI Manual. These are based on coefficient alpha reliability; they provide for a band interpretation and are given in terms of normalized T-scores. For scores on each of the scales, the standard errors of measurement indicate that on a retest, the child's score would fluctuate within that band 68% of the time (68% confidence limits). Following the directions given on the CAIMI Profile Report Form, a line was drawn to indicate the obtained T-score and bands were plotted for each scale by adding and subtracting the standard error of measurement from each plotted T-score (3 T-score points for subject areas, 4 for the General Scale). For example, if the T-score on a math test is 48, the chances are 68 out of 100 that on a retest the T-score would fall between 45 and 51 (+/- 3 from the plotted T-score). Ninety-six percent confidence is also discussed in the CAIMI Manual. This value can be obtained by multiplying the standard error of measurement values by two and then adding and subtracting to and from the T-score value accordingly. For example, for the math T-score value of 48, the chances are 96 out of 100 that on a retest the T-score would fall between 42 and 54 (+/- 6, rather than +/- 3).

Upon drawing the lines to indicate the upper and lower limits of the band, using the 68% values of +/- 3 from the plotted T-score value, the banded area was shaded using either a pen or pencil. These banded areas were used to inspect the comparison of motivational strength across the scales and to establish if differences in scores were due to chance fluctuations, or if they differed beyond what was expected by chance. Scales which differed beyond chance expectation were those whose bands did not overlap; these scales represented a real difference in motivation approximately two-thirds of the time. Where the bands for different scales overlapped, the differences in scores for those scales

did not differ beyond chance expectation, and motivation was considered to be within the same range across these scales (Appendix F).

For the purposes of this study, CAIMI results were not reported individually. Instead, these scores were used to determine average results for the participant group of students who took the CAIMI. Once the CAIMI scores were interpreted and the students' average levels of academic intrinsic motivation were determined, the researcher randomly selected three sets of six students each to participate in focus group interviews. In simple random sampling, the researcher selects participants for the sample so that any individual has an equal probability of being selected from the population. The intent of simple random sampling is to choose individuals to be sampled that will be representative of the population; any bias in the population will be equally distributed among the people chosen (Creswell, 2005). According to Kitzinger (1995), focus groups are a common method used to gather data for research purposes. The researcher asks a small number of general questions and elicits responses from all individuals in the group. Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information and when interviewees are similar to and cooperative with each other (Creswell, 2005). This technique is a particularly useful way for the researcher to probe deeper into the knowledge and experiences of the group's members, discovering how and why the group members think the way they do.

Differing from conventional group interviews, focus groups overtly encourage communication and interaction with the group as a whole. This interaction is an explicit component of the focus group methodology, as the researcher invites the participants to talk to each other, rather than the researcher asking one question in turn to each participant. Krueger (1994) contended that the purpose of focus groups is to determine

the perceptions, feelings, and manner of thinking of consumers regarding products, services, or opportunities (p. 19). Krueger (1994) added that focus groups *work* because they (1) tap into human tendencies that as products of our environment, we are influenced by others around us, and (2) provide a nonjudgmental environment where people tend toward self-disclosure (pp. 10-11). In their research, Siegenthaler and Vaughan (1998) found that focus groups are an effective means of eliciting discussions, and the interactions with other group members appeared to stimulate their own thoughts about their experiences and perceptions.

The focus group questions were derived by using the CAIMI items as a starting point to write open-ended prompts (Appendix G). The primary goal of the focus group interviews was to determine from the students, the freshman academy experiences that have impacted their academic intrinsic motivation to learn English, math, science, and history, and to school in general. In order to write the open-ended prompts, the researcher carefully reviewed the CAIMI items and explored ways to rephrase those items as discussion questions to find out more specific information about the students' freshman academy experiences. For example, the CAIMI item "I would like to learn more about English, math, social studies, and science" (answered as Likert scale item), was adjusted for discussion as: "Tell me what subject(s) you'd like to learn more about. Why do you want to learn more about this/these subject(s)? Can you give me an example from this school year?" As the CAIMI scores measured the students' levels of academic intrinsic motivation, the focus group questions did not need to address motivation per se, but rather, the school experiences this year that have affected their motivation to learn the four core subjects and/or their attitude toward school in general. Once the first list of focus group questions was written, the list was shared with two other doctoral students

and a university professor to gather feedback. Based on their suggestions, minor changes were made in the wording on two of the original questions.

In addition to the student focus group interviews, the researcher interviewed freshman academy teachers and the assistant principal in charge of overseeing the freshman academy (Appendices H, I). Once consent had been confirmed via staff permission letters (Appendix J), the interviews were conducted as one-on-one interviews and ascertained the participants' understandings of freshman academies and their perceptions of the study freshman academy, as well as researching the teachers' and the assistant principal's perceptions of how the study freshman academy experiences were currently impacting the students' motivation to learn English, math, science, history, and their general orientation toward school learning. The researcher also desired to ascertain the teachers' and administrator's understandings of the structure and function of freshman academies as reform efforts to ease transition for students as they move from middle school to high school. Creswell (2005) posited that one-on-one interviews, although time-consuming and costly, are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably.

The selection of the teachers for individual interviews was conducted via purposeful sampling. In purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals to learn or understand the central phenomenon. The standard used in choosing participants is whether they are *information rich* (Patton, 1990). The teachers and assistant principal sampled in this study were all considered information rich in that they work daily in the freshman academy being studied, and they all work closely with the current freshmen enrolled at the academy. The sampling strategy employed in this research is described as maximal variation sampling. Maximal variation sampling is a

purposeful sampling strategy that develops many perspectives because the researcher samples cases or individuals that differ on some characteristic or trait (Creswell, 2005). Although all of the teachers sampled teach in the study freshman academy, they differ in the students they teach, the subjects they teach, and in their relative degrees of teaching experience. They also represent different ethnicities and both genders. Maximal variation sampling provided the researcher with a relatively wide variety of perspectives concerning the impact that the study freshman academy is having on the current students' academic intrinsic motivation.

To select the teachers to interview, the researcher first secured a list of all teachers that teach English, math, science, and history in the freshman academy, along with their gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience. The researcher then selected a total of four teachers, one from each subject that also equally represented gender, ethnicity, and relative levels of teaching experience.

The researcher conducted all of the interview sessions (focus group interviews and individual interviews) and tape recorded each session. A professional transcriber transcribed the recordings so that all responses could be accurately and thoroughly examined. Transcription data from the interviews was analyzed to identify themes and patterns that emerged relative to how freshman academy experiences have impacted student motivation to learn, including how the students, teachers, and administrator perceived the transitional challenges faced by current ninth graders.

Finally, the researcher conducted data analysis of how the study school writes about their freshman academy by examining their student handbook, school website, and the school's annual School Improvement Council *Report to the People*. This information is included as part of a detailed description of the study high school and its freshman

academy that is presented in Chapter 4 of this research study.

In order to attain a true, holistic interpretation of the participants, it is crucial for case study researchers to make use of a multi-modal approach. Becker et al. (2005) contended that the most common types of data collected in case study research are documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and artifacts. Creswell (2005) maintained that case study data should be triangulated in order to increase the accuracy of results. He defined triangulation as the process of authenticating data collection by using multiple sources to identify themes, adding that employing a range of data collection practices (e.g., interviews, observations, document analysis, and surveys) enables the researcher to create a valid and reliable report. In Chapter 4 of this research study, the researcher presents a thorough analysis and triangulation of the study's relevant data that was gathered via literature review, the perspectives of the study school's current ninth-grade students, teachers, and administrator, and from the study school's written portrayal of its freshman academy.

Delimitations

This study does not compare the students' academic intrinsic motivation and their academic achievement, as is most often done. Rather, the researcher studied the students' perceptions of how their freshman academy experiences at this school influenced their academic intrinsic motivation, without measure of their relative academic achievement.

Limitations

It is necessary for the researcher to recognize that the research results are only applicable to the particular school studied. No generalizations are made in regards to the wider educational community.

Summary

The freshman academy concept was initiated at this school in 2003-2004 with extended time for math and English. In 2006-2007 a new facility, connected to the main building, was opened to house the ninth graders separately from the rest of the high school (Grades 10-12). Other than research on graduation rates, assessment results, and student self-efficacy, there has been no prior research conducted at this school about the students' motivation to learn.

The transition to high school is a critical period for all students, and many students appear to lose interest in the ninth grade and are not able to get back on track academically, and for some students, this culminates in dropping out of high school. As a principal, this researcher often hears teachers claim that they cannot motivate their students to want to learn. The purpose of this study was to examine the freshman transition primarily from the students' viewpoints, and from their viewpoints, ascertain the impact that these experiences had on their academic intrinsic motivation to learn specific core subjects and their general orientation to school learning. To further triangulate the data, the researcher also explored the perceptions of the freshman academy teachers and administrator in terms of freshman transitional challenges and the role of the freshman academy in student transition to high school, as well as examining the school's written portrayal of its freshman academy.

Chapter 4: Findings

As stated in Chapter 1, this study examined the impact of freshman academy experiences on students' intrinsic motivation to learn English, math, science, history, and their general orientation toward school learning. This study sought to determine the perceptions of current freshmen about their transition to a high school freshman academy in Upstate South Carolina High School and how their freshman academy experiences impacted their academic intrinsic motivation. This study also sought to determine the teachers' and administrator's perceptions of how the freshman academy impacted the students' motivation to learn and how the academy helped transition its students from middle school to high school.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the data collected to determine what impact, if any, freshman academy experiences had on student academic intrinsic motivation to learn English, math, science, history, and their general orientation toward school learning. This chapter begins with a description of Upstate South Carolina High School, its community, and its freshman academy, including a general description of the staff, the building, and the ninth-grade daily schedule. Next, this chapter presents the results of the data collected in terms of the five guiding research questions presented in Chapter 1 by presenting the findings of the CAIMI surveys, student focus group interviews, teacher interviews, assistant principal interview, and a summary of how the study school writes about its freshman academy.

Description of Community, School, and Freshman Academy

The study high school is located in the upstate of South Carolina. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the county in which this school resides has a population of 55,342, reflecting a 5.3% increase since 2000. The county is comprised of 75% Caucasians,

20.4% African Americans, 0.4% Asians, 1.4% persons reporting two or more races, and 3.7% persons of Hispanic or Latino origin; 4.5% of the households report that a language other than English is spoken at home. The median household income for 2006-2010 is $34,132 and 19.4% of its persons are considered to be living below poverty level. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the city in which Upstate South Carolina High School resides has a population of 12,414, reflecting a 4.3% decrease since 2000. The city is comprised of 50.1% Caucasians, 45.7% African Americans, 0.2% American Indian and Alaska Natives, 0.9% Asians, 0.1% Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, 1.6% reporting two or more races, and 3.1% persons of Hispanic or Latino origin; 7.6% of the households report that a language other than English is spoken at home. The median household income for 2006-2010 was $27,465 and 23.9% of its persons were considered to be living below poverty level.

The Upstate South Carolina High School has an ethnically diverse student population of 2,021 (Table 1), including 644 ninth graders (Table 2) that represent three different feeder middle schools. According to the 2011 South Carolina Annual School Report Card, this high school received “Below Average” Absolute Rating in 2007, and “Average” Absolute Rating from 2008-2011. The school received “Average” Growth Rating in 2007, “Excellent” Growth Rating in 2008, and “Below Average” Growth Rating from 2009-2011. One hundred seven teachers currently teach in this high school and 59.8% of them hold advanced degrees; the principal is in her fifth year of tenure at this high school.

Of the 107 teachers at this school, 22 of them teach in the freshman academy; 13 of these hold advanced degrees. In the freshman academy there are 16 female teachers and 6 male teachers. Seven of these teach English, five teach math, four teach history,

three teach science, two teach academic skills/resource, and one teaches computer education classes. Of these, 18 are Caucasian males and females, and four are African American females. The average teaching experience among the freshman academy teachers is 11.5 years. The freshman academy also houses two female Caucasian guidance counselors, one with 40 years of experience, and the other with 10 years of experience, as well as a full-time nurse, two full-time secretaries, and a School Resource Officer. One of the high school assistant principals is assigned to the freshman academy as the administrator in charge; he has served the past 4 years in this capacity. This administrator has a doctorate degree with 18 years of experience in public education.

The freshman academy building, housed on the same campus as the main building (Grades 10-12), consists of two floors that house 31 classrooms, administrative offices, guidance offices, and the ninth-grade cafeteria. There is a connecting canopy between the main building and the ninth-grade wing, allowing easy accessibility as students transition between the academy and the main building for their elective classes and Honors math classes. All other ninth-grade classes are housed in the freshman academy, which means that all first-time ninth graders spend the majority of their day in the wing, rather than in the main building. The original architectural plans for the ninth-grade academy addition contained plans for a gymnasium, but due to budget constraints, school district administrators decided to eliminate the separate gymnasium, which made it necessary for freshman to take PE in the main building. Three of the freshman academy classrooms are designated as *self-contained* classrooms, but only one is currently being utilized. There are also two resource classrooms for special education students and both of these are currently being used for Academic Assistance/Resource. Seven teachers teach ninth-grade English, five teach math, four teach history, and three teach science. All science

classes and labs are located on the first floor, along with administrative and guidance offices, and the cafeteria. There is a computer lab located on each floor; one teacher uses a lab to teach Integrated Business Applications, a course required for high school graduation. The design of the freshman academy resembles that of a large rectangle, with the core classes arranged in *pods*, for easy location. Each classroom contains an interactive white board, LCD, and document camera. Science labs are very well-equipped with lab stations, sinks, and natural gas access.

Students arrive to school in the morning and may enter the freshman academy building at 8:00 a.m. They are allowed to walk around and *hang out* until the first bell rings at 8:10 a.m., signaling the need to report to first period by 8:17. The general daily schedule for the ninth graders consists of English, math, science, history, two elective classes, and lunch, constituting a nine-period day that concludes with the final bell ringing at 3:30 p.m. For all of the students, English is a 100-minute double-blocked class and for most students, so is math. Honors math students, however, take a single period of Honors Geometry or Algebra I Honors, which are both taught in the main building. There are two different lunch shifts, each consisting of 35 minutes.

Results

Data analysis and interpretation of results were based on the following research questions:

1. How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn English?
2. How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn math?
3. How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to

learn science?

4. How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn history?

5. How do freshman academy experiences impact student general orientation toward school learning?

Description of the Sample

The CAIMI survey was administered to quantitatively determine the students' raw scores for academic intrinsic motivation toward the four subject areas and their general orientation toward school learning. The CAIMI survey was completed by 70 students; a total of 23 students did not return their signed consent forms and were therefore not involved in the data collection. The sample was comprised of 37 female students (52.9%) and 33 male students (47.1%). The majority of students (*n*=51, 72.9%) were on a college preparatory (CP) track, while the remaining students (*n*=19, 27.1%) were on the honor's track. There were no gifted/talented (G/T) English classes taught during the time of the day when surveys were completed. It is noted that all students not enrolled in either honor's track or G/T are enrolled in college preparatory (CP) English.

The ethnic make-up of the student sample is displayed below.

Table 4

Ethnic Make-up of Student Sample

Race/Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Two or More Races	2	2.9
African American	16	22.9
American Indian	1	1.4
Caucasian	49	70.0
Hispanic or Latino	2	2.9
Total	70	100.0

As evidenced in Table 4, the ethnicity of the student sample showed considerable variation. This sample population was very similar ethnically to the total ninth-grade population, whose ethnicity was described in Chapter 1 and displayed in Table 2. The largest difference noted was in the percentage of African American students, which was 7.1% higher in the total student population than in the sample student population.

A cross-tabulation of gender, track, and ethnicity of the student sample is found below.

Table 5

Cross-Tabulation of Student Demographic Variables

		Gender		
Track	Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
College Prep	Two or More	1	0	1
	African American	5	8	13
	American Indian	1	0	1
	Caucasian	22	12	34
	Hispanic or Latino	1	1	2
	Total	30	21	51
Honors	Two or More	1	0	1
	African American	2	1	3
	Caucasian	4	11	15
	Total	7	12	19

Table 5 also illustrates the considerable variation in the ethnicity of the student sample, when separated out by the college preparatory and honors classes represented in the study. As represented above, the percentage of Caucasian students was 12.2% higher in the honors class than in the CP classes. Additionally, the percentage of African American

students was 9.7% higher in the CP classes than in the honors class; these represented the largest differences in ethnicity categories between the two tracks of classes. Also, there was a much larger percentage of males in the Honors class than in the CP classes—63.2% males in the Honors class as compared to only 41.2% males in the CP classes. Overall, when comparing for ethnicity and gender, the CP classes most closely mirrored the overall ninth-grade population.

Descriptive Statistics of the CAIMI Raw Scores

In the next pages, Figures 1-5 depict CAIMI subscale raw score frequency results. These results are displayed as histograms, with each histogram representing a particular CAIMI subscale. Results are indicated by the mean (average) CAIMI raw scores and corresponding standard deviations. Standard deviation shows how much variation exists from the mean; a low standard deviation indicates that the data points tend to be very close to the mean. The frequency results for each subscale are briefly discussed beneath the corresponding histograms.

The frequency results for the English CAIMI raw scores are displayed below in Figure 1.

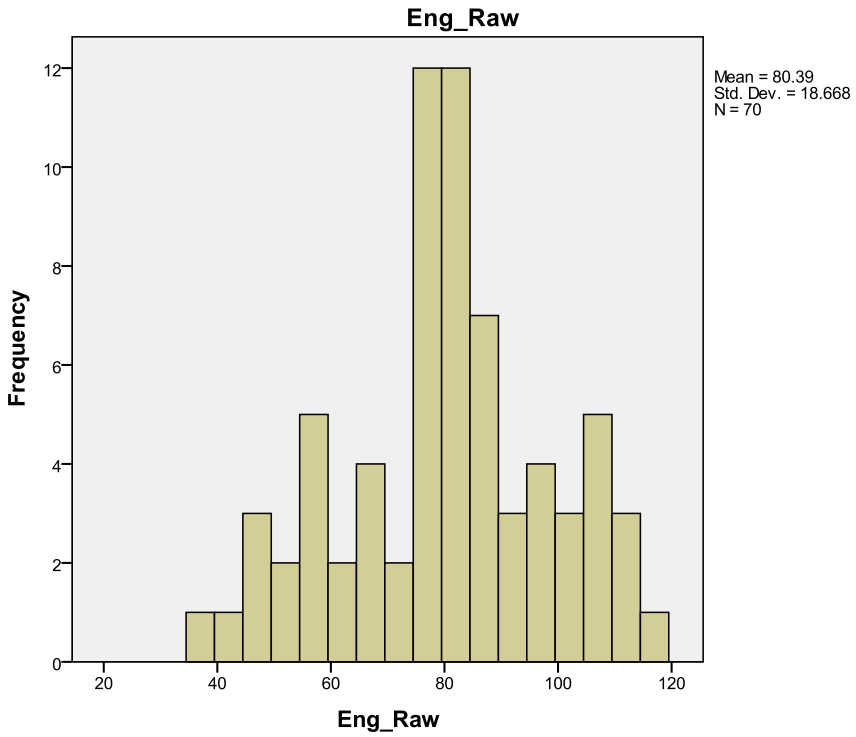

Figure 1. English CAIMI Raw Scores.

The frequency results shown in the above figure indicated that the English CAIMI raw scores had a minimum value of 37 and a maximum value of 116. The mean raw score was 80.39, with standard deviation 18.668. This test had the highest overall raw score mean.

The following histogram illustrates the frequency results for the math CAIMI raw scores (Figure 2).

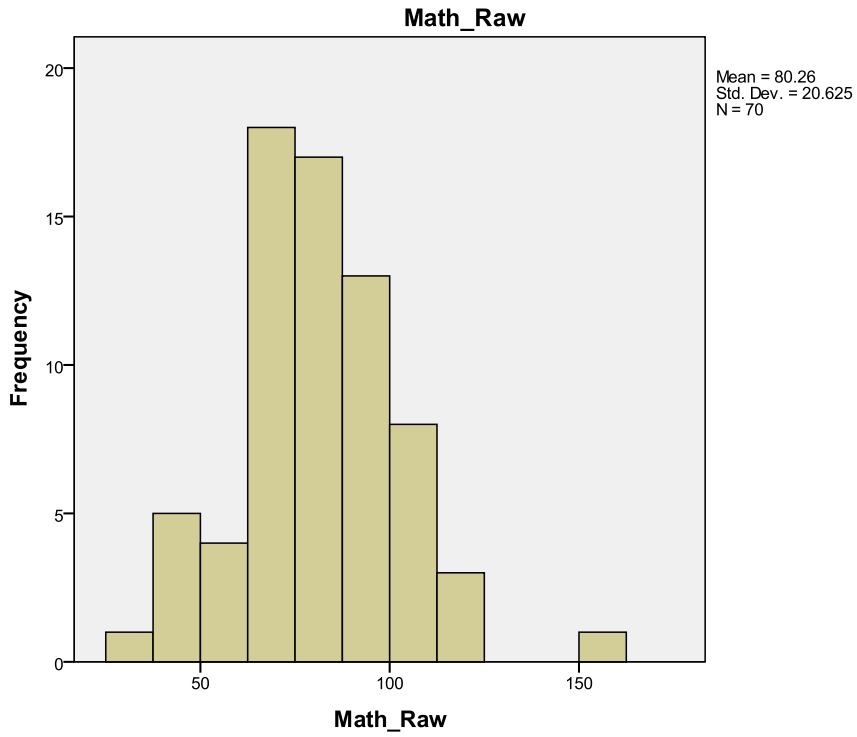

Figure 2. Math CAIMI Raw Scores.

As shown in Figure 2, the math CAIMI raw scores had a minimum value of 37 and a maximum value of 161. The mean raw score was 80.26, with standard deviation 20.625. The Math CAIMI had the largest variability in scores, as indicated by the standard deviation, indicating student scores varied the most on this CAIMI subject.

Frequency results for the science CAIMI raw scores are displayed below in Figure 3.

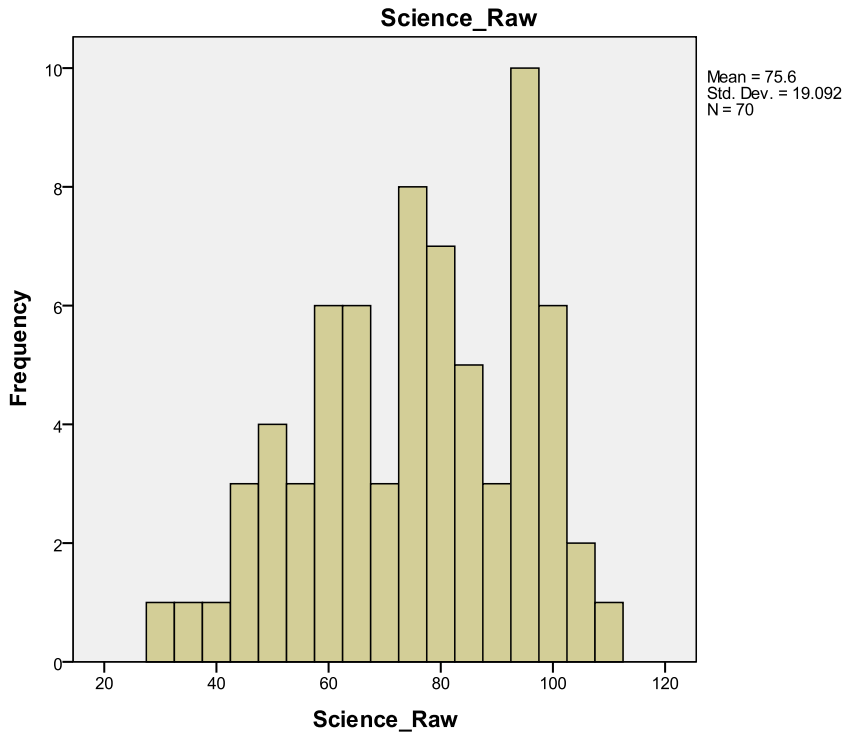

Figure 3. Science CAIMI Raw Scores.

The science CAIMI raw scores, as shown in Figure 3, had a minimum value of 30 and a maximum value of 109. The mean raw score was 75.60, with standard deviation 19.092.

The following histogram (Figure 4) displays the history CAIMI raw score frequency results.

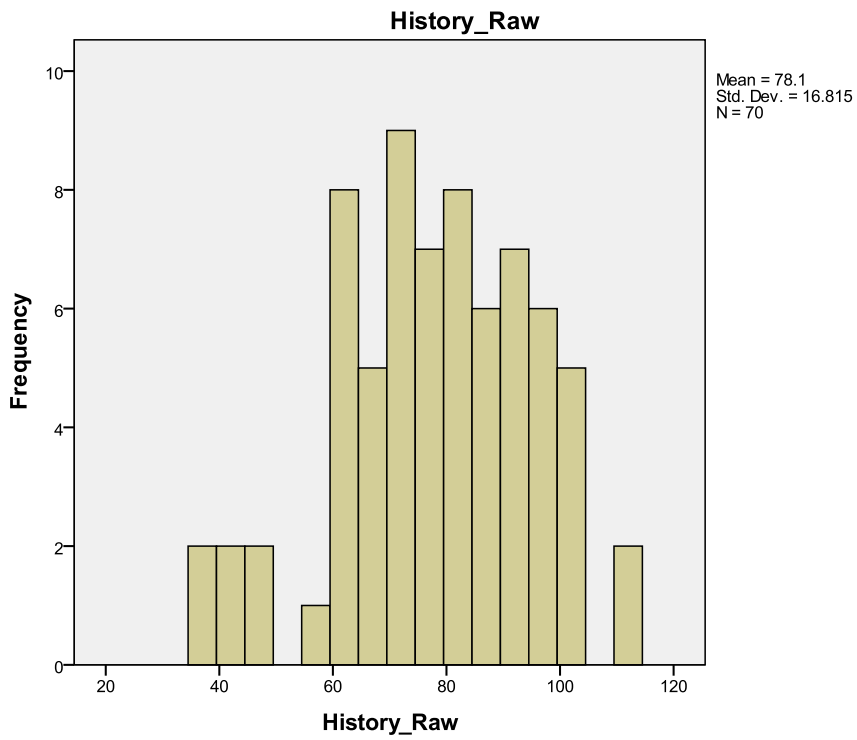

Figure 4. History CAIMI Raw Scores.

Figure 4 shows that the history CAIMI raw scores had a minimum value of 37 and a maximum value of 112. The mean raw score was 78.10, with standard deviation 16.815. This test represented the lowest overall raw score mean and the lowest standard deviation for the four core subjects.

Frequency results for the general CAIMI raw scores are displayed below in Figure 5.

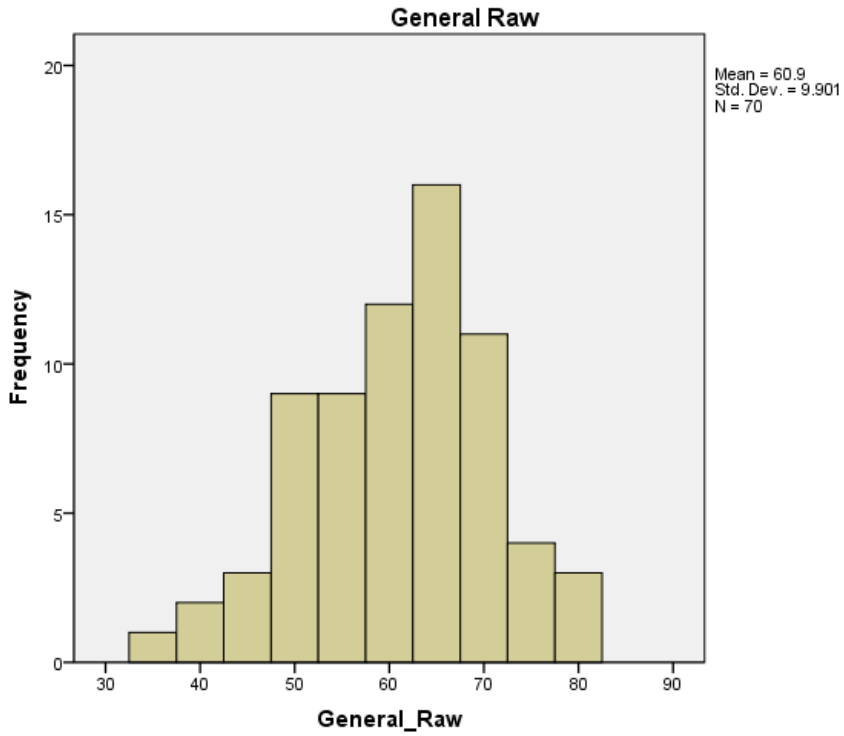

Figure 5. General CAIMI Raw Scores.

The general orientation mean raw score, as shown in Figure 5, was 60.90; this test represented the lowest overall raw score mean. Additionally, with standard deviation 9.901, the general orientation CAIMI had the lowest standard deviation of all the tests, and hence the smallest variability.

Overall descriptive statistics of the CAIMI raw scores are found in Table 6 below. These values indicate the minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, mean T-scores, and corresponding mean percentiles for each set of scores.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for CAIMI Raw Scores

	N	Min	Max	M	SD	T-score	Percent
English	70	37	116	80.39	18.668	47	38
Math	70	37	161	80.26	20.625	40	15
History	70	37	112	78.10	16.815	41	18
Science	70	30	109	75.60	19.092	40	15
General	70	35	80	60.90	9.901	41	18

As discussed previously in Chapter 3, CAIMI percentiles and T-scores allow the user to determine a child's level of academic intrinsic motivation relative to the normative group. For example, if a child's percentile rank is 50, then the child's score falls at a point at which 50% of the children score below him or her. T-scores are standardized scores which have a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10, and allow the user to know the distance of a score from the mean. For example, a T-score of 40 falls one standard deviation below the mean of 50 points. Instead of reporting individual CAIMI T-scores and percentiles, for the purposes of this study, the researcher chose to report T-scores and percentiles as means for all the students who took the CAIMI. Quantitatively, the mean percentiles and mean T-scores allowed the researcher to compare participant group means across the five CAIMI scales.

As shown in Table 6, these results indicate that English had the highest corresponding mean T-score and percentile, 47 and 38, respectfully. The history and general CAIMI subscales had the second highest T-scores of 41 and the second highest

percentile of 18. Math and science had the same scores that represented the lowest T-scores and percents, 40 and 15, respectfully.

Table 7 that follows depicts the correlations between the CAIMI raw scores. This test was performed by a professional statistician who used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. A two-tailed Pearson coefficient correlation was performed. A Pearson correlation (r) is a single number that describes the strength of a relationship between two variables; in this case any two of the CAIMI subscale raw scores. When this number is near zero, there is no correlation, but as it approaches +1 or -1, there is a strong positive or negative relationship between the variables respectively. For the purposes of this study, a two-tailed correlation test was used, because it was uncertain whether any relationships that were identified across the CAIMI subscales would be positive or negative.

Table 7

Correlations between CAIMI Raw Scores

		Eng Raw	Math Raw	History Raw	Science Raw	General Raw
Eng Raw	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	70				
Math Raw	Pearson Correlation	.478**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	70	70			
History Raw	Pearson Correlation	.554**	.384**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001			
	N	70	70	70		
Science Raw	Pearson Correlation	.491**	.309**	.577**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.009	.000		
	N	70	70	70	70	
General Raw	Pearson Correlation	.595**	.710**	.401**	.496**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.000	
	N	70	70	70	70	70

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on SPSS analysis, as indicated in the above table, all correlations between raw scores were positive and significant. This indicates that as motivation scores in one subject area increased, motivation scores in other subject areas increased as well. For example, the correlation between English raw CAIMI scores and math raw CAIMI scores was .478 ($p<.01$) indicating a positive relationship between student motivation scores in these two areas. The largest correlation was found between math scores and general orientation scores ($r=.710$, $p<.01$) and the smallest correlation was found between math and science scores ($r=.309$, $p=.009$). Using the student sample size of 70, SPSS software processing of the CAIMI raw scores determined the correlation significance level at 0.01,

which means that there was less than one in 100 chance of the scores being wrong, as in being due to chance alone.

During the next phase of the research process, the researcher examined student scores for motivational differences across the five CAIMI subscales. The researcher followed the directions given on the CAIMI Profile Report Form (Appendix E), and a line was drawn to indicate the obtained T-score and bands were plotted for each scale by adding and subtracting the standard error of measurement from each plotted T-score. Upon drawing the lines to indicate the upper and lower limits of the band, using the 68% values of +/- 3 from the plotted T-score value, the banded area was shaded in to reflect the 68% confidence intervals. These banded areas were used to inspect the comparison of motivational strength across the scales and to establish if differences in scores were due to chance fluctuations, or if they differed beyond what is expected by chance. Scales which differed beyond chance expectation were those whose bands did not overlap; these scales represented a real difference in motivation approximately two-thirds of the time. Where the bands for different scales overlapped, the differences in scores for those scales did not differ beyond chance expectation, and motivation was considered to be within the same range across these scales (Appendix G).

Students with confidence intervals which did not overlap with other scores were flagged and identified as having differing motivation scores in that subject area in comparison with other subject areas. Results are found in Table 8.

Table 8

Overlapping Motivation Scores

Subject Area		n	Lower motivation	Higher motivation
English	Due to chance fluctuations	62		
	Differences in motivation not due to chance	8	6	2
Math	Due to chance fluctuations	58		
	Differences in motivation not due to chance	12	10	2
History	Due to chance fluctuations	52		
	Differences in motivation not due to chance	18	17	1
Science	Due to chance fluctuations	60		
	Differences in motivation not due to chance	10	5	5
General Orientation	Due to chance fluctuations	55		
	Differences in motivation not due to chance	15	12	3

As shown in Table 8, results for English CAIMI scores can be interpreted as follows, with other results interpreted similarly. Of the 70 students taking the CAIMI English instrument, 62 (88.6%) had scores that varied due to chance alone and eight (11.4%) had motivation scores that showed a real difference. For those seeing real differences in motivation, six (75%) had lower motivation scores in English than other areas and two (25%) had higher motivation scores in English than in other subject areas. The lowest relative scores appear to be in history where only one student (5.9%) had

higher motivation scores than in other areas.

Students having multiple non-overlapping motivation scores were then identified. Table 9 shows these results. This was done to more closely examine any identified differences in motivation scores across the five scales measured by the CAIMI.

Table 9

Counts of Different Motivation Scores

Number significantly different scores	Frequency	Percent
None	36	51.4
1	13	18.6
2	13	18.6
3	8	11.4

For example, from Table 9, it is apparent that 51.4% of the students had consistent scores (no differences in motivation between subject areas other than what is expected by chance alone). Thirteen (18.6%) had one score that differed from other subject area scores, 13 had two scores that differed from other subject area scores, and eight (11.4%) showed considerably different motivation by subject area with three scores differing from other subject area scores. This means that of the students who participated in the CAIMI, slightly less than half of the subscale scores indicated a true difference in intrinsic motivation based on subjects. Only eight (11.4%) of the students who participated in the CAIMI showed statistically different motivation scores across three subject areas.

Table 10 below shows the cross-tabulation of motivation scores. This cross-

tabulation allowed the researcher to identify the subject areas that showed the greatest differences for student intrinsic motivation.

Table 10

Cross-tabulation of Motivation Scores

Subject		Number significantly different scores			
		None	1	2	3
English	Due to chance fluctuations	36	11	10	5
	Differences in motivation not due to chance	0	2	3	3
Math	Due to chance fluctuations	36	11	7	4
	Differences in motivation not due to chance	0	2	6	4
History	Due to chance fluctuations	36	9	5	2
	Differences in motivation not due to chance	0	4	8	6
Science	Due to chance fluctuations	36	12	8	4
	Differences in motivation not due to chance	0	1	5	4
General Orientation	Due to chance fluctuations	36	9	9	1
	Differences in motivation not due to chance	0	4	4	7

Upon closer examination (see Table 10), it is evident that students with multiple different scores were most likely to have general orientation and history differences in motivation scores. As discussed previously in Chapter 4, these two subscale scores were also typically lower than scores in the other CAIMI subscales.

Summary of Quantitative Data

CAIMI scores indicated that among the student participants, English had the

highest overall raw score means and the highest mean T-scores and percentiles. English scores also exhibited the least motivational differences when compared to the other subscales. Math had the second highest overall raw score means and shared the third-highest mean T-scores and percentiles with science. Math scores also exhibited the largest variability in scores, evidenced by the highest standard deviation value. Additionally, math scores exhibited the third-lowest motivational differences when compared to the other subscales. Science scores had the third-highest overall raw score means and the second-lowest motivational differences when compared to the other subscales. Of these score differences, 50% represented higher scores than in the other subscales. This was unique, in that subject differences across the other subscales typically indicated lower scores. Among the four core subjects, history had the lowest CAIMI raw score mean and tied with general orientation for the second-highest mean T-scores and percentiles. History scores also tied with general orientation scores for the lowest standard deviation values, and hence, the lowest variability in scores. History scores also reflected the greatest number of scores, 18, that were significantly different from the other scales. Seventeen of these 18 scores were lower than the other subscale scores. General orientation scores revealed the lowest overall raw score means. Additionally, students with multiple different CAIMI raw scores were more likely to have general orientation and history differences in motivation. Finally, the largest CAIMI raw score correlations (positive) were between general orientation scores and math scores; the smallest CAIMI raw score correlations (positive) were between science and math.

Focus Group and Individual Interviews

After the CAIMI survey phase of the research process was complete, the researcher formed the student focus groups by employing the simple random sample

method. All completed student consent forms were placed in a pile and the researcher then selected three groups of six students each. An additional six were selected to serve as replacements should a student be absent from school at the interview appointment time, or should study participants choose to opt out of the research process immediately upon notification that they had been selected for the interviews. It should be noted that two students were absent from school during the interview appointment time, one from Focus Group 2 and one from Focus Group 3. They were replaced with the first two alternate students; all students that were selected and present agreed to participate; no one opted out of the interviews at any point in the research process. The study participants were seven Caucasian males, six Caucasian females, one "2 or more" males, one African American male, two African American females, and one Hispanic female. Each focus group session was audio taped and the student participants were asked nine general questions (Appendix H). The audio taped sessions were transcribed and the transcriptions were analyzed and interpreted by the researcher for emergent themes and patterns. Student focus group responses were combined for presentation of data.

In order to provide as much depth as possible to the data collected, the researcher deemed it important to open the student focus group sessions with a broader focus, and then progress to more specific questions about the participants' subjects and teachers. The researcher accomplished this by beginning the student focus group interviews with three questions designed to determine the students' relative understandings of their freshman academy and whether or not they felt that their freshman academy experiences had eased their transition from middle school to high school. A similar format was patterned in the teacher and administrator interviews. Later in this chapter, results from these interviews are presented, along with the cross-tabulation of student and staff

interviews for statistical comparison.

Do you know you're in a freshman academy? If so, how do you know? When students were questioned about their knowledge of being in a freshman academy and the source of this knowledge, all students said they were aware that they were attending a freshman academy this year. When asked specifically about the source of this knowledge, participant responses indicated that they had consistently heard about their freshman academy from family and friends and a visit to their middle school from the academy principal during the spring of their eighth-grade year, with 12 out of 23 responses crediting friends and family, and five out of 23 responses crediting the principal's visit. Two responses identified ninth-grade orientation and the building sign located in front of the academy building as the sources of their knowledge of the freshman academy. Two additional responses included former teachers and the fact that they were in a separate building as contributing to their knowledge of the existence of the freshman academy.

Below, Figure 7 indicates the graphical summary of student responses to this interview question.

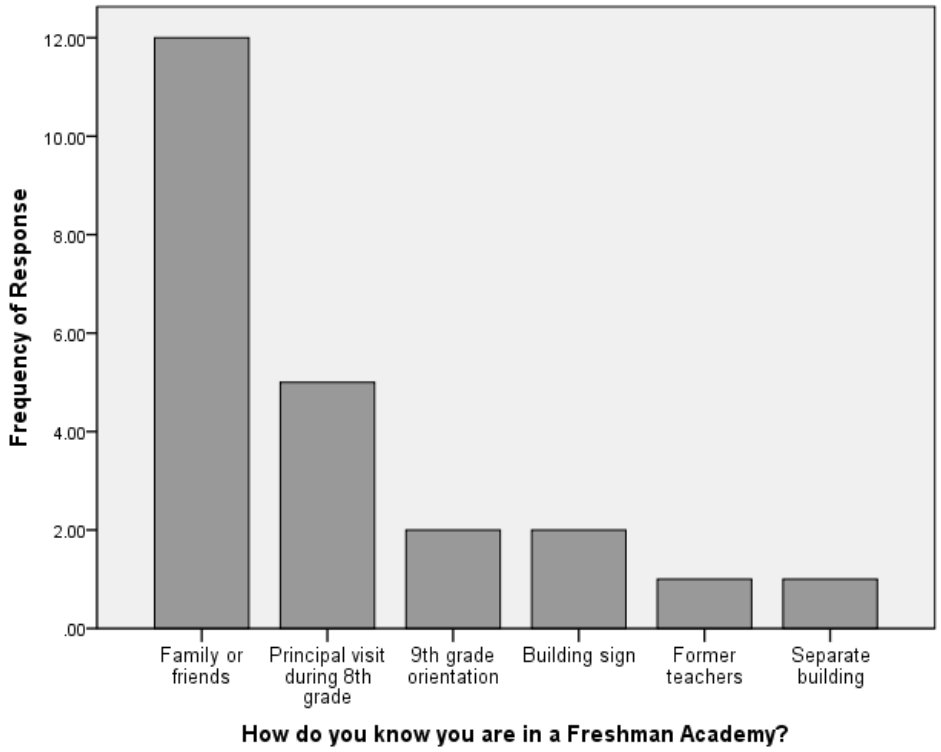

Figure 7. How do you know you're in a Freshman Academy?

Students provided a variety of examples of how they found out that they would be attending a freshman academy this year. For example, one student said, "My sister told me that I would be attending an academy at the high school this year" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A second student shared:

> When I was in the 8th grade, I played track and varsity cross county, and I asked my teammates what it was like in high school. They told me that I would be in a freshman academy and that I wouldn't be with the older students unless I was in honor's classes. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

A third student said:

> I remember the principal coming to our middle school to talk to us in the eighth grade. He told us that we would be in an academy this year, but I don't really

remember anything else he said; that was a long time ago (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

There were six other responses that students gave as having made them aware that they would attend a freshman academy this year. These included ninth-grade orientation, the sign in the front of the academy, former teachers, and a separate building. None of the students indicated a visit to the academy prior to their freshman orientation, which was held late in the summer prior to their ninth-grade year. This was also when students received their ninth-grade schedules and were allowed to briefly tour the academy building.

Are freshman academy experiences different? When asked this interview question, the students responded with a total of 20 responses, and these responses were interpreted by the interviewer and organized into six different categories. These response categories included: easier to navigate; less intimidating; less crowded; separated from older students; smaller; and fewer behavioral issues. Based on these responses, it was evident that students perceived the freshman academy to be quite different from a non-academy high school. The reasons they gave appeared to be related to procedural and social differences, rather than to academic differences. These results are shown below in Figure 8.

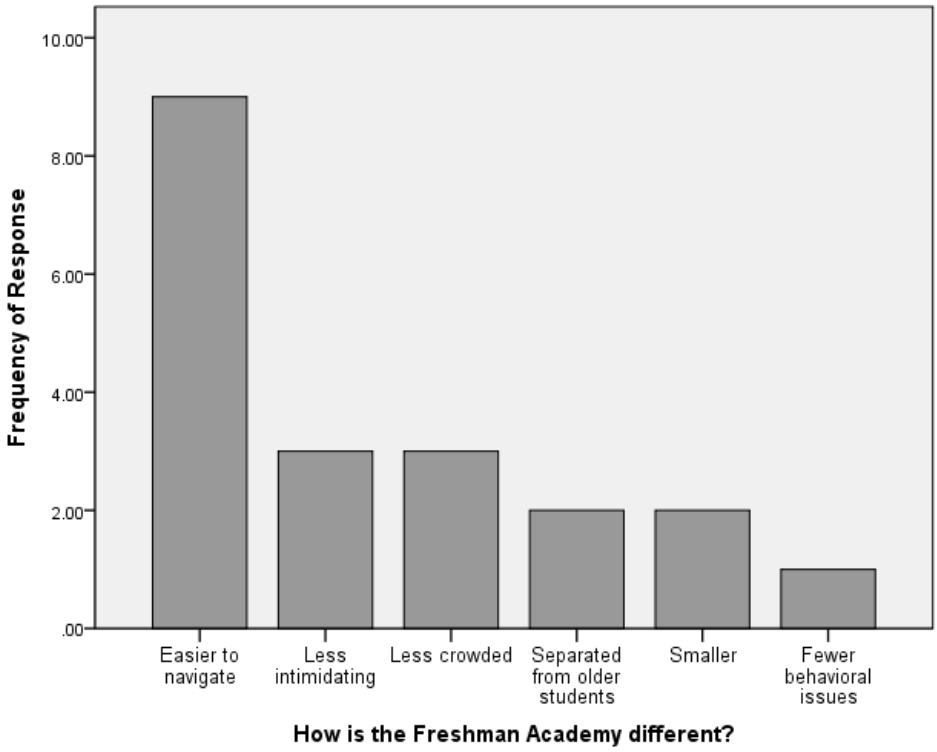

Figure 8. How is the Freshman Academy Different?

Of the responses given when asked how their freshman academy experiences differed from non-academy experiences, the most prevalent response was given in all three focus groups a total of nine times and had to do with navigation around the building and being able to find their classes. For example, one student commented, "This building is probably a lot smaller than a regular high school building and it's arranged like a big rectangle. The classes are grouped by subjects. That makes it much easier to find your way around" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Three comments suggested to the interviewer that the freshman academy was perceived as less intimidating than a non-academy high school setting. For example, one student explained,

> There are probably less behavioral problems with an academy than with all of the students together in one place. Some people don't like other people and the older

> kids might pick on the freshman. Because we're here most of the day, that doesn't happen as much. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Three comments also indicated that the students believed their academy was less crowded than a non-academy building. According to one of these students, "There's more room here; you don't have all those people in your way at lunch or when you're walking to classes" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Two students spoke that the academy is smaller than a non-academy building. They were followed by two other students who commented about the physical separation of the freshman from the other students. A different student added, "I think it's easier for the teachers and principals to control behavior over here; there aren't as many kids to keep up with" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). This response was interpreted by the interviewer as "fewer behavioral issues."

Academic, Procedural, and Social Challenges Encountered

Next during the interviews, the students were asked to comment specifically about their high school transition in terms of the academic, procedural, and social changes, and challenges they have encountered. As for the academic challenges faced, all focus groups mentioned that their classes are more difficult than when they were in middle school. Responses about the classes being more difficult this year accounted for 12 of the 25 responses during this portion of the sessions. All focus groups also mentioned that credit courses made the academic transition more difficult, as this was not something they were accustomed to coming from middle school. These remarks constituted eight out of the 25 responses. Four students discussed feeling more apt to handle the new-found difficulty because they were with their peers most of the day, rather than being mixed in with the older students. Figure 9 displays the results of the academic differences and challenges

faced by these students as they entered high school this year.

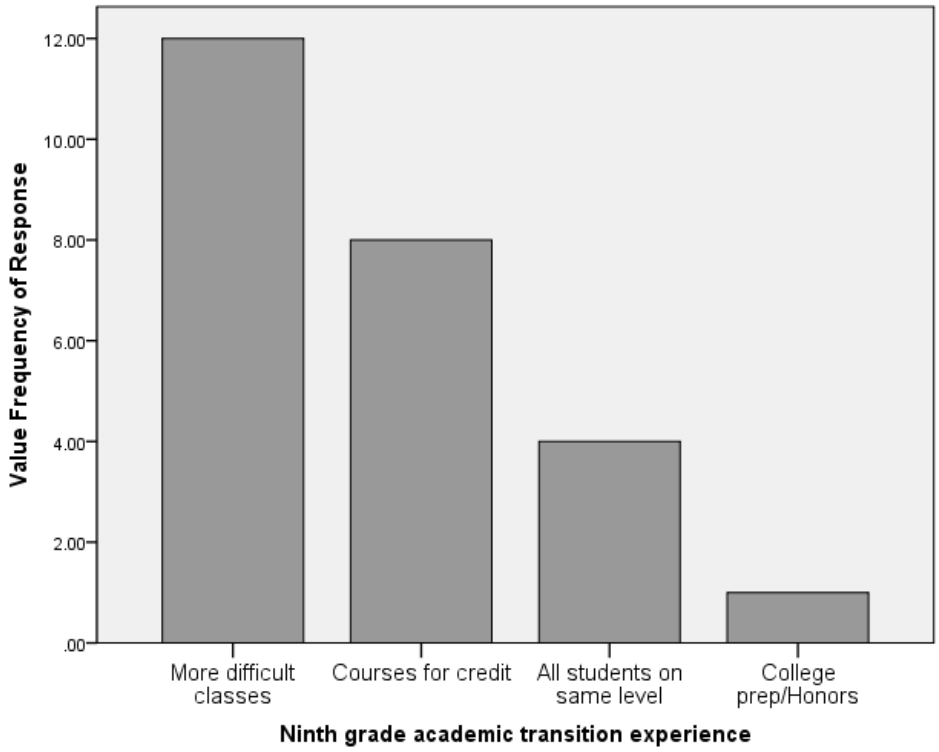

Figure 9. Ninth-Grade Academic Transition Experience.

Students readily agreed that they had faced academic challenges this year. For example, one student said, "Oh yes, the classes are a lot harder" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A student from a different focus group exclaimed, "Like, you have more work, and they expect you do your work" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Being with their peers most of the day apparently lessened these academic challenges, however. According to one student:

> I don't really mind the harder work because pretty much everyone else in my classes is like me, you know, a ninth grader. I'd probably be scared if I was in my classes with older kids, cause [sic] I'd think they were a lot smarter than me (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Another participant also noted that students are now tracked into honors and CP classes, unlike at the middle school, where most of the classes are heterogeneously grouped.

In summary, students talked openly about the academic challenges they had faced as first time ninth graders at Upstate South Carolina High School. Most students volunteered that their ninth-grade classes were more difficult than their former middle school classes. They also recognized that courses now count toward their graduation requirements (courses for credit). Additionally, student participants discussed their perceptions of being on the same level with the other students in their classes, and how their classes were now tracked into college prep and honors.

When asked about procedural challenges faced this year, all focus groups indicated that the freshman academy experiences had eased their transition to high school. Eight of the 18 students interviewed acknowledged the greater freedom experienced at the freshman academy compared to what they had when they attended their middle schools. They welcomed this freedom, and eight other students discussed how this transition year had assisted them in getting used to the new-found freedom before being turned out into the main high school full time. Two students also acknowledged the bell system as a major difference between the freshman academy and the middle schools. Figure 10 displays the procedural differences and challenges encountered by the students as they entered high school this year.

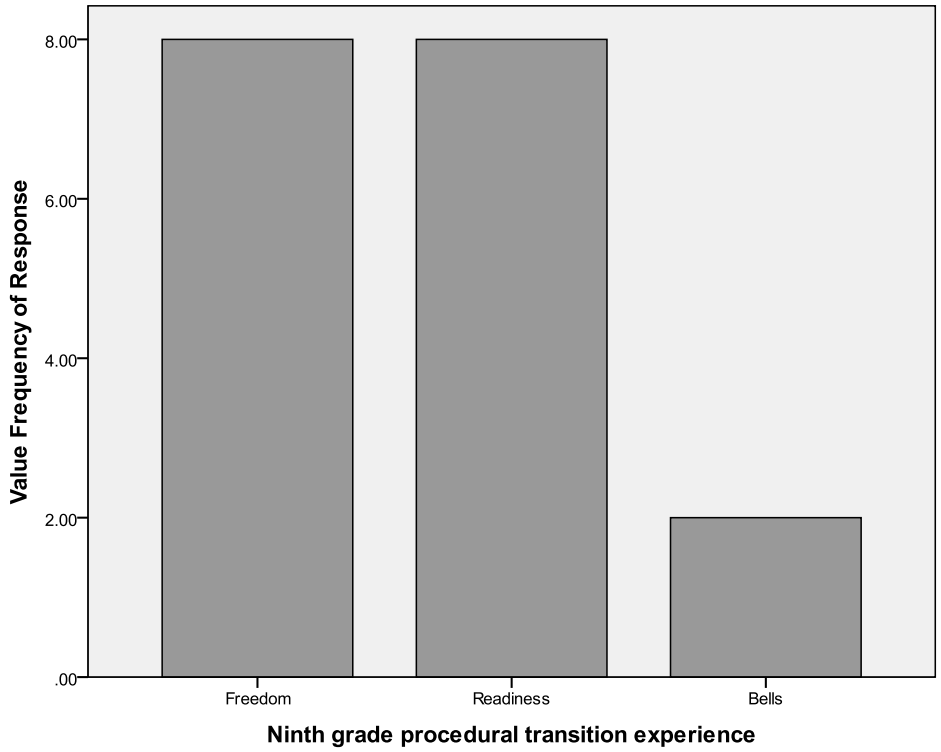

Figure 10. Ninth-Grade Procedural Transition Experience.

The additional freedom acquired at the freshman academy was described as a positive experience for the focus group participants; simply put, they liked having more freedom than they had while at the middle school. An example was not having to report to a common holding area when they arrive to school each morning like they did when they were in middle school: "I like being able to walk around in the mornings when I get here; that gives me time to hang out with my friends before I have to go to class" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Other comments about increased freedom included "Lunch is different now. As soon as you're finished eating, you can get up and go outside and stay outside until the bell rings. In middle school, we had to wait to be taken outside" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). All focus groups did, however, indicate that things were a little difficult at the very beginning of the year,

when they were adjusting to this freedom. One student explained as follows:

> At first I was scared that I would be late for my next class and I wouldn't even stop at the restroom if I needed to. Once I learned my way around though, I realized that I could go and still get to class on time (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Other participant responses, representing all three focus groups, indicated that the freshman academy had helped them get ready for high school this year, instead of having to go straight to the main building, full time. According to one of these students, "We are taking things one step at a time to get bigger and bigger. We started at the elementary, then to middle, and then we went to the academy. Finally, next year, we'll go to the big building" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Several of these students commented about their daily schedule contributing to their gradual transition. For example, one student said, "Since I take my electives in the big building, I now know both buildings. That will make it easier for me next year, when I'll be there all day" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Comments about the high school bell schedule included "We now have bells that tell us when to leave class and go to the next one. We didn't have bells at middle school. That took some getting used to, too" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

All focus group participants appeared eager to talk about their social experiences this year. Figure 11 shows the results of these findings.

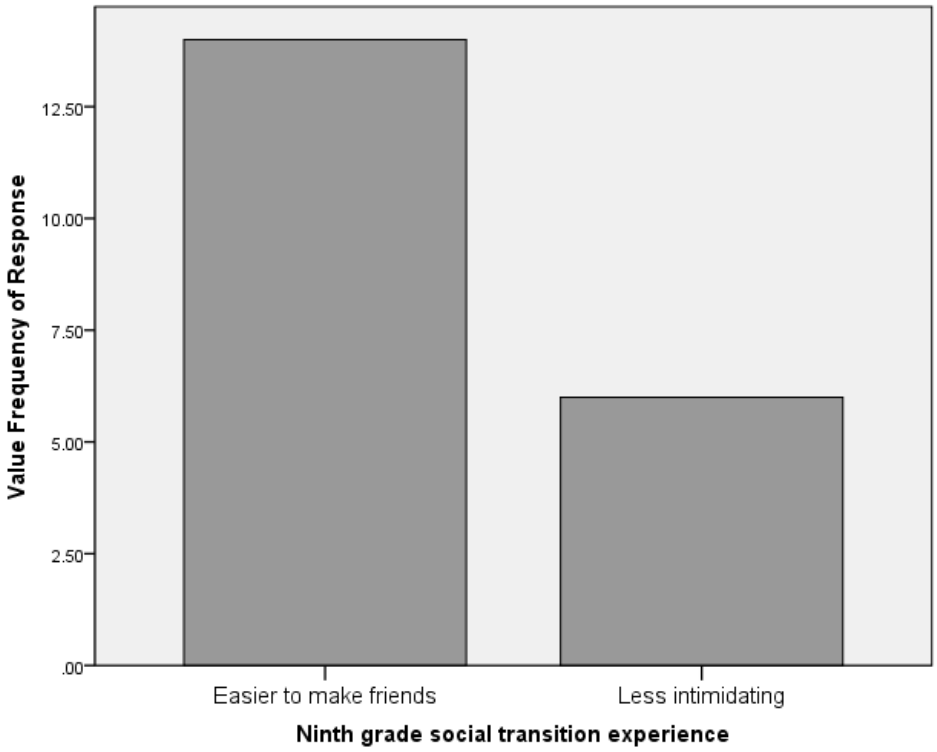

Figure 11. Ninth-Grade Social Transition Experience.

As Figure 11 illustrates, most students liked the freshman academy social experiences, but a few students in one focus group mentioned they would like to socialize with the "more mature" high school students. Thirteen of the 18 students commented that the freshman academy had made it easier for them to make friends this year. Six additional comments indicated that the students found the freshman academy to be less intimidating because they were with their own age group for most of the day. Spanning across all three focus groups, most participants felt that it had been easier for them to make friends this year because they were in a freshman academy. According to one student, "We see each other more and spend more time together because the building's smaller" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Another student added, "I would be shy if I was in a bigger place" (Anonymous, personal communication, March

2012). Others stated specifically that they were less intimidated socially because they were in a smaller building. One of them said, “A bigger place would be very intimidating, mostly because it would be so crowded” (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

In summary, the responses provided to questions about social transition experiences this year showed considerable consistency. Most students volunteered that the freshman academy had made it easier for them to make new friends because of its smaller size and because they now had more freedom to socialize with their friends outside of the classroom. One-third of the responses indicated that these freshman academy attributes resulted in the academy being less intimidating to the students.

Summary of Freshman Academy Transition

When student participants were asked by the interviewer if their freshman academy experiences had significantly eased their transition to high school, 16 of the 18 students replied yes. Their dialogue primarily centered on an appreciation for the transitional year provided by the freshman academy. Figure 12 presents these results in graph form.

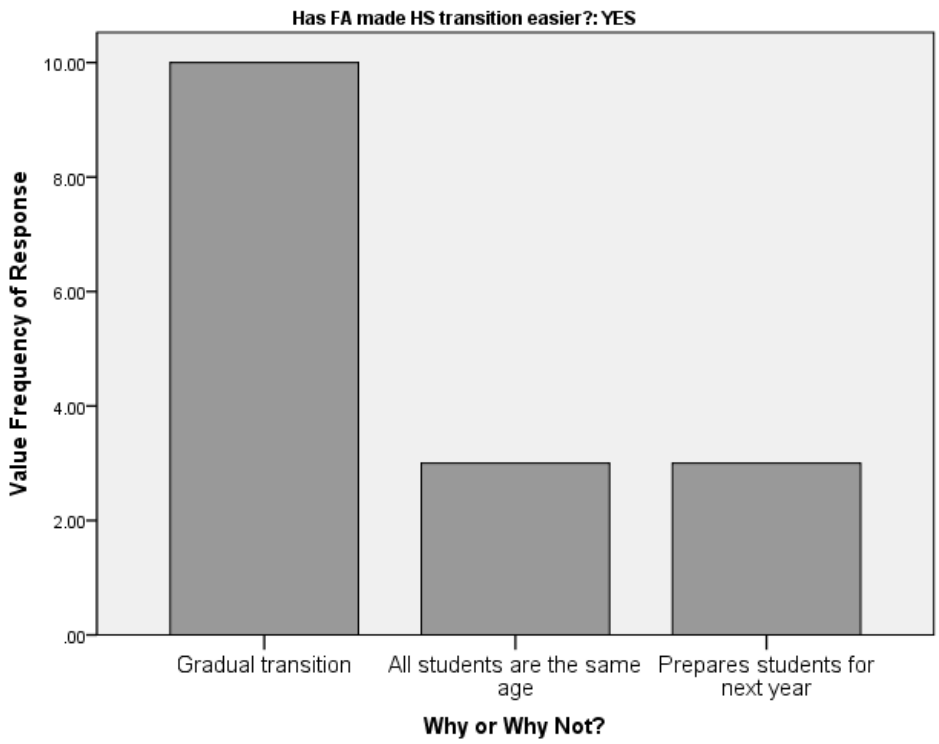

Figure 12. Freshman Academy Made High School Transition Easier.

Figure 12 indicates that of the 16 focus group participants that said the freshman academy had significantly eased their transition to high school, 10 of them attributed this ease to a gradual transition to high school. Several of the students stressed that they liked being with their same age group, rather than mixing with the older students all day. Several other participants talked about how this year has made them feel better prepared to enter the main high school next year. Three students said that the transition had been easier because all of students in the freshman academy are the same age. Three other students said the academy eased their transition to high school because it has prepared them for the next level. Two of the 18 study participants, however, said that the freshman academy had not eased their transition from middle school. Figure 13 displays these results below.

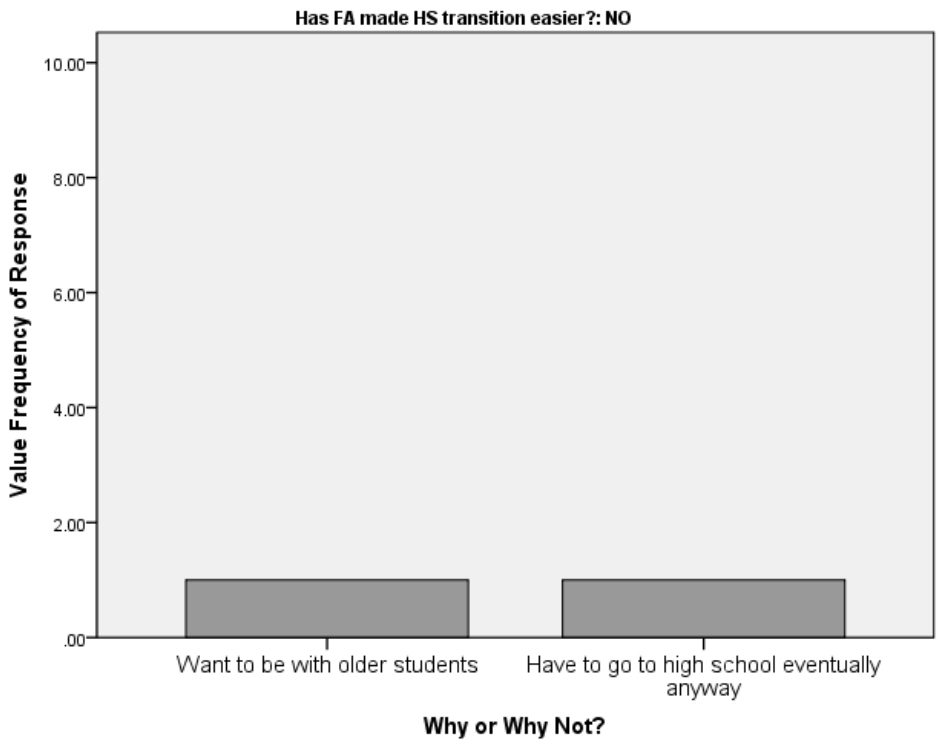

Figure 13. Freshman Academy Not Made High School Transition Easier.

As shown in Figure 13, the opinions of these two students differed from the majority of the focus group participants. Their desire to be with the older students and the perceived inevitability of going to a more traditional high school were given as reasons for wanting to start high school in the main building, rather than in the freshman academy wing, as they had done this year. Their specific comments were "I would rather be at the high school now, with the older students. That's because I failed an elementary grade and I'm older too" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012); "I have to do it eventually anyway. Why not this year instead of having to wait until next year? It's gonna [sic] be the same no matter when I do it" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

The next section of this chapter describes the focus group session outcomes that

were most specifically framed by the five guiding research questions of this research study. Students were asked to name a subject or subjects about which they desired to learn more. They were then asked to expand their answers to include what, if any, freshman academy experiences had impacted their motivation to learn more about that subject(s). This information was compiled and eventually cross-tabulated with the teachers' interview responses about how they motivated their students in order to determine similarities and differences between the students' motivational needs and what the teachers say they do to motivate their students. Results of this cross-tabulation are presented later in Chapter 4.

When asked, students indicated the subject(s) about which they desired to learn more. The researcher's intent was to ascertain students' general curiosity about specific subjects, as curiosity is a primary indicator of academic intrinsic motivation. These results are shown below in Figure 14.

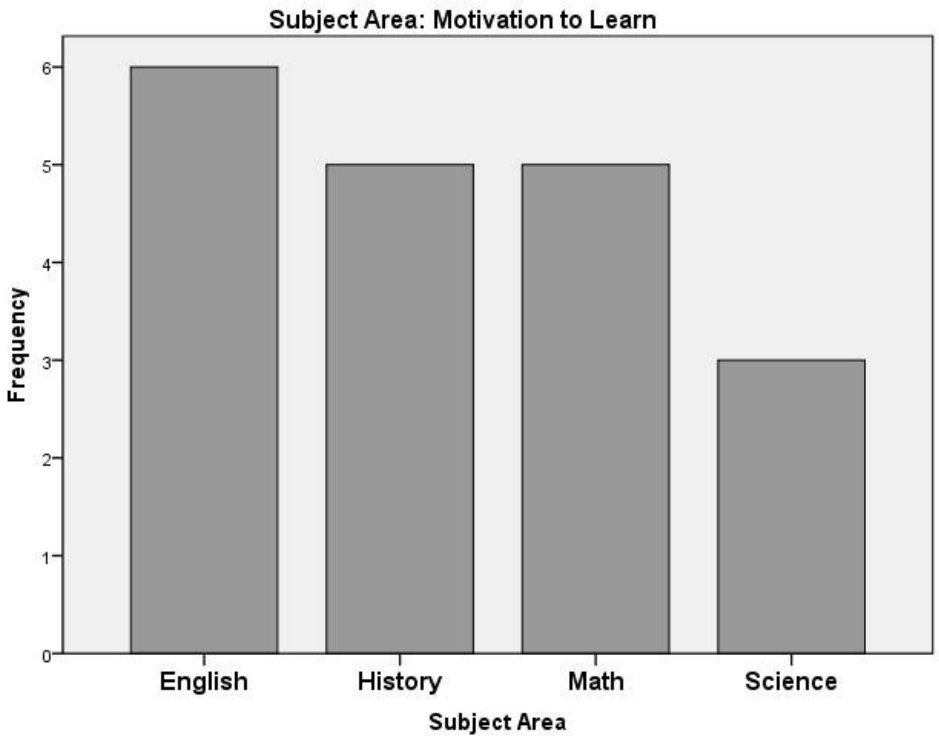

Figure 14. Motivation to Learn, by Subject Area.

As Figure 14 indicates, English, cited six times, was the favored subject about which students wanted to learn more. History and math came in second, with five mentions each, and science was mentioned only three times, the least of all the subjects. Summaries of focus group dialogue, with sample participant quotes are presented in the following sections of Chapter 4; the summaries and student quotes are presented in a fashion that mirrors the scope of the five guiding research questions.

Research Question 1

How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn English? Of the 18 students interviewed during the three focus group sessions, six students, two from each focus group, volunteered that their experiences this year had increased their motivation to learn more about English. These results are shown in Table

11.

Table 11

Motivating Experiences to Learn English

Subject	Motivating Experiences
English	Fun teacher Inviting classroom Student engagement Teamwork

As illustrated in Table 11, when asked to describe the freshman academy experiences that increased their motivation to learn English, one student stated:

> The teacher that I have is like really fun, and we like get to do fun things. Like we get to act out stuff in class, and she'll give us extra credit points, and we have poetry contests, and we make stuff. We do lots of projects in there. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

A second student commented, "My English classroom is really colorful and it feels homey-like [sic]. If you come to a boring room, you don't want to learn, you just want to go to sleep" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A third student also commented about English class:

> At first I thought that I would not like that class, especially when I heard about all the projects. But, we get to work with partners, which means you don't have to do as much work. You can split it up equal [sic]. Sometimes she'll draw partners from a hat and that way you get to know the people in the classroom a little bit better. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Movies shown in the classroom also emerged as motivating to the students in their English classes. According to one of the students:

> In English we watch a lot of movies, but it's [sic] movies related to what we're talking about. Like when we studied *Romeo and Juliet*, we watched like 3 different versions of it. And that's kind of fun, you know, getting to watch it from different views. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

When probed by the interviewer to comment as to whether or not watching the movies made him want to learn more, he stated, "Yeah; it made it more interesting" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A different student added about watching movies in English class, "At the beginning of the year we watched *Kung Fu Panda*, but it was intertwined with a lesson. We were learning about antagonist and protagonist" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). When asked by the interviewer if this helped him learn the content, this student added that it made him understand it better (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

None of the students interviewed stated clearly that their freshman academy experiences had decreased their motivation to learn English, although one student commented about the difficulty of some of the assignments, which was interpreted by the interviewer to have adversely affected his confidence. This student shared his concern about having to memorize a *Romeo and Juliet* script when he said:

> I'm thinking I'm not going to do good [sic] because it's long and hard to memorize. Yeah, I'll try it, but I'm not going to guarantee that I'm going to get a good grade on it. If I had a partner, I think I could do better than on my own (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Research Question 2

How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn math? Of the 18 students interviewed, five students representing all three focus groups expressed that their freshman academy experiences this year had increased their motivation to learn more about math; these results are displayed below in Table 12.

Table 12

Motivating Experiences to Learn Math

Subject	Motivating Experiences
Math	Fun teacher Relevance Student engagement

As illustrated in Table 12, student responses were interpreted by the interviewer as fun teacher, student engagement, and relevance. One of these responses was, "I like my math teacher; he's fun and laid back" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). When asked what he meant by that comment, the student replied, "He doesn't really go by all the rules. I mean he lets you off for a lot of little stuff. I can learn better when the teacher is not so uptight about the little things" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A second student commenting positively about her math teacher shared her experiences this way:

> When we go in there, she'll let us pick with her, and she'll pick back with us. We kind of aggravate each other for a little while, and then after the beginning of the class is a little bit out, we'll start learning, and at the end of the class she'll let us have a little bit of talking time. (Anonymous, personal communication, March

2012)

Another student that said a fun teacher makes her more motivated to learn math by commenting, “My math teacher plays around with us, and jokes around with us, but there are times when you have to get serious” (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). When asked specifically about math, another student emphatically stated, “I love my Algebra class—it’s like my favorite class! My teacher uses songs to help us learn stuff like the quadratic formula. She also tells us what happened in the past with formulas and stuff” (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). This last student comment prompted responses from several of the other students, who expressed dissatisfaction with their math classes which decreased their motivation to learn math. These responses were summarized into categories displayed below in Table 13.

Table 13

Experiences that Decreased Motivation to Learn Math

Subject	Decreased Motivation Experiences
Math	Subject difficulty Little teacher engagement Poor classroom management

As indicated in Table 13 above, student responses were interpreted as subject difficulty, little teacher engagement, and poor classroom management. One student said:

> I hate geometry; it's hard. I remember the 10th graders saying that if you hate algebra, you'll love geometry. Well, I liked algebra and thought that I'd like geometry too, but I don't. Like she teaches like…well the problem is she will give us our homework for most of the class, which is good because homework teaches you a lot of stuff, but I would actually like to learn a lesson more, because since I'm in honors, I don't have a block class, so I already don't get to learn as much. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Another student added:

> And the students in my geometry class affect how others learn too. We have a selection of people who are constantly getting yelled at, and he doesn't really do nothing [sic] about it but yell at them, and that gives us only like 15 or 20 minutes to do the First Move, and the lesson, and the worksheet he has to give us for homework. And we don't have as much time to go over it, and that's why I'm kind of clueless. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

When the interviewer asked these students how this affects their personal motivation to

learn more about math, one of them replied, “It doesn’t make me motivated at all; just makes me want to sit there and not do my work” (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A second student added, “It’s annoying” (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A third student said, “Yeah, it’s irritating, very irritating” (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A fourth student stated, “I already dislike math, so it sort of makes it worse” (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A student in a different focus group shared these sentiments about math when she commented about how her experiences this year have decreased her motivation to learn math:

> My teacher this year has made me not want to learn math—if you say one word, even about a math problem, you’re afraid you’ll get in trouble; last year I liked math, but this year I don’t really like it (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Research Question 3

How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn science? Three of the 18 student participants, representing all three of the focus groups, volunteered that their experiences this year have motivated them to learn more about science. Their responses are summarized below in Table 14.

Table 14

Motivating Experiences to Learn Science

Subject	Motivating Experiences
Science	Curiosity Student engagement

As seen in Table 14, student comments about science were interpreted as curiosity and student engagement. One of the first comments came from a student that discussed lab assignments. This student stated:

> We do a lot of labs in our Honor's Physical Science class. It helps a lot, because it's really interesting. And like one day we had this outside person coming to school about plastics, and she was doing all this cool stuff with liquids and they turned into solids, and then just started bubbling, and just turned hard. And like she lit a paper on fire and it burned like that—it was really interesting. I was all excited; I wanted to learn all I could about plastics. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Students from the other two focus groups discussed their lab experiments too. They seemed to really enjoy those activities and were eager to share what they did. For example, "We did a gummy lab where we put gummy bears in water. I thought they'd get smaller, but they didn't—they got bigger! It was like a science project" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A student from the third focus group discussed how she wants to learn more about science because of the labs and experiments when she stated, "They're fun and interesting, and it's [sic] teamwork and all that. It's also learning more about the earth and stuff" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). There were four of the 18 students representing two of the focus groups whose comments about science classes indicated a decrease in their motivation to learn more about science. These findings are illustrated below in Table 15.

Table 15

Experiences that Decreased Motivation to Learn Science

Subject	Decreased Motivation Experiences
Science	Lack of teacher engagement

As evidenced in Table 15, the researcher categorized these two student comments similarly as the lack of teacher engagement. The following statements depict the students' obvious dissatisfaction with their science teachers and the lack of engaged instruction in their science classes. According to one student:

> She's a really nice teacher, but I just don't feel like she goes over the stuff she's trying to teach. She just hands us a sheet of paper and tells us to look through the book. I don't feel like that's going to help me. I'd rather have a teacher that tells us how things work. I want her to explain it and elaborate on it just enough where we can understand it. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

A different student said, "My science teacher—he doesn't teach you nothing [sic]" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Two other students, who admittedly had the same teacher, added, "I know; you're basically on your own in Biology" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012); and "Yeah, you have to teach yourself in his class" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Research Question 4

How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn history? Five out of 18 students, representing all three focus groups, contributed to the discussion about how their experiences this year have increased their desire to learn

more about history. Student responses are summarized below in Table 16.

Table 16

Motivating Experiences to Learn History

Subject	Motivating Experiences
History	Personal interest Student engagement

As indicated in Table 16, of the five students who expressed a desire to learn more about history, the researcher interpreted their comments as personal interest and student engagement. The first student commented specifically about how the teacher shared his personal experiences with the class and how this has made history more interesting to him. He said:

> In Global Studies, we have a student teacher now, and so you would expect that since he's new and all, he won't know what to do, but actually he's like, he was part of the military, and we were studying about Afghanistan and all that. He went there and he showed us pictures and everything, and it was actually really interesting because he told us about some animals he saw, what the people were like, and I learned a lot of stuff because of that. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Several students' comments centered on being engaged in the lesson when they were labeling and coloring maps in their history classes. For example, one student stated, "I'm terrible at a map, but every time we go into a new chapter we have to map—put everything where it goes and color it. That helps me a lot, because now I can memorize it easier" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Another student added,

"Yeah, I like filling in maps too, because the teacher helps you but you still get to do it by yourself, too; it just helps me learn to draw the maps and fill them in" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Other positive comments about history classes included, "It's interesting to learn about the past" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). "You get to learn more about the globe, where stuff is at [sic] like on the map, and you get to color" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Another student discussed how his teacher made his learning more motivational because it had personal meaning to him:

> Well, with me, my family being a Navy family, I was thinking of joining that, traveling the world, and more likely due to the benefits that are happening over there in Uganda, with what Kony is doing, because I just learned about that this year. I was surprised that I hadn't heard about it, since he was doing it for over 20 years. So as soon as I go into the Navy I was hoping I could try to find…like get stationed over there somewhere to see if I can't help. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

A student in Focus Group B also discussed how he was motivated to learn history because of his personal experiences. According to him:

> I grew up around my daddy most of the time. He always talked about when my grandpa was on the Air Force base in Louisiana, and he always talked about the stuff he did when he was little, and when he lived on it. He used to tell me the stuff that happened in other countries, and it kind of made me more interested in what happened over there. When we talk about those things in history, it makes me want to learn more about them. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

There was only one comment that was perceived by the interviewer to decrease student motivation to learn history, and it is categorized below in Table 17.

Table 17

Experiences that Decreased Motivation to Learn History

Subject	Decreased Motivation Factors
History	Lesson pace too fast

As evidenced in Table 17, a student said he sometimes has trouble keeping up with the lessons. This appeared to frustrate him, thus decreasing his desire to learn history. He described his experiences this way:

> I think we should have more time to complete the maps. It gets into a lot, like sometimes they put a lot of stuff on there, and sometimes you can't even find what's on there. Everybody doesn't work at the same pace. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Summary

Students provided a variety of freshman academy experiences that they credited as motivating them to learn specific subjects. Figure 15 shows the combined results that were revealed when student participants were asked to describe the freshman academy experiences that increased their motivation to learn English, math, science, and history.

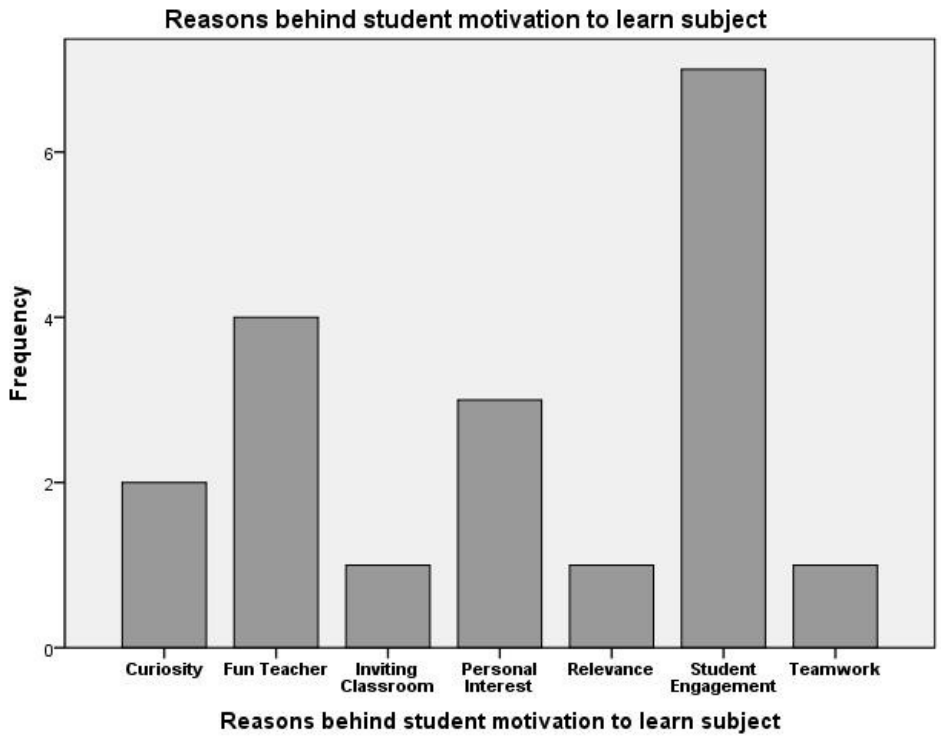

Figure 15. Reasons Behind Student Motivation to Learn Subjects.

As seen in Figure 15, the most common motivating experience discussed was interpreted as "student engagement." For all four core subjects, students clearly indicated that they wanted to be involved in the learning. Having fun teachers was the second most motivating response; this was cited specifically by students who expressed an interest in learning more about English and math. Teamwork and an inviting classroom were also discussed by students who expressed a desire to learn more about English. "Relevance" was specific to a desire to learn more about math. "Curiosity" was specific to a desire to learn more about science, and "personal interest" was specific to a desire to learn more about history. As already discussed, this portion of the research process also revealed students' responses that indicated a decreased desire to learn particular subjects. For summary purposes, these combined results are displayed below in Figure 16.

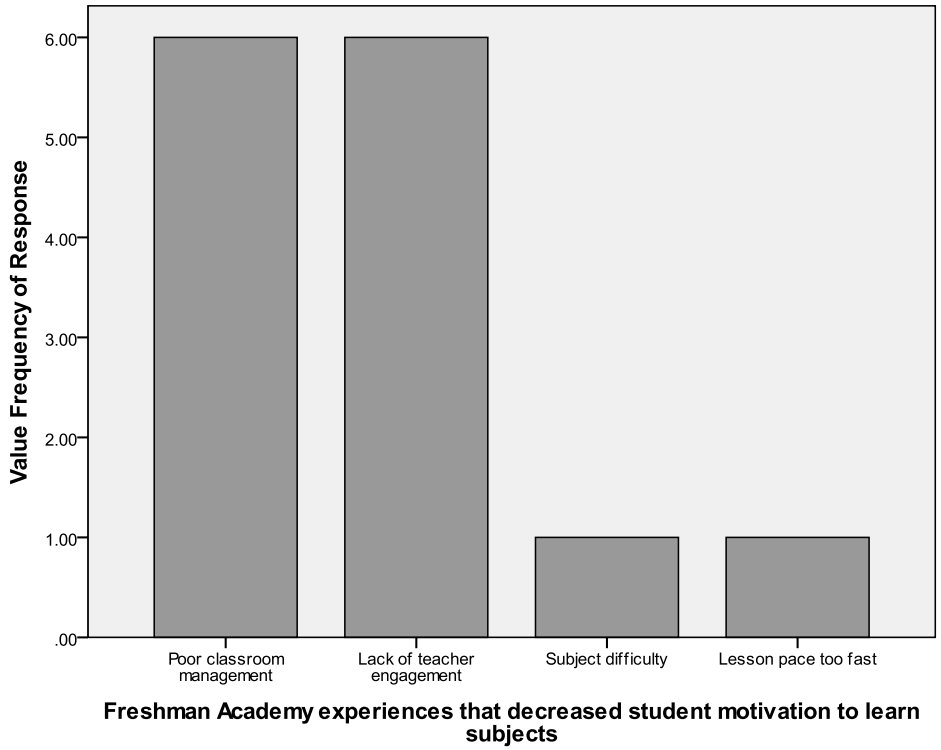

Figure 16. Experiences that Decreased Student Motivation to Learn Subjects.

As Figure 16 shows, students also provided a variety of experiences that decreased their motivation to learn in their classrooms this year. The most prevalent responses were poor classroom management and lack of teacher engagement. Other experiences having a negative impact on student motivation to learn included subject difficulty and the pace of the lessons (too fast).

Research Question 5

How do freshman academy experiences impact student general orientation toward school learning? When asked, "In general, what has motivated you about school learning this year," the 18 focus group participants gave a variety of responses that the interviewer interpreted and summarized into 13 different categories. These results are summarized below in Figure 17.

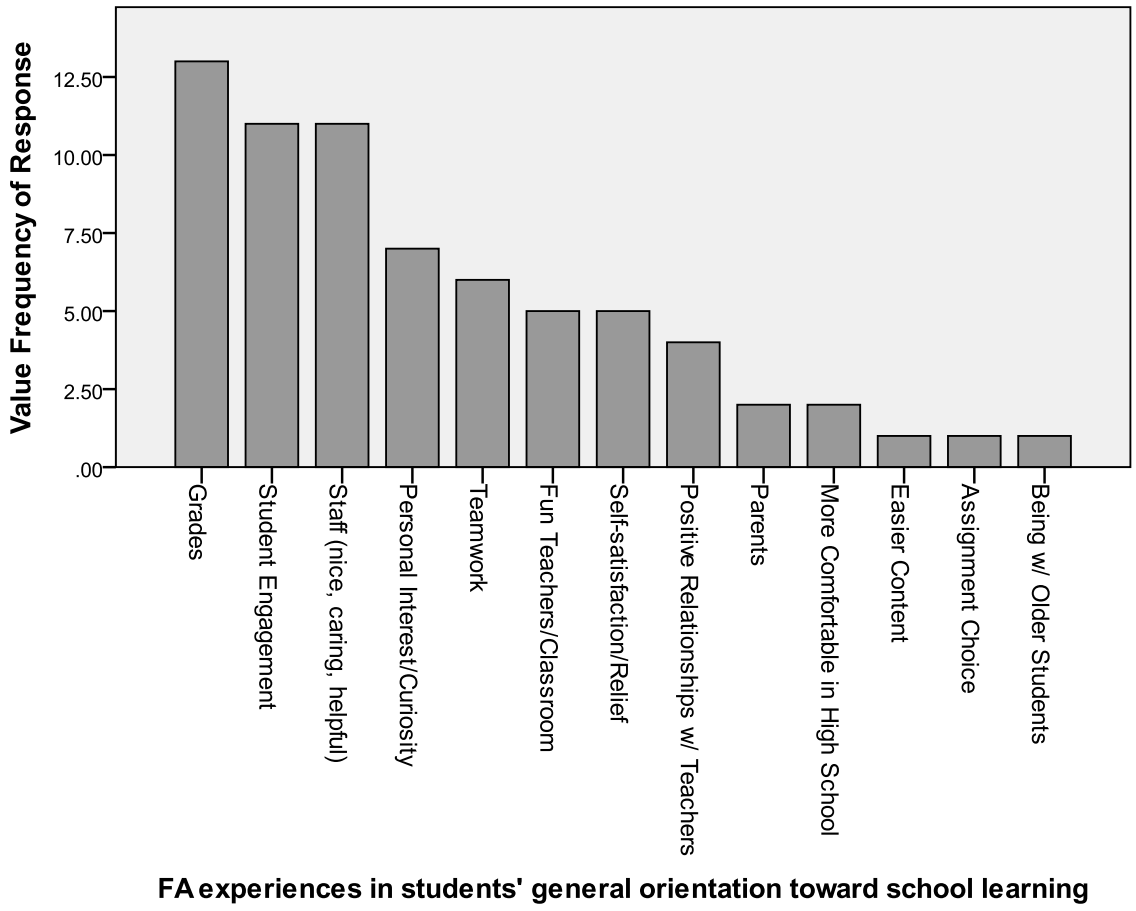

Figure 17. Motivating Experiences—General Orientation toward School Learning.

As shown in Figure 17, the student participants provided a wide variety of reasons when asked to respond in general about the freshman academy experiences that motivated them toward school learning. The most frequent student response given in all three focus groups as having the most impact on their orientation toward school learning was grades/passing. Of the 13 statements regarding grades and passing, one student said, "I like making good grades; I'm like Yay [sic]–I made an A on that! I made an A on that, and I stayed up all night doing it" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Another comment about grades being a motivating factor was, "Grades motivate me because I want to be on the yearbook staff and you have to have a 3.0 GPA to qualify"

(Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A third student added the following about grades being a motivating factor, "I feel good about myself when I make good grades" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A second most prevalent response about their general motivation toward school learning was interpreted by the researcher as student engagement; 11 different students, representing all three focus groups, cited this as motivating to them this year. For example, one student said, "I like it when we do stuff, and it helps me learn, and keeps me awake" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Another student supported this sentiment when he said, "My best teachers this year are those that give work that is interactive, but educational" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A different comment that was given that was more specific was, "One of my teachers made his autobiography assignment fun, because it's like a scrapbook; I'll enjoy doing something like that" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Nice, caring, and helpful faculty and staff members that motivated students toward school learning also elicited 11 responses including:

> One of my teachers is very kind; he's nice and he helps us with whatever we need. He lets us do a lot of stuff that we wouldn't normally be able to do in other classes. That makes me want to work harder in his class. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Another student had the following to say about nice and caring teachers and how they positively impact student motivation to learn:

> It's easy to tell if a teacher cares. If they really care, they're interested and willing to do their work. They are also willing to help you individually, and as a class too, and not just tolerate being in a class and putting something on the board, and

> telling you to do it. I want to learn more when I know the teacher cares, and I can tell when they don't. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

A third student contributed to the comments about teachers being helpful and how this impacts student motivation to learn when he said, "If you don't understand something, they tell you to go up there and they will help you and all, and they'll just help you. That makes you try the best you can" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Seven students, representing all three focus groups, stated that personal interest and curiosity about what they were learning motivated them toward school learning. According to one of these students, "It's motivating to me when I have assignments that interest me. For example, this year I picked Napoleon Bonaparte to write about in English, because I am actually very interested in history; he's big in history" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A second student said, "If I am interested in what we're doing, it makes me want to make the assignment look better and try harder on it" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). All three focus groups commented that working with other students motivated them and it was cited six times as motivating toward school learning. For example, one student commented, "Being able to share the workload motivates you to finish if you know you're not having to do it all by yourself" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Another student said the following about teamwork as a motivator:

> I really like teamwork, but I'm not really competitive about anything, really. I still want to do good [sic] but I really don't care if I win the extra credit points or whatever. I just like being in it and part of a team. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Five different students, representing all three focus groups, added that fun teachers and

classes motivated them to learn more in school. According to one student, "If a teacher wants to motivate me to learn, they need to be fun and make the class fun" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A second student appeared to especially value the happy and fun teachers when he stated:

> I want to learn more when the teachers are happy and fun. I mean they're not dreading the day. You know, they're happier to come to work; you see them with a smile on their face. There's one teacher here that outshines everyone else; she even comes skipping down the hall. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Self-satisfaction and relief over task completion rounded out the top seven student responses, with five students citing this as motivating them to learn more in school this year, again representing all three focus groups. According to one of these students, "Like if you put so much hard work into it, and you do good [sic], you feel like you have the greatest feeling ever, like I accomplished something that I wanted to do" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A second student shared this sentiment when she was recorded as saying, "Yeah, I feel really good when I accomplish something" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Positive relationships with teachers was interpreted a total of four times, including from one student who stated, "I want to do good [sic] so I don't let my teacher down" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A second student also felt this way, and he said, "It's important to feel comfortable with the teacher in the classroom; it helps you learn" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Two students from Focus Group A added that their parents stimulate their motivation toward school. One of them said, "I definitely don't want to let my parents down by not doing well in school" (Anonymous, personal communication,

March 2012). Two other students, representing Focus Groups A and B, also stated that they were now "more comfortable with high school," and this motivated them toward school learning.

Also perceived to enhance student motivation to school learning were easier content, having choice about assignments, and being with older students part of the day. Each of these was mentioned once across the three focus groups.

Motivation for Challenging/Difficult Assignments

In order to further strengthen the research report, the interviewer also asked the students about challenging tasks that they have had this year, and what, if anything made them see these tasks to completion, rather than giving up. The summary of these findings is displayed below in Figure 18.

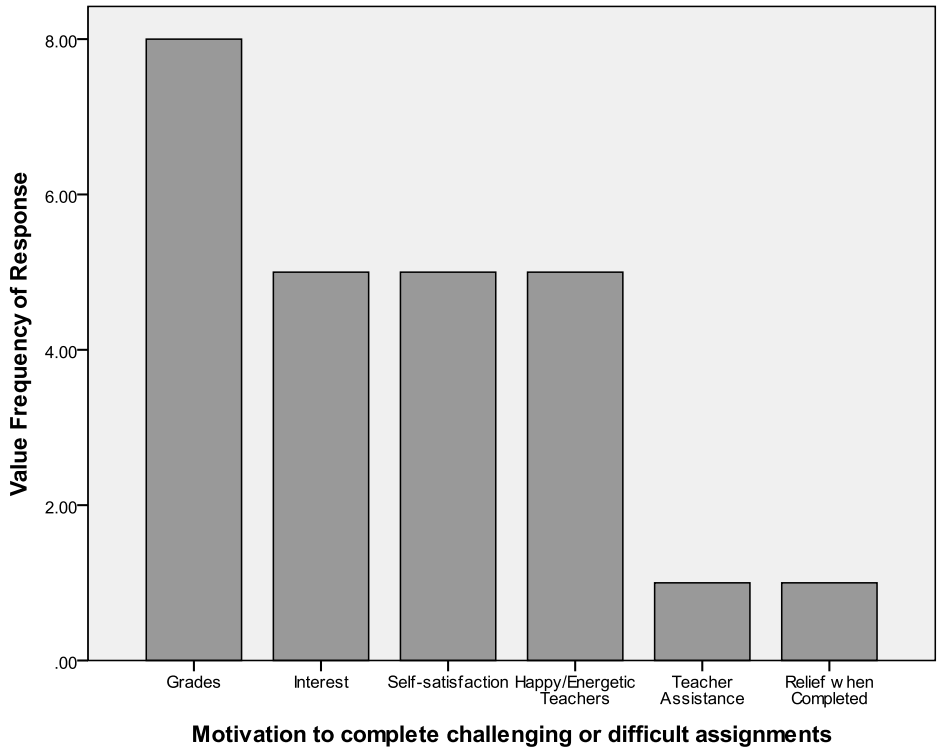

Figure 18. Motivation to Complete Challenging/Difficult Assignments.

As illustrated in Figure 18, when asked what motivated them to stick with challenging and difficult assignments, students credited their motivation to grades, interest, self-satisfaction, a happy and energetic teacher, teacher assistance, and relief once the task was completed. When asked this question in each focus group, at least one student began talking about an English assignment that required them to create a poetry scrapbook. This project was viewed as difficult because it had lot of very detailed components and the students were not allowed to use the Internet for their research. The most prevalent motivator for the students when facing a difficult assignment was grades; this response was cited by eight students, representing all three focus groups. One of these students commented about a Global Studies project, "This was a very big grade for this nine weeks; I have to do good [sic], or my grade will not be good" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Another student shared this sentiment about grades motivating her to stick with difficult assignments rather than giving up: "I have to make good grades so that I can get into a good college; that's why I try really hard" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A third student commented that the project grade also kept him going: "When I know I can make a good grade, it pushes me to do more" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Five students, representing all three focus groups, commented that they were more likely to persist with a challenging or difficult assignment if it were interesting to them. For example, one student said, "I enjoy scrapbooking, so I really didn't mind all the work" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Another student shared the importance of making the work interesting to the students through his comments about a difficult English assignment:

The teacher made the autobiography fun to keep me interested; he really needs to

> do the same thing for the research paper. He needs to find a way besides just sending us to the library and telling us to find the books and read them. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Across the three focus groups there were five student comments made about persisting with difficult and challenging tasks that the interviewer interpreted as self-satisfaction. One student stated, "I really have a lot going on, with several big projects due at the same time. I feel so good when I've finished everything and I know that I've done a good job" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Adding to that, a second student said, "Yeah, I know what you mean. I feel awesome when all that work is finally over and I know I have given it my best" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Spanning the three focus groups, a happy and energetic teacher was also cited by five students as helping them to maintain their motivation for difficult tasks. One of these students commented, "When they act all excited about the project, you can't help but get excited too" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Another student said:

> The teacher makes a big difference; if they hate what they do, then we will hate what we do. When a teacher has a good attitude about their [sic] job, it makes me want to work harder, even when the work is very tough. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The responses voiced the least amount of times that concerned tenacity toward difficult assignments were teacher assistance and relief once the task is completed. According to one student, "If the teacher helps me with the work, then I do better. My math teacher wouldn't help me with a hard quiz in class, and I stopped trying" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). As for relief when the work is done, a very energetic

student replied, “That is the coolest feeling ever, when the work is finally done, and I know that I did a good job” (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Students’ Perceptions of Freshman Academy Teachers

The final part of the focus group sessions emphasized the students’ perceptions of their teachers—do they care about their students, and do they work and plan together with their students’ best interests at heart? This was deemed important by the researcher in order to continue to add strength to the data and hopefully it would do so by exposing what the teachers’ actions revealed to the students about their relative commitments to them, the learners.

When asked if their freshman academy teachers care about them as students, all focus groups said either yes or somewhat. Students said that there were not any teachers at the freshman academy who did not care about them. These results are shown below in Figure 19.

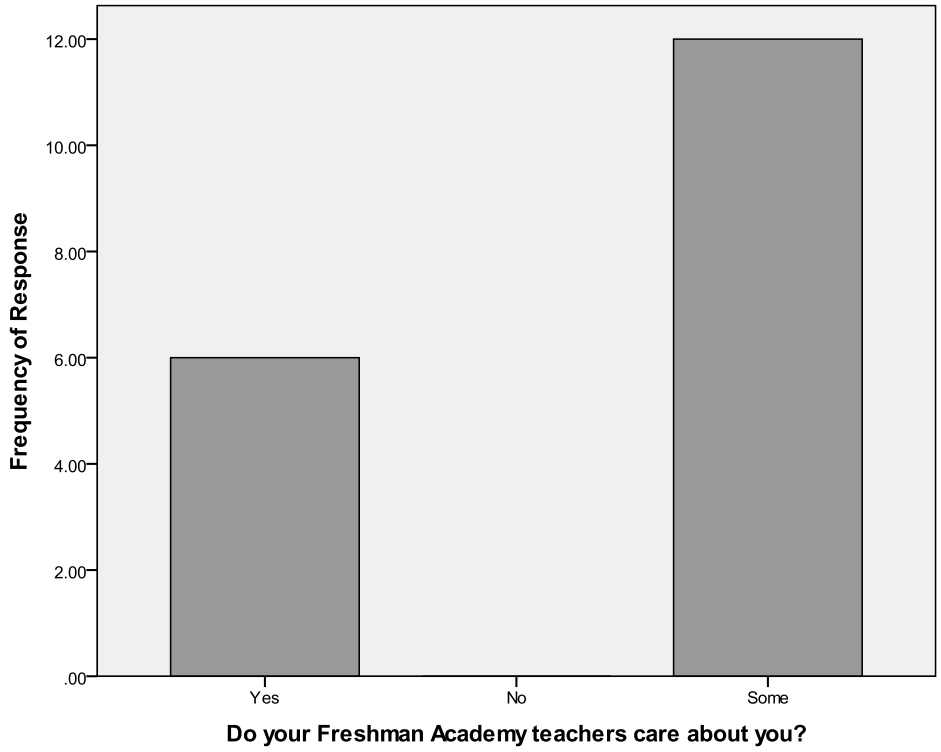

Figure 19. Do Your Freshman Academy Teachers Care About You?

As seen in Figure 19, of the 18 study participants, six answered yes, and 12 participants answered, "Some of them do." Since all focus groups were unanimous that at least one of their teachers cared about them, the researcher asked the students to describe how they knew those teachers cared about them. These responses are depicted below in Figure 20.

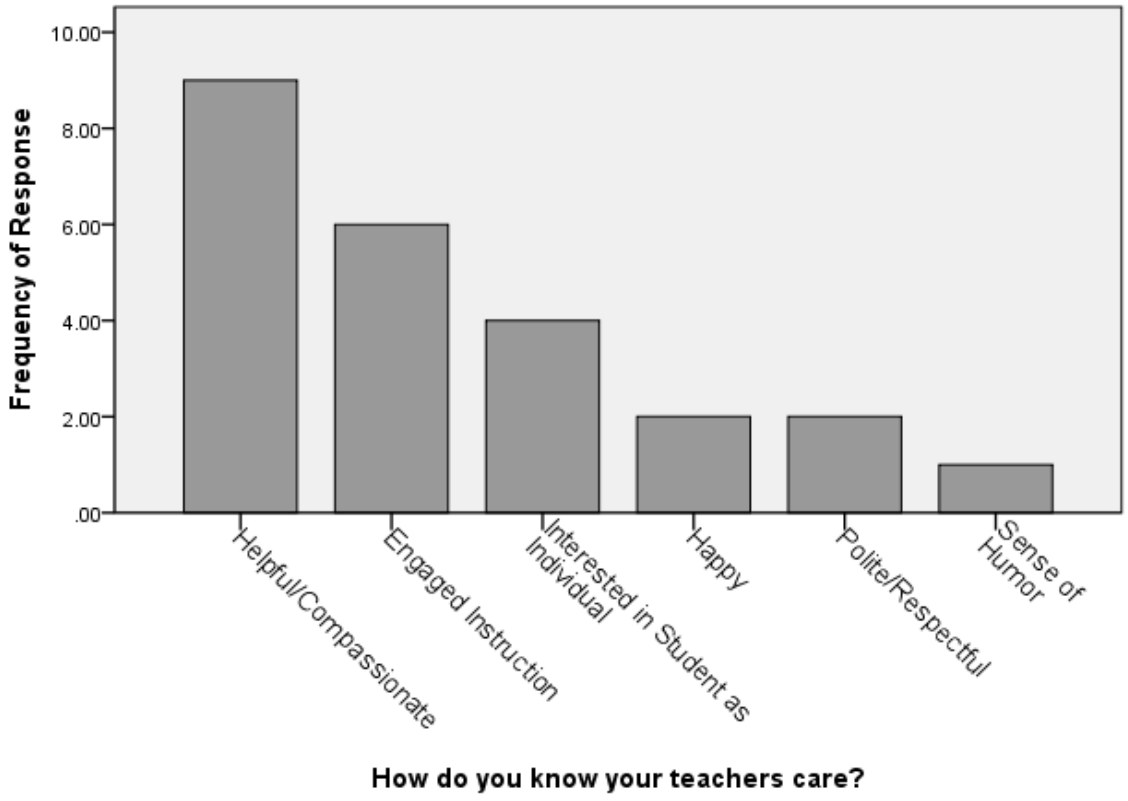

Figure 20. How Do You Know Your Freshman Academy Teachers Care About You?

As seen above, the most frequent responses were interpreted as compassionate/helpful, engaged instruction, and interested in their students as individuals; these responses were categorized nine, six, and four times, respectively. When speaking of a compassionate and helpful teacher, one student said:

> I had a death in my family, and I had a legitimate reason one of my assignments couldn't be turned in on time, and she told me that it was fine. I had an extra two days to finish it; I thought that was nice. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

A second student commented, "The teachers who care help you with your work and don't yell at you when you don't get it right" (Anonymous, personal communication, March

2012). A third student who commented specifically about how he knew the freshman academy teachers cared about their students discussed a freshman academy teacher that he did not even know:

> One day I started to cry in the hallway because I was so stressed out over all my work. One of the teachers here, that I don't even have, came up to me and asked me if I was okay. She offered to call my parents. It made me feel really good inside to know that this teacher cared about me as a student in this building. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Teachers who engage themselves in their classroom instruction elicited a variety of comments in the three focus groups, including the following: "The teachers who care really teach. They don't just sit at their computers all day and give you stuff to do and expect you to do it on your own" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). This prompted the following student comment:

> Yeah, I know; you can tell that they really like their subject and they get all excited about it and you can tell that they really want you to like it too. They are up teaching you, and having fun in the classroom, and showing you that they do care, and that they're here to teach you. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The students that distinguished caring teachers as those who are interested in their students as individuals commented, "They will ask you how your day is going or what your plans are, and stuff like that" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012); "Yeah, or they will ask you about your family, or one of your extra-curricular activities or something" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

According to the participants, other characteristics depicting caring freshman

academy teachers included teachers who are happy, polite/respectful, and have a sense of humor. Two students said that happy teachers are caring. According to one of them, "The teachers that are happy in their jobs really care about what they are doing and they care about their students" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).Two additional students added that caring teachers are polite and respectful to their students. For example, one of them said, "Like when they bump into you or something, they say excuse me and they talk to you like they really care; they're not all mean and stuff" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A sense of humor was seen as a characteristic of caring teachers by one student who commented:

> I like a teacher with a sense of humor. You know they care about you when they laugh at some of the stupid things you do, instead of getting mad at you and holding it against you. I have one teacher that I made mad and she still makes me feel like she doesn't want me in there. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Do Freshman Academy Teachers Work and Plan Together?

Next, the interviewer asked the focus groups about their academy teachers working and planning together for their students' best interests. Specifically the students were asked, "Do you think your academy teachers plan their instruction together?" Participants from all three focus groups stated that they thought at least some of their teachers worked together to plan their lessons, although some students in each group appeared uncertain. Results of these responses are seen below in Figure 21.

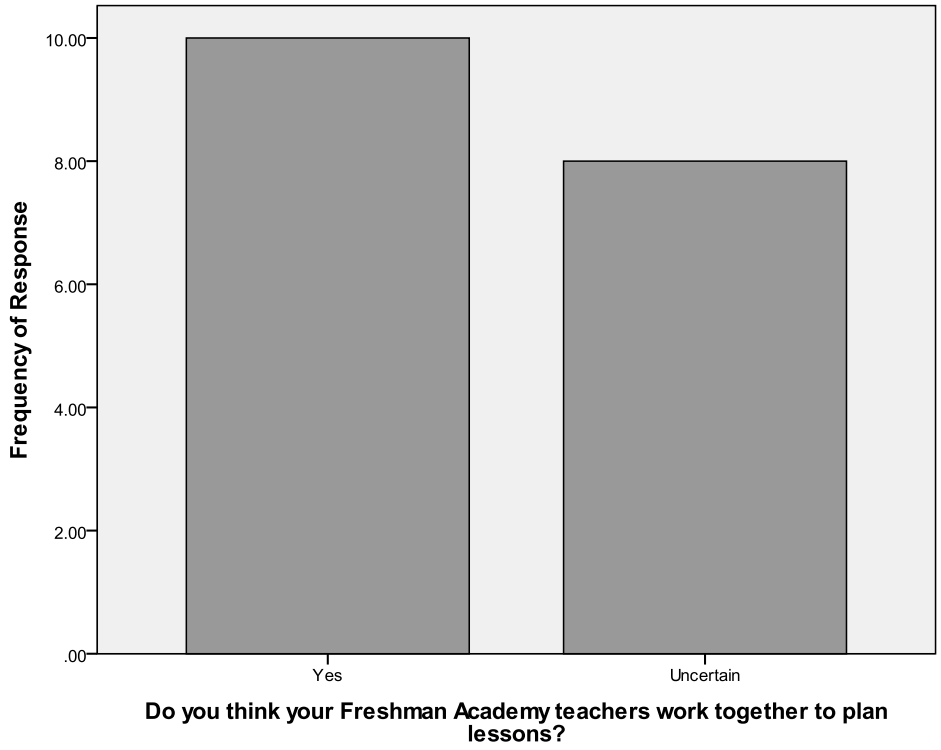

Figure 21. Do Academy Teachers Work Together to Plan Lessons?

As seen in Figure 21, 10 students commented yes to the question, while six students said they were not sure. One student said he could tell they plan together in math because "My worksheets were just like my friend's who has a different math teacher" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). When asked why he thought teachers did that, he replied, "Well, I guess they figure if they're not around to help you, you could ask your friend for help" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Another student commented, "I know our English teachers plan together because we have the same projects, like with *Romeo and Juliet*. Well, they might be harder in some classes, but it's basically the same work" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A third student was certain that his global studies teachers plan together because he said:

> My global studies teacher told me how she got all the global studies teachers

> together for them to look up ideas about how to teach us about Africa, and they came up with the Kony 2012 video, having learned about the children there. And, we did projects in our classes. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Students in all three focus groups appeared uncertain about science teachers planning together. For example, one student said, "I don't really think they plan together because, some teachers do lab experiments and some don't do any" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Do Freshman Academy Teachers Discuss Their Students?

When asked if they thought their teachers discussed their students as part of their instructional practice, all focus groups said yes, but this response was very limited. Only two members of each focus group said they thought their teachers discussed them. The rest of the participants said they did not know whether the teachers discussed them or not. One student said, when asked about academy teacher interaction, "They tell each other if someone's having a very bad day to give each other the heads-up" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). Another student contributed the following about teacher interaction and collaboration: "One of my friends in my class has a lot of issues because of his ADHD, and I know that our teachers talk about him and how to help him learn" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). A third student commented:

> I know they talk about us because one time I made a really good grade in one class and that teacher told another teacher; when I got to her class, she told me that she heard about my good grade and that she was proud of me. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The participants also told the interviewer that the teachers interact with other academy

staff members in order to help them. For example, teachers refer students to the guidance counselors for help if needed. According to one student, “Four girls were about to get into a fight the other day, and the teacher sent them to guidance to get help in solving the problem” (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Summary of Student Focus Group Interviews

In summary, it was determined from the student focus group interviews that there are a variety of motivation factors for students. An important factor to the motivation to learn certain subjects was the teacher in the classroom. An energetic, happy teacher not only showed students his/she cared, but also motivated the students to do well. Another motivating factor was a sense of accomplishment and self-satisfaction of a job well done. The students felt that the teachers collaborated and discussed their work. It was emphasized that the students felt the teachers did this in a caring way, and not in a gossipy or negative manner. Teacher motivation techniques (fun lesson plans that included games, contests, and those that avoided rote memorization or textbook reading) were appreciated by the students. These avenues were mentioned as the force behind becoming interested in certain subject areas.

In the following pages of Chapter 4, the findings from the teacher and assistant principal interviews will be presented. This information was gathered to triangulate the research data by providing information from multiple sources. After the findings of teacher and assistant principal interviews are presented, the researcher will present analysis of the written documentation regarding the freshman academy at Upstate South Carolina High School, further strengthening data triangulation. Also, the researcher will present cross-tabulation results for statistical comparison between what the students say motivated them to learn this year and what the teachers say they have done to motivate

their students to learn.

Teacher and Administrator Interviews

Four teachers, representing English, math, science, and history subject areas, were interviewed regarding freshman academy experiences and motivating students within the freshman academy. Interview questions are displayed in Appendix H. Additionally, one assistant principal (administrator in charge of the academy) was interviewed on the same topics. The assistant principal interview questions are displayed in Appendix I. Transcriptions of all interviews and groups were reviewed for themes in each topic area and then put into tables so that agreements and alternative patterns could be identified. Three of the teachers interviewed were female, one African American and two Caucasians; the other teacher, a Caucasian male. Their years of total teaching experience ranged from 1 year to 14 years, with an average experience of 9 years. They averaged 4.3 years teaching experience at Upstate South Carolina High School, with an average of 2 years of experience in this school's freshman academy. Additionally, one assistant principal was interviewed on the same topics. The assistant principal, a Caucasian male, had 18 years of experience, with 4 years at Upstate South Carolina High School and 4 years at the freshman academy. The teachers to be interviewed were selected from a list of freshman academy teachers that indicated gender, ethnicity, total years of experience, and years teaching experience at Upstate South Carolina High School and in the freshman academy. These teachers closely matched their peer group distribution in ethnicity and gender, but their average teaching experience was noticeably less. The average years of teaching experience for all freshman academy teachers was 16.2 years; the teachers and administrator interviewed averaged 5.4 years less teaching/administrative experience when compared to their peer group. The gender and

ethnic make-up of the interviewees, along with their years of teaching/administrative experience, is displayed in Table 18.

Table 18

Description of Teachers Interviewed

Teacher	Gender	Ethnicity	Total Yrs Experience	Yrs Experience (This School)	Yrs Experience (This Freshman Academy)
English	F	African American	8	7	4
Math	F	Caucasian	14	3	2
Science	F	Caucasian	13	6	1
History	M	Caucasian	1	1	1
Assistant Principal	M	Caucasian	18	4	4
			Average		
			10.8	4.2	2.4

Understanding of Freshman Academy

As seen in Table 18, all teachers and the administrator had a basic understanding of the purposes, structure, and function of the freshman academy. According to them, the freshman academy aided in the transition from smaller middle schools to the larger high school setting by pulling ninth graders apart from other students and providing the freshmen a year to assume more responsibility and independence as they prepared for the main high school the following year.

Table 19

Teacher and Administrator Understanding of Freshman Academy

Teacher	Basic understanding of Freshman Academies	Structure of Freshman Academies	Function of Freshman Academies
History	• Aid in transition • Stepping stone • Better serve the kids that are going through lots of changes • Different mindset than older students	• Separate facilities • Separate principal • Same guidelines/rules as HS • Smaller than main building • Similar size to MS	• Aid in transition • Less overwhelming introduction • Promote pride • Camaraderie (way to get to know the students that they'll go to HS with)
Math	• Pull apart 9th graders from other classes • Aid in transition • Adjust to more freedom than MS, but not as much freedom as HS	• Separate facilities • Same rules as HS • Smaller • More freedom to work one on one with students	• Aid in transition • Gets students used to bell schedule
Science	• Aid in transition • Opportunity to be more independent than MS	• Separate facilities • Most academic classes in FA • 2 Lunch shifts	• Aid in transition
English	• Aid in transition • Pull apart from other classes • Give students more attention • Solidify ideals to carry forward into HS	• Separate facilities • Most academic classes in FA • No library • No gym • Own cafeteria	• Aid in transition
AP	• Aid in transition • Pull apart 9th graders other classes • Emphasize true beginning of academic career	• Separate facilities • Modified block of ELA / Math (like MS) • Emphasize culture/climate of school	• Aid in transition • Improve retention (academic support) • Decrease instances of behavioral problems

Table 19 is summarized in the following paragraphs through teacher and administrator comments as they elaborated on their relative understandings of their freshman academy. For example, the history teacher said, "We are here to better serve the needs of these

kids; to serve as a stepping stone from middle school to high school. They are going through a lot of changes and they are not at the same mindset as the 17 and 18 year olds (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). The math teacher commented, "The academy gives the students an opportunity to be more independent and to adjust to more freedom than the middle school offers, but not quite as much freedom as the high school offers" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). According to the English teacher:

> Ninth grade is typically the hardest year for students academically because it is such a large transition from middle or junior high school to high school, and there are often a lot of attendance, academic and social issues for students at this level. The idea is to pull them out in a separate academy that can give them more attention and solidify the ideals we want them to carry forward into high school. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The science teacher included the following in her understanding of the freshman academy concept: "It gives students an opportunity to be more independent regarding responsibilities like getting their materials from their lockers to their classes, getting to classes on time, and just having more course work than before" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). The assistant principal also felt that "the freshman academy marked the beginning of the academic experience for these students and that the intensity and importance of academics must be emphasized" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The teacher and administrator interviews also focused on the academic, procedural, and social challenges that incoming freshmen face when they enter high school. All five interview subjects were asked to comment specifically about these

transitions for the students and whether or not they believed the freshman academy eased the challenges encountered by their students. The summary of the teacher and administrator comments are displayed in Table 20.

Table 20

Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of Freshman Academy Transitions

Teacher	Transition Helpful to Students?	Academic Transition	Procedural Transition	Social Transition
History	Yes	• Provide support for more difficult classes	• Walk on own to classes • Further independence	• Less intimidation due to smaller environment and reduced interaction with older students
Math	Yes	• More challenging • All students are "equal"	• Walk on own to classes • Emphasize true beginning of academic career	• Camaraderie
Science	Yes	• Cultivate academics of high school • More responsibility	• Tardy policy (walk on own to classes)	• Structure in the day helps with the adjustment to new freedom
English	Yes	• Provide support for increased rigor • Scaffold assignments	• Walk on own to classes	• Learn to interact with students from other middle schools • Promote independence
AP	Yes	• Builds on what they do in middle school • Everything counts • More responsibility	• Tardy policy (walk on own to classes) • Increased freedom • Bells	• Camaraderie (bonding over new experiences)

As evident in Table 20, all four teachers, as well as the administrator, were certain that the academy had eased the academic challenges faced by the ninth graders as they

entered high school for the first time. For example, the English teacher stated:

> We have academic requirements that are more rigorous than the middle school, though we keep in mind that we are asking things of them that they are not used to. Because of that, we support them in the beginning and lead them to where we want them to be so they will be more successful in the high school. We kind of scaffold their educational experiences in a manner that lets them know that we do expect a lot out of them, but that we're willing to help them get there. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

When asked about ninth-grade academic transition, the math teacher said: "The academy keeps the students with their grade level which makes everyone on the same page; it keeps them from feeling inferior, as they do when mixed with the older students" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). The science teacher, having previously taught eighth grade and eleventh grade, said:

> Having taught middle school and high school before, I can see why freshman need their own academy. It cultivates the academic part. With an academy, the students are dipped into the high school curriculum. There's a lot more responsibility expected of them academically, a lot more to keep up with, and deadlines that they have to meet. I believe we push them towards having sole responsibility over in the big school. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The history teacher, when asked if the freshman academy helps transition the students to high school, gave the following comment, "I think it does. I mean, that's the goal of education anyway, to help students as they move up. The academy gets them prepared for a little more on their own" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). The

assistant principal added:

> Our retention rate has improved since we implemented the academy. When they come here, the students are doing the same things they did in middle school, only now it's intensified. They now get units that actually count; no longer are they just passed along because of their age; they are now responsible for their academic grades. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Next, the teachers and administrators were asked to comment about the procedural transition for the students and whether or not they believed their freshman academy eased the academic transition for their students. All four teachers and the assistant principal felt strongly that the academy had helped the students deal with the procedural challenges better than if they had not gone to a ninth-grade academy. Several of the teachers discussed that the students now have to walk to classes on their own, without being led by their teachers as they may have been in middle school. These teachers felt that this was easier for the students because the academy building is smaller and less crowded than the main building.

The math teacher commented specifically about the more stringent procedural expectations for ninth graders as they enter high school for the first time:

> At the beginning of the year, we really do have a tough time getting the students accustomed to the new procedures. In middle school they are walked basically everywhere they go. They are not walked here. In middle school they're never tardy, but they're tardy a lot here. Most of the students eventually catch on, but unfortunately, some never do. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The history teacher commented:

> The teachers stand in the hallways at class change encouraging the kids to keep moving, and not to be standing around talking. That is more necessary at the beginning of the year when kids are just learning the bell schedules. Now, they are doing much better on their own, without a lot of prompting. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The English teacher spoke about the procedural changes that students also encounter in their classrooms:

> The academy teachers try to teach our students very early in the school year the policies and procedures that we want them to follow, not only the rules for the entire school and our academy, but for our classes as well. We take the time during the first two weeks to go through them individually to make sure the students understand what the procedures are and why they're important, and how important it is that by following those procedures things go a little bit more smoothly. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The assistant principal added, "I think a lot of our procedures carry over from middle school, but the students are given more responsibilities here. For example, we actually let them walk around the building until the first bell sounds for them to report to first period" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012). The science teacher discussed the ease of navigating from class to class due to the academy's relatively small size: "This is a small building compared to the main building. Students can actually circle this place a couple of times and still get to class on time, but over in the big building they really have to grab their books and keep moving" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

Next, the teachers and administrators were asked to comment about the social

challenges faced by the ninth-grade students and whether or not they believed the freshman academy experiences had eased the social transition for these students. All four teachers and the assistant principal agreed that the academy had eased challenges for its students as they entered high school for the first time. Almost immediately, the assistant principal commented about the blending of three feeder middle schools at the freshman academy:

> There are three middle schools that feed this ninth-grade academy. Bringing these three groups together that have been competing against each other in academics and athletics, presents a problem in itself. But when you put them all together, they know they're in one building together, and it gives them time to make relationships with those kids before they go to the main building, where it might be more difficult to form those relationships. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The math teacher also referred to the blending of the students from the feeder middle schools, stating, "Although they are now with students from two other middle schools, they are all the same age versus being thrown into the high school, where they would be with nearly four years of kids that they don't know" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

The English teacher also discussed the feeder middle schools in her response:

> Bringing the students together in the academy means they have to learn to interact with people who are from different areas of town and from different levels of socioeconomic status, but it's easier without the sophomores, juniors, and seniors being in the mix. By keeping the freshman somewhat isolated, they learn to interact and accept each other, while they are all pretty much on a level playing

field, so to speak. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The history teacher touched on the social hierarchy present in the high school, when he said:

> Last year these kids were the top dogs; now they're the little kids again. The time they spend at the academy gives them an adjustment period while still in their comfort zone. That gives them time to get ready for next year, when they will be in the big building all day, instead of just two periods a day like they are now. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

When asked about the social transition, the science teacher talked about her own experiences as a ninth grader in order to better understand what her students are going through:

> I remember when I went from junior high to high school. That was such as scary time. I know that coming to the ninth-grade academy is scary, but I feel like we are more structured than what I experienced as a student. By being more structured and having all kids together that are the same age, we provide them with opportunities to meet new friends that are their "equals," in a less threatening environment. We give them time to mature before they enter the main building; I can see such a tremendous difference in the kids socially over the course of a year. They mature a lot and by the end of the year, and I believe they are better equipped to handle the social pressures of high school. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The final portion of the teacher and administrator interviews centered on their specific roles in the academy. For example, the teachers were asked what they did to motivate their students to learn their subject matter, and the assistant principal was asked

to describe what his observations were regarding the teachers and their motivational strategies. They were all asked to describe how they think their jobs differ from similar positions in a non-academy. Lastly, the teachers were asked if they had received any special training or staff development to help prepare them for teaching in this Upstate South Carolina High School freshman academy. The results of the motivation section and other teaching/administration questions are found below in Table 21.

Table 21

Teacher and Administrator Roles

Teacher	Motivation for Students	Differences: Freshman Academies and High School	Interaction With Other Teachers	Training
History	• Passion of my own for the subject area • Games • Encouragement to express opinions • Casual mood	• More reassuring/nurturing	• Global atmosphere • Discuss students regularly	• None extra
Math	• Emphasize true beginning of academic career • Candy • Games • Group work	• Scheduling: blocked time periods	• Lesson plans often coordinated	• None extra
Science	• Lab activities • Contest/games • Emphasize true beginning of academic career • Display work • Casual mood	• More reassuring/nurturing	• Not as much as preferred	• None extra
English	• Contest/games • Display work • Still implement structure and discipline • Blocks of assignments rather than one large assignment	• Prevents some social acting out • Less distraction	• Not as much as preferred	• Some staff development
AP	• Display work • Contest/games • Intrinsic motivation • Casual mood	• Deal only with 9th grade • Easier to get to know students and their families • Easier to provide assistance / discipline	• Very much • Teachers observe other teachers	• Some staff development

From Table 21, it is apparent that the teachers had multiple avenues for

motivating students to learn in their classrooms. Most common was the use of games and contests, displaying students' work, and a casual atmosphere in the classroom. When asked to share strategies for motivating students to learn history, the teacher provided the following response:

> Well, you know I could probably talk all day about this. I don't know if my answers are all right or all wrong, but the biggest thing I do is I try to let them see my passion for history. I mean I love it! It gets my blood flowing talking about history, and I want the kids to have fun learning it. We play games like trash can basketball and Jeopardy. I really try to get the kids to express their own opinions too, because they sometimes act like they're afraid to make a mistake and are hesitant to talk and let me know what they're thinking. I challenge them to think for themselves, and I keep the mood light so they're not afraid to speak up. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The math teacher too shared the use of games such as Jeopardy as a motivational technique but she also discussed having high expectations for all of her students, regardless of their ability levels or track; she felt that once her students realized that she believed in them, they would work harder. Additionally, the math teacher mentioned other instructional strategies and activities that she uses to motivate her students. These included allowing extra time to complete assignments, videos, power points, songs, making their learning relevant, and even an occasional piece of candy as a reward. The most passionate portion of her response, however, centered on group work:

> I do group work on a daily basis; I'm a full believer in group work. Now, I may not let them choose their own partner. Sometimes I have to assign partners or be very strong in my suggestion as to who they work with. I feel strongly that

> children need to work together when learning, and I have my children for 107 minutes. They can't sit and listen to me for that long. I can't listen to me for that long! While they're working together, I move around from group to group, checking on what they're doing and talking to them about their work. Group work keeps us all motivated. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

A variety of motivation strategies were also provided by the English teacher, including group work, competition, praise, and breaking large, complex assignments down into smaller, less intimidating tasks. She shared her comments as follows:

> Personally, motivation varies from student to student, and it typically takes at least the first couple of months of school to figure out exactly what's going to motivate the students who are not just motivated to get a good grade. Finding out involves things like figuring out what their relationships are with their parents, with their peers, and with the other students in the class. Some students are better motivated if they're put with other students they can interact with. Sometimes having a little competition between the two of them results in them working harder to outdo each other. Other students need praise—seeing their work on the wall, having their name read over the announcements, or a note or phone call home. Also, when things get difficult and I can tell that by either the confusion on their faces, or the blank looks that come back at me, I will break the material down. If the whole assignment is too much for them, I can usually motivate the students by assigning the work in smaller blocks. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The science teacher, when asked about motivating her students to learn, stressed that she likes to give assignments that are purposeful and projects-based; she also likes to

promote a healthy sense of competition in her classroom. This teacher also discussed how she uses scaffolding as a strategy to keep her students motivated to learn science:

> A lot of times if these kids face a difficult assignment, they just want to give up. So what I do is scaffold their assignments. I begin by modeling the work, for example how to solve a genetics problem. I will work several problems with them first, and then allow them to work with a partner. Eventually, I will get them to work independently. It seems to really help when I model and provide assistance first, then let them work with a partner, and finally, they are confident to do the work on their own. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

For statistical purposes, the researcher examined the relationship between what teachers said they did to motivate their students and what the students revealed to be motivating factors (Table 22).

Table 22

Statistical Analysis of Motivation Factors: Teacher Responses vs. Student Responses

Response category: Motivation factors	Teacher response	Student response
Candy	X	
Caring and helpful staff (teacher attitude)	X	X
Choice in assignments		X
Curiosity or personal interest		X
Display work (pride)	X	
Elective classes		X
Encouragement to express opinions	X	
Goal of becoming more comfortable with high school		X
Grades or academic standards	X	X
Innovate assignments (blocks rather than one large assignment)	X	
Parent motivation or pressure		X
Peers (being with older students)		X
Relationship and rapport with teachers	X	X
Self-satisfaction or relief		X
Structure and discipline	X	
Student engagement (games, competitions, hands-on activities)	X	X
Team work	X	X

This relationship between teacher responses and student responses regarding motivating factors was examined by performing a chi-squared analysis, a statistical

measure designed for use with nominal or ordinal data. For this purpose, two hypotheses were written by the researcher:

1. Null hypothesis (H_0): There are no differences based on group membership (teacher, student).

2. Alternate hypothesis (H_1): There are differences based on group membership (teacher, student).

The two response data sets were cross-tabulated and the chi-squared analysis was performed by a professional statistician. The chi-squared statistic has a p-value, which determines its statistical significance. The chi-squared test results were $\chi^2(20)=36.41$, and $p=.014$. This p-value is less than .05, and considered significant. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis, and accepted the alternate hypothesis—there were significant differences based on group membership (teacher, student). These findings have very important implications for Upstate South Carolina High School freshman academy teachers and administration. These implications, along with others, are elaborated in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Next, during the administrator interview, the assistant principal was asked to give examples of teacher motivational techniques that he had observed this year. The assistant principal commented initially about having relative stability in the academy teaching staff from year to year, with little turnover; he stressed that this has enabled him to develop a thorough working knowledge of the teachers and the strategies they employ to motivate their students to learn. He shared specific examples that included the following explanation:

> My teachers all feel that their subject matter is the most important; that's what I want because if they feel that way, they will pass that along to their students. As

> you walk our halls, you see a lot of student work displayed. The kids are proud of what they're doing in the classrooms and the teachers use this as motivation. We have projects in social studies where they build different things and put them in the hallways for everyone to see. In our English department, we have the Romeo and Juliet things—right now I have a teacher that is allowing her students to paint scenes on the ceiling tiles. She's going to put them up to make her ceiling; the kids compete to make theirs the best. By far, the most important thing I want them to do is to engage their students. Ninth-grade kids cannot sit still; I don't think they've made one yet that sits still. Teachers need to involve them in the learning, whether it's by using the promethean board, hands-on stuff, or manipulatives. I encourage them to involve all of their students; if they're having classroom management issues with a student, I suggest to them that they give that student a meaningful task, or a job, to do—that seems to work well with most students that can be problems in the classroom. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

When asked to describe how their jobs differed from that of a non-academy high school teacher, the themes that emerged from the teacher's responses included that they provided a more nurturing and supportive environment for their students and that the structure they provided in the academy promoted a reduction in typical high school distractions. The history teacher commented specifically about the nurturing environment when he said:

> I think I help the kids out a lot more than the teachers that have the older students, especially the ones with the juniors and seniors. I think that's because by that time, the kids know what to expect. Although we are teaching them responsibility

> at this age, I still am more apt to give them the benefit of the doubt since they're still new to the whole high school concept. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The science teacher also spoke freely about the nurturing environment that is fostered at the academy with her remarks:

> I feel like I am more nurturing since I'm in the ninth-grade academy. I love all of my students, regardless of their ages, but I am more likely to help them here, and show them the way, and take the time to show them how to organize their notebooks, for example. Because I've had middle school experience, I think I am more apt to treat them that way, especially at first; I realize where they've come from. They are, however, getting to an age where they want to do things themselves and sometimes they don't want to listen as much to what an adult has to say. It certainly has to be a balance at this age. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The English teacher discussed how her role differs from that of a non-academy teacher because the ninth graders are segregated from the older students:

> Because the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders aren't over here, they don't come by and interact with my ninth graders like they did before we had the academy. Although sometimes that interaction was very positive, often it was not because the older kids were trying to engage our kids socially. It was a constant battle to keep the older students away from our kids and to keep our kids focused on their classes when they were all together. In the academy setting, there's not as much outside distraction for the ninth graders and for me having to corral them back into focus. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The math teacher also discussed how her job was easier because the ninth graders were segregated from the older students. Additionally, she commented about the procedural differences in her job now that she teaches in the freshman academy by comparing her current experiences to her experiences when she taught in the main building:

> Well, for one thing, my math classes would probably not be blocked like they are now; that affects everything you do as a teacher. It is also easier here for me to keep the students focused and in line, and doing what they need to do, because they don't have the distractions of the older kids around all the time. I also like the way it's much easier for me to monitor my students now. When we were in the big building, it was much more difficult because the building was huge and the classes were all clustered off the main halls; that made it hard for me to monitor the kids during class changes. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The assistant principal spoke at length about his current position, explaining that now he has a more focused look at what the ninth graders are actually taking and what they are going through. His comments were as follows:

> Anybody that's been through school knows the 9th grade year is your hardest year; it's the 14 and 15 year old age group struggling with what they want to do with themselves. If I can make them understand that first year in high school how important their freshman year really is, it's downhill for them after that. They need focus; it's easier here for me to get my hands on them and help point them in the right direction. Here, all I deal with is 9th graders, so I am more familiar with them. That's an important point. Because I deal with them over and over, and their parents over and over, and their teachers over and over, I am able to really

> identify students' needs and then it's easier for me to do something to help satisfy those needs. Because it's a much smaller setting, I am also able to have a little more flexibility in dealing with issues, and devote a little more time to educating these younger students academically and socially. I really think I have an advantage over my peers who administrate at the big building. This year's graduation represents the first group that started out in the academy—that makes me very proud. The proof is not there just yet, but I believe 100% that the ninth-grade academy works. I think it's the right kind of atmosphere and climate that not only the leader projects, but also the faculty and staff that you have working with you. Kids will always be kids. They'll always be different, and they'll always be the same. I realize that's a contradictory statement, but say it around any educator, and they know exactly what you mean. When I see the kids once they've left the academy, they often say to me that they miss it over here and that they want to come back. They talk to me about how it was smaller and things were simpler over here. The main thing that I remind the kids every day when I make announcements is that my job is to get them to the 10th grade as a 10th grader, and not as a 9th grade repeater. In this academy, they only come through one time. If they fail 9th grade over here, they do go to the main building again next year, but as a ninth-grade repeater. Like I said earlier, our dropout numbers have decreased dramatically from 200 to probably 75 to about 100, and that's a great feeling to know that you are getting through to some of them. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Next, the researcher asked the teachers and assistant principal to comment about their collaboration for instructional planning. The science teacher said, when asked if she

planned with other freshman academy teachers for instruction:

> No, but…well, not as much as I would like, because I love team planning. I love getting ideas from other people. I'm also very willing to share my ideas. There is one colleague that shares a lot of his teaching stuff with me, and what he does in his classroom. There is also a teacher that teaches a higher level of biology than I do, and we try to stay along the same path, because we think that's important. I would really love to sit down and plan, however. I think it's essential for all teachers to be on the same page, because if one of my students has a question and their best friend has another teacher, and we're in two different spots, it makes it hard for them because I'm not with them 24 hours a day, and a lot of times their parents can't help them. You know, I've had parents tell me, "I could do it before, but now it's getting too difficult." (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The English teacher also stressed the lack of a common planning period, but she also discussed how she and the other teachers did share good ideas with each other when she stated, "Even though we don't have a common planning period, typically if we come across something we do share it from one to the other" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012).

The history teacher felt that it was relatively easy for the academy teachers to collaborate for instructional purposes because the school is small and because their students all take pretty much the same courses, unlike at the main building where the course variety is much greater. He also briefly mentioned how he and another teacher that share a student discuss him frequently in order to handle him better, as he can be quite difficult. He shared his thoughts as:

> In the big building, the history teachers are teaching different things; here we all teach global studies. This allows us to get together and discuss what we're doing in our class and how our kids are responding. The same is true for math, science, and English. The teachers can discuss what techniques are working in their classrooms and with their students, and I think that helps the students especially, and it even makes our jobs easier, because we're not maneuvering around on our own. And I know if I'm doing a good job in something and my kids are getting it, then I'm going to tell the other history teachers, "Look; I did this today, and the kids loved it. They really responded well. You might want to try it." We also collaborate to talk about specific student concerns. For example, I share a student with a teacher that's two doors down from me. Every day I let her know how he did for me before he gets to her and we help each other figure out how to reach him and to calm him if needed. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

When asked if she plans instructionally with the other freshman academy teachers, the math teacher replied:

> To a degree. I mean I kind of plan out my lessons, but then I go to the other teachers and say, "Okay, where are you? What are you doing?" If there's an activity that I want to do, I'll take it and go by them and say, "Does this make sense to you? Is this something you think your CP (college prep) would do, because I'm thinking of giving it to mine?" I do try to get input. We're not all exactly in the same place, so I kind of plan my own, but we do try to kind of go together, and if you make a test, then I'll say, "Okay, I made this; if you want it, that's fine." It's easier because three out of the five of us have the same planning,

> so we three work together a little more than the other two. I do try to ask questions when we're in the hall too, where they are and what they're doing. Do they have anything fun to do? Do they have any games that might interest the students? I also talk to the other teachers about grading and behavioral issues if we share the same students. It was easier last year because most of my children also had one other specific teacher; because of that, we were able to talk more about the students in order to help them. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The assistant principal appeared confident that his teachers collaborated with each other regularly in order to benefit their students. His statement is as follows:

> That's one thing we do a lot of. Not only with the negative, but also with the positive. The teachers from different subjects often work together. For example, the English teacher may go to the math teacher and ask, "How do you get him to learn? He won't do anything for me." I am also a part of this collaboration because teachers will frequently come to me if they need help motivating a student. One of the first things I do is to encourage them to collaborate with each other. I might suggest that they observe each other while teaching. When I pull that student's grades I may notice that he does much better for one teacher than another. If that's the case, I can say, "Why not go talk to his English teacher? It looks like he's doing a good job in there." I have a very open door policy and the teachers do ask me for help, but at the same time, they help each other a lot. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

The final question posed by the interviewer during the teacher interviews dealt with staff development and other training that they received prior to their assignment to the

freshman academy. They were simply asked the question, "Did you receive any specific training or staff development designed to help you prepare for teaching in this freshman academy?" All four teachers shared that there was little to no training for teaching in the freshman academy. The English teacher, who has taught in the freshman academy since it was opened 4 years ago, said that she did remember meetings that were held to make the teachers more aware of their specific purpose in working exclusively with the segregated ninth graders:

> We were all brought together to let us know that because we had the ninth graders, our responsibilities were slightly different—we have to get them ready academically, but we were also charged with making sure that the students understand the high school differences. These differences include tardies, attendance in credit classes, grades, etc. They had us all come together in several different meetings to make sure we understood exactly how to approach those things with them, in that this is the year that is most crucial for them to move forward in high school. And if they can make it through their first year with some measure of success, there's a very good possibility that they'll finish rather than getting lost in transition, and then maybe dropping out of school altogether. (Anonymous, personal communication, March 2012)

Summary of Focus Groups and Interviews

The researcher used student focus groups and teacher and administrator interviews to explore how freshman academy experiences have impacted Upstate South Carolina High School's student academic intrinsic motivation. Students, teachers, and the assistant principal all agreed that the freshman academy experiences eased the academic, procedural, and social transition experiences for the current ninth graders. The ninth-

grade teachers, students, and the administrator had an essential (and relative) knowledge of the purposes, structure, and function of the freshman academy. According to them, the freshman academy eased the transitional challenges faced by ninth graders as they moved from smaller middle schools to the larger high school. This was accomplished by segregating the freshmen from the older students in Grades 10 through 12 and providing them a year to assume more responsibility and independence as they prepared to enter the main high school the following year. The majority of the students (all but two), all teachers, and the assistant principal also shared that their freshman academy was more beneficial for high school transition than a non-freshman academy setting. All participant subjects appeared to have some understanding of the freshman academy as a redesign effort to ease high school transition. However, the largest divergence in responses was seen regarding the topic of interaction and collaboration among teachers. It was apparent that the students did not have an understanding about their teachers collaborating with each other for instructional purposes. Additionally, the teachers felt there was little to none, with more interaction desired, but the assistant principal felt there was quite a good deal of interaction.

The students shared a variety of freshman academy responses that they felt most impacted their academic intrinsic motivation. As already discussed, they dialogued about specific subjects, as well as about their general orientation toward school learning. Some of their responses appeared to reflect their individual motivations, such as curiosity, interest, and feelings of self-satisfaction when tasks were completed. Many other responses, however, indicated the teacher as a primary source of their students' motivation to learn. This is an important finding because, as discussed earlier in the literature review, the relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic success is

very strong; students with higher levels of academic intrinsic motivation tend to experience better academic success in school.

Freshman Academy in Written Form

During the next phase of the research process, the researcher reviewed the printed text and website information that the Upstate South Carolina High School published describing its freshman academy. The primary purpose of this phase was to determine how the school portrayed its academy and to look for any identifiable themes that might emerge. It was also the researcher's desire that these additional findings would further triangulate and strengthen the study's data. The researcher reviewed the high school's website, the high school Student Registration Guide, and the school's annual School Improvement Council Report to the People that is published on the School Report Card.

School website. First, the researcher reviewed the high school's website and located a link on its homepage to the Ninth Grade Academy. Located on this page are a photograph of the front of the academy wing and the sign that identifies the entrance—9th Grade Academy. Listed below the photograph is a diagram labeled "Student Drop Off Pattern: 9th Grade Building." This diagram identifies the traffic pattern for dropping off and picking up students (Appendix K).

All of the high school teachers are listed by subjects taught, but there is no grade level distinction, so freshman academy teachers are not identified. The same is true for the assistant principal who serves as the administrator in charge of the freshman academy. There is, however, a list of the ninth-grade support staff listed on the school's website; this list includes the freshman academy school nurse, secretaries, guidance counselors, and the records clerk.

Student registration guide. Each year, the high school publishes a student

registration guide; this guide is found on the school's website. The researcher reviewed the guide for written information pertaining to the freshman academy. Although no specific reference to the academy was found, there were numerous references to ninth grade in general. These references included ninth-grade course load (students expected to enroll in seven courses), ninth-grade homeroom and grade placement (mastery of requirements and promotion at the eighth grade), and ninth-grade gifted/talented (served in English classes). The End of Course Exam Program (EOCEP) is described for applicable courses in Grades 9-12, curriculum templates matched to specific Career Clusters for Grades 9-12, and course descriptions for all courses taught in Grades 9-12 are also included.

School Improvement Council Report to the People. Each year, the high school principal is required to write a *School Improvement Council Report to the People* which serves as one of the narrative portions of the SC School Report Card. The researcher reviewed the South Carolina State Department of Education website for School Report Cards for the Upstate South Carolina High School in order to determine how the freshman academy is depicted. A single written reference to the freshman academy was found in the 2009 Report Card:

> Despite budget cuts in all sources of revenues, we were able to move forward in many areas. Sixteen new staff members helped invigorate both the old building (relatively speaking) and the new ninth-grade wing. The purpose of the new addition is to provide a close community setting in which ninth graders can be successful academically as well as socially. With an energetic, student oriented staff to guide them through their first year of high school, our expectations are very high for a reduction in the number of ninth-grade repeaters in the future. This

> new facility contains 31 classrooms, including 6 state of the art science rooms/labs, along with a cafeteria, office complex, guidance suite and computer rooms suitable for classrooms or individual tutorials. (2009 Upstate South Carolina High School S.C. School Report Card)

Freshman Survival Guide. On the first day of school, Upstate South Carolina High School gives its ninth graders an informational pamphlet entitled *Freshman Survival Guide* (Appendix L). This pamphlet is given to the students during homeroom and the homeroom teachers review it with their students. The *Freshman Survival Guide* clearly refers students to the front office for assistance and it covers a variety of procedural topics including ID cards, bus passes, cell phone policies, and attendance and tardy policies. On the front page there is a section entitled "Bits and Bytes to Help You Hang Tight!" The following information is found in this section:

> Make new friends. Leave middle school behind. You are now faced with new rules, new faces, and new policies.
>
> Get organized. Use an agenda! It might seem dorky, but it will remind you when assignments are due, which, in turn, helps you keep your grades up.
>
> Keep an open mind about people. We all change a lot from year to year—hopefully you will too. (Freshman Survival Guide, 2011-2012).

The *Freshman Survival Guide* also contains information about clubs, sports, and physical education. Additionally, there are several references to academic issues, such as high school GPA, homework, paying attention in class, and asking for help with schoolwork.

The research study conclusions, discussions, and recommendations are presented next in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Discussions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed methodology case study was to examine the impact that Upstate South Carolina High School freshman academy experiences had on its ninth graders' academic intrinsic motivation to learn English, math, science, history, and their general orientation toward school learning. First time ninth graders encounter a variety of challenges as they transition from middle school to high school, and many of them are unable to successfully meet these challenges. Smith et al. (2008) posited,

> Part of what makes the transition so difficult, is not merely just the adolescent age of the students, but the substantial differences, both academically and socially, between middle school and high school. Ninth graders are introduced to new stressors and different expectations for which they are often not prepared. (p. 33)

Some schools have worked to ease the transition to high school by providing separate wings or buildings just for ninth graders that allow for an entire year of transition time before being blended with students from the upper grades (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007).

As introduced earlier in this dissertation, for the purposes of this study the researcher chose to use Gottfried's (1985) definition of academic intrinsic motivation: "Academic intrinsic motivation involves enjoyment of school learning characterized by a mastery orientation; curiosity; persistence; task-endogeny; and the learning of challenging, difficult, and novel tasks" (p. 632). This definition was chosen by the researcher to ensure consistency, since Gottfried is credited with developing the Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (CAIMI), the instrument used by the researcher in this study. Gottfried's definition of academic intrinsic motivation is based upon three conceptual foundations—cognitive discrepancy, competence, and attribution.

Cognitive discrepancy stimulates curiosity and exploration as the learner seeks to reduce the apparent discrepancy between what he observes and what he *thinks to be true*. Competence mastery is directly related to the learner's sense of autonomy and being in control of his learning. Attribution refers to the impact of extrinsic consequences for learning on intrinsic motivation. Academic intrinsic motivation is of profound importance to students' academic performance and overall adaptation to the demands of the school environment (Ames & Ames, 1984).

Quantitative data were collected by administering the Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (CAIMI) to current ninth graders. Qualitative data in the form of student focus group interviews, teacher interviews, an administrator interview, and document analysis of how Upstate South Carolina High school writes about its freshman academy were examined in order to reveal what the students, teachers, and administrator perceive this impact to be, as well as their thoughts about whether the freshman academy eased the transitional challenges faced by the current ninth graders.

The five guiding research questions were:

1. How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn English?
2. How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn math?
3. How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn science?
4. How do freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn history?
5. How do freshman academy experiences impact student general orientation

toward school learning?

This chapter includes a brief summary of the study, a discussion and interpretation of the results, and recommendations from the researcher. The results are organized into categories which represent the five guiding research questions, themes in Chapter 4, as well as themes identified in the literature review.

Summary of the Study

Initial data were collected by administering CAIMI to 70 current Upstate South Carolina High School ninth graders; this data provided participants' quantitative raw scale scores for motivation to learn English, math, science, history and their general orientation toward school learning. Participant raw scores were statistically analyzed to determine the minimum scores, maximum scores, mean scores, relative percentages, and standard deviation values for all five of these CAIMI scales. T-scores that corresponded to participant raw scores were used to inspect the comparison of motivational strength across the scales and to establish if differences were due to chance fluctuations or if they represented differing motivation scores across the five scales.

Once the quantitative data were collected and analyzed, to strengthen data triangulation, the researcher conducted three student focus group interviews, four individual teacher interviews, and an administrator interview. There were six ninth-grade students in each focus group. All focus group responses were transcribed and reviewed for common themes; a similar procedure was followed for the teacher and administrator interviews. The teachers all taught in the freshman academy and each one taught one of the four core subject areas. The administrator interviewed was the assistant principal in charge of the freshman academy. Additionally, the researcher reviewed the school's website, its School Improvement Council Report to the People, and its publication

Freshman Survival Guide in order to analyze how Upstate South Carolina High School writes about its freshman academy.

Interpretation and Discussion of Results

For the initial interpretation and discussion of results, the researcher will discuss findings most specific to the five guiding research questions. These findings resulted from student CAIMI data, student focus group interviews, teacher interviews, and an administrator interview. Hence, these findings represent student voice, teacher voice, and administrator voice about the perceived impact of the freshman academy experiences on the students' intrinsic motivation to learn English, math, science, and history, as well as to their general orientation toward school learning. The researcher will present recommendations to enhance student academic intrinsic motivation based on these findings.

The researcher will also present what the study findings revealed about how the freshman academy experiences have impacted the transitional challenges faced by the students as they entered high school, again from the perspectives of the students, teachers, and administrator. Next, the researcher will discuss how the students perceived the roles of their freshman academy teachers this year. The researcher will consider these together in order to offer recommendations to the academy about easing the challenges faced by the students as they transition from middle school to high school.

The researcher will review how the freshman academy represents itself via its school website, *School Improvement Council Report to the People*, student registration guides, and the *Freshman Survival Guide*, and make suggestions as to how to enhance this representation to better inform its students and parents. These recommendations are presented in a manner supportive of successful transition to high school for all Upstate

South Carolina High School students.

Throughout this chapter, connections will also be made to current research themes as discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, as well as to additional themes that emerged during the course of the research study. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the study's limitations and an overall summary of its findings.

Motivation to learn English: Student voice. CAIMI data indicated that among the study group, English had the highest mean motivation scores, and focus group data showed that six students volunteered English as a subject about which they desired to learn more. Of the core subject data, this represented the greatest number of responses, and students' response data credited the teachers for increasing student motivation to learn more about English. Student data showed that this year students have encountered fun English teachers who engage their students in the class work, promote teamwork among their students, and offer an inviting classroom. These findings are supported by earlier research, such as that done by Wlodkowski (1999), who found that a visible outcome of motivation is engagement in learning. In support of these findings, Newmann (1991) posited that when classroom tasks provide opportunities for collaboration and fun, engagement in learning will be enhanced.

Motivation to learn math: Student voice. CAIMI data indicated that among the study group, math had the second highest mean motivation scores, and focus group data revealed that five different students responded that math was a subject about which they desired to learn more. Their response data unanimously credited their teachers for inspiring them to want to learn more about math. Student responses included specific examples of how their math teachers this year were fun, engaged their students in the class work, and made the learning relevant to the students. Task relevance appropriate to

motivating students to learn content is supported by research literature. For example, in his research study, Lepper (1988) found that when learning is relevant, students are more motivated to learn. When 467 dropouts were interviewed in a research study by Gewertz (2006), 81% of the former students said they wanted better teachers and more interesting classes, including the opportunity for more *real world* learning experiences.

Motivation to learn science: Student voice. CAIMI data indicated that among the study group, science had the lowest mean motivation scores, and focus group data showed only three different students' responses that science was a subject about which they desired to learn more. Curiosity about science content was the most prevalent response as motivating to the students; one other response credited the teacher as the motivational source by planning lessons that foster student engagement. Intrinsic motivation has been partly defined as participation in an activity purely out of curiosity (Deci, 1975). Lepper (1988) also supported that learning should tailor to a student's curiosity; in his research he found that curiosity, an intrinsic motivator, is stimulated by tasks that involve a reasonable amount of discrepancy or incongruity. In their explanations, the students who cited their curiosity about science as being motivational referred specifically to engaging labs that sparked their curiosity because events happened that they did not expect to happen. Fostering curiosity and engagement in learning is further supported by Lambert and McCombs (1998), who concluded,

> It is part of human nature to be curious, to be active, to initiate thought and behavior, to make meaning from experience, and to be effective at what we value. These primary sources of motivation reside in all of us. When students can see that what they are learning is important, their motivation emerges. (p. 113)

Motivation to learn history: Student voice. CAIMI data indicated that among

the study group, history had the second lowest mean motivation scores, but focus group data showed that five different responses indicated that history was a subject about which students desired to learn more. Three students indicated a personal interest in history and two other students again credited their teacher as providing engaging lessons in the classroom that stimulated their desire to learn more about history. Personal interest as motivating to students is supported in the research literature by Reeve, Carrell, Jeon, and Barch (2004), who examined the extent to which autonomy-supportive classroom contexts (i.e. practices which cultivate students' internal locus of control, interests, and autonomy) resulted in more adaptive student motivation and academic achievement than did environments adhering to a more controlling teaching environment. Their work paralleled that of Ames (1992) who found that when student interest in the learning process is developed, there is a positive impact on student interest, enjoyment, and regulatory behaviors in school.

Motivation to general orientation toward school learning: Student voice. CAIMI data indicated that among the study group, and of the five CAIMI scales, general orientation toward school learning had the lowest mean motivation scores. The focus group data produced 14 different reasons that students credited as increasing their motivation toward school learning this year. However, of the student-centered responses given, earning passing/good grades was cited the most. In the research literature, students motivated by grades are typically viewed as extrinsically motivated rather than intrinsically motivated. Grades, stickers, or teacher approval may serve as motivation to extrinsically motivated students since they participate in order to acquire some reward or evade some punishment external to the activity itself (Lepper, 1998). The researcher posits that these students' low intrinsic scores may indicate that the source of their

motivation is more extrinsic in nature; to be confirmed, however, this would require further research.

Another prevalent student-centered response included feeling a sense of satisfaction and relief once tasks were completed. Since these students discussed this self-satisfaction in terms of meeting their academic goals, this response was interpreted by the researcher as being related to mastery goal orientation. A mastery goal elicits a motivational pattern that is associated with a quality of involvement likely to maintain achievement behavior (Ames, 1992). When mastery goals are adopted, pride and satisfaction are associated with successful effort (Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1987). Other student-centered responses included feeling more comfortable with high school (now), and spending at least part of their school day with the older students.

Teachers were credited in the focus group data as being a primary motivational source for the students this year. Listed in descending order of response prevalence, the teacher characteristics that focus group data revealed as being the most motivational to students this year included those teachers who:

- planned engaging lessons
- were nice, caring, and helpful to students
- planned lessons that matched students' interest and curiosity
- promoted student teamwork
- were fun
- promoted positive relationships with their students

This portion of the focus group data indicated that the students freely discussed their teachers' positive impact on their motivation to learn when the teachers fostered a

positive relationship with them in the classroom. Few would dispute the importance of high-quality interpersonal relationships in young people's capacity to function effectively, including in their academic lives (Martin & Dowson, 2009). These results are also supported by Pianta (1998) who stressed the critical role that relationships play in student engagement and motivation in school. Teachers are more likely to foster motivated, engaged, and achieving students when they structure their practice in relational terms (Martin & Dowson, 2009).

Motivation to learn subjects: Teacher voice. Data from the teacher interviews indicated that the freshman academy teachers used a variety of instructional strategies to foster academic intrinsic motivation in their students. These data were compiled and organized into the following themes:

- Student engagement
- Casual classroom atmosphere
- Relevant assignments
- Dividing assignments into smaller, more manageable units

Interview data revealed that all of the teachers claimed to intentionally plan for student engagement in their classes, and indicated that active involvement fostered their students' intrinsic motivation to learn. This data is substantially supported in the research literature. For example, Astin (1984) suggested that faculty members who are able to increase student involvement, both physically and psychologically, are more likely to enhance student learning and motivation. Likewise, Diaz-Lefebvre (2004) warned against pedagogical methods that encourage rote memorization as they are likely to guide students toward low motivation, reduced performance, and an inability to relate course

material to real life.

Interview data also indicated that several of the teachers believed the casual, non-threatening atmosphere in their classrooms encouraged intrinsic motivation in their students. This belief is supported by education researchers such as Sanacore (1999), who associate this with students' intrinsic motivation via the concept of self-determination. "Students' self-determination flourishes when they have some degree of power and control over classroom activities, but their self-determination is compromised, or negated, when teachers require them to rigidly follow curricula, rules, and assessments" (p. 41).

Pintrich, McKeachie, and Lin's (1987) research on teaching effectiveness and teacher training suggested that it is possible to motivate students to be excited about learning by creating active learning experiences. Students who are able to see a connection between concepts from lecture and real life situations are more likely to become curious and eager to know more. Teacher interview data showed that the Upstate South Carolina High School freshman academy teachers claim to embrace this phenomenon by ensuring relevance to that which they are teaching in an effort to motivate their students to learn more about their subject matter.

Findings from the interviews also indicated that teachers structured their assignments to foster motivation in their students. For example, data revealed that teachers broke large assignments into smaller, more manageable chunks of content, and they also allowed students to redo assignments until they *got it right*. These findings are supported by education researchers such as Gottfried (1983), who stated:

> Achieving mastery motivates the student intrinsically. When a student completes an assignment that does not meet the expected criteria, give her or him one or

> more opportunities to tackle the task again, with guidelines on how to achieve the desired result. One way to do this would be to help the student break the task up into manageable components and to set goals or completing each step. This will also imbue the student with a feeling of success as each goal is achieved. (p. 67)

Proximal goal setting has been shown to be self-motivating because it cultivates a feeling of competency in learners (Bandura & Schunk, 1981).

Motivation to learn subjects: Administrator voice. Data from the administrator interview indicated that the assistant principal in charge of the freshman academy had observed the academy teachers employing a variety of instructional strategies designed to foster their students' academic intrinsic motivation. Initial findings indicated the observance of a casual atmosphere within many of the academy teachers' classrooms. This type of atmosphere was perceived as supportive to student learning, as opposed to a very rigid atmosphere that stifles students' self-determination. This data is supported by research on student autonomy. For example, if teachers support students' autonomy, it is predicted that students can better identify the value of a behavior (e.g. going to school) and assimilate it within the self. In addition, autonomy supportive environments can improve students' competence beliefs because students can realize the link between their effort and their accomplishments (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Additional data from the administrator interview revealed that teachers also foster student autonomy within their classrooms by engaging students in project-based learning and then displaying the completed projects. Finally, the data revealed the administrator's knowledge of the teachers' use of contests and games in order to promote student engagement, and hence student autonomy, in their classrooms. There is existing research that cautions the over-use of competition within the classroom, however. In the classroom environments where

the focus is on behavioral management and competition students can perceive the learning environment as hostile, uncontrollable, and unpredictable. In such threatening classroom environments, students are less likely to develop intrinsic interest for the tasks or activities (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006).

Recommendations to enhance student motivation. The data shows that Upstate South Carolina High School freshman academy teachers, from the students' perspectives, are utilizing a variety of instructional strategies that foster their students' intrinsic motivation to learn. Most of these instructional strategies directly relate to conceptual foundations of academic intrinsic motivation. For example, lessons that actively engage the students in the learning promote student autonomy in the classroom.

However, when statistical chi-squared analysis was performed to compare what teachers stated they did to motivate their students with the factors that students found to be motivating, significant differences were found. Focus group data and interview data revealed that teachers are employing a variety of motivational techniques; data also revealed that students recognize what their teachers are doing to motivate them. Nevertheless, the chi-squared results revealed a likely disconnect between these two response groups. In other words, teachers may not be aware of the factors most likely to influence their students' motivation to learn. The researcher also posits that this may be a possible explanation for students' lower CAIMI scores and/or variation in students' CAIMI scores.

The researcher proposes the following recommendations to the freshman academy teachers and administration:

1. Administer the CAIMI to their students early in the school year and use the motivational scale scores obtained to plan and effectively implement student-centered

instruction that is tailored to meet the needs of all students, in the four core subject areas. Once scores are generated, conference individually with students about their scores and involve them in the instructional strategies; this promotes autonomy, and hence motivation, within the learners. Researchers in the field of cognitive psychology argue that instruction and motivation are contextualized, meaning that factors such as the subject being taught and the students' developmental levels influence the types of motivational strategies used (Hootstein, 1994).

2. Participate in staff development on academic intrinsic motivation and how to foster academic intrinsic motivation in classrooms. Vallerand and Bissonnette (1992) described how intrinsic motivation can be increased when students engage in activities that are self-determined and that they find to be creative, interesting, and associated with positive emotions. Recommendations are supported by the literature on teaching effectiveness and teacher training that suggests that it is possible to motivate students to be excited about learning by creating active learning experiences. For example, McKeachie, Lin, Moffett, and Daugherty (1978) posited that students are more motivated to participate in class when their instructors use a student-centered style. Grasha (1994) also emphasized the importance of varying teaching styles to match students' knowledge and motivation in order to promote student interest and learning. When students work with topics in which they are personally interested, their motivation and task persistence increase; modifying instruction to draw on students' interests is likely to result in greater student engagement, higher levels of intrinsic motivation, higher student productivity, greater student autonomy, increased achievement, and an increased sense of self-competence (Tomlinson, 2006). Likewise, Miller, Martineau, and Clark (2000) stressed the significance of taking into account student differences in personality, motivation, and

learning styles and adjusting teaching techniques so as to appeal to a broader range of students.

3. Promote a school-wide focus on providing a school culture that is caring and supportive, and where there is a sense of belonging and everyone is valued and respected; in this type of school culture, students tend to participate more fully in the process of learning. Barth (2002) contended that life and learning in schools is far more influential than the state department of education, the school board, the superintendent, or even the principal. Additionally, Narvaez (2010) argued that positive school climates of high support and high expectations for achievement and behavior meet students' needs for belonging, competence, and autonomy. This is further supported by Lumsden (1994) who noted that a caring, nurturing school environment boosts student motivation—that is, student interest in participating in the learning process. To help accomplish this, the teachers and administration are encouraged to establish a strong sense of Professional Learning Community (PLC) within their academy. One suggestion would be to establish an academy leadership team of staff members (and perhaps students) to research PLC concepts and to present their findings to the faculty as a whole. These staff members would then be expected to lead the academy into and along their PLC journey through purposeful and sustained staff development (ex. a book study of *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*). Through assimilation and analysis of current school performance data, PLC teams should work together to clearly establish, implement, and continually evaluate the academy's mission, vision, values, and goals. By participating in PLCs, teachers enhance their leadership capacity while they work as members of ongoing, high-performing, collaborative teams that focus on improving student learning (Rentfro, 2007).

4. Teachers should vary their task dimensions in order to stimulate motivation to learn. Ideally, tasks should be challenging, but achievable. Relevance also promotes motivation, as does contextualizing learning, assisting students to determine how skills can be applied in the real world (Lepper, 1988).

5. Restrict the use of extrinsic rewards for students. Lepper (1988) found that superfluous extrinsic rewards have a negative impact on interest, arousal, and control. Ideally extrinsic rewards are or may be useful in engaging students, but should be withdrawn as students' abilities and self-confidence about the activity increase.

Perceptions of freshman academy and transitional challenges: Student voice. Data from student focus groups indicated that all of the students knew they were in a freshman academy, and all of the students recognized the features that distinguished their freshman academy from a traditional high school. The features that were cited included smaller size, separate building, less crowded, easier to navigate, less intimidating, and fewer behavioral issues. Further focus group data revealed that all but two of the students acknowledged that freshman academy experiences this year had eased their transition from middle school to high school. Students admitted that their classes, which now counted toward high school graduation, were more difficult, although the support provided by the academy's structure and teachers lessened these academic challenges. Additionally, students disclosed that they had encountered numerous procedural challenges this year, such as increased freedoms, attendance and tardy policies, and bells. As adolescents prepare to enter high school, one of their greatest anticipations is more freedom (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Adolescents desire autonomy, independence, and time with peers, but at the same time, they continue to rely on guidance from parents and other adults (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007). Focus group data also revealed that the

ninth graders credited the freshman academy with assisting their social transition to high school by providing a less-intimidating environment, thus making it easier to create new friendships.

These findings relate directly to the research literature on freshman academies. Many ninth graders fail because they can more easily get lost in large high school settings. Freshman academies are structured to give each student more individual attention (Reents, 2002). Having a separate academy with separate teachers and schedules gives students the literal and psychological space they need to mature (Allen, 2001). Effective transition programs address the academic and procedural concerns of students, as well as their very real social concerns. Cauley and Jovanovich (2006) contend that

> Academically, students worry about increased academic expectations and look for ways to be successful. Procedurally, they also worry about negotiating the rules and environment at the new school. And socially, they worry about having friends and getting along with peers and teachers. (p. 24)

Perceptions of freshman academy and transitional challenges: Teacher voice. Teacher interview data revealed that teachers believed the Upstate South Carolina High School freshman academy had eased their students' academic transition this year from middle school to high school. Data also revealed that the teachers described ninth-grade courses as more rigorous and requiring more responsibility than their students' former middle school courses. Findings also disclosed that teachers felt that they provided substantial support to assist the students as they adjusted to the increased rigor and responsibility as ninth graders. Finally, data clearly indicated that teachers believed that the additional year provided by the freshman academy experience was beneficial to the

students as it gave them the opportunity for a more gradual entrance into high school with the older students. Teacher data directly relates to the literature describing freshman academies as high school reform efforts designed to reduce the academic challenges faced by first time freshmen. For example, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, through the Smaller Learning Community Assessment, found that students who attend freshman academies score higher on tests, pass more core courses, and attend college more frequently, all things being equal, at a higher level than students who attend a traditional high school (Fouts, Baker, Brown, & Riley, 2006). In Kentucky, a study was conducted on large urban schools with freshman academies. After studying the graduation rates in the state, administrators deemed the freshman academy approach a feasible way to make schools adequate. The study reported a reduction in class failures from 26% to 14% after implementation of freshman academies (De Mesquita, 1992). McComb (2000) concluded that freshman academy students' test scores are consistently higher than in traditional ninth-grade classes.

Interview data indicated that teachers believed that their freshman academy had also eased procedural challenges faced by the incoming freshmen this year; these challenges included bells, students walking on their own to classes, attendance and tardy policies, and increased freedom. The teachers felt that the smaller size and organizational structure of the academy wing drastically reduced procedural challenges their students would have encountered had they entered a traditional high school ninth-grade setting. The literature supports that procedural challenges are of utmost concern for students as they enter high school for the first time. Student concerns include finding classes, having enough time to get to classes or to eat lunch, and opening their locker (Potter et al., 2001).

The degree to which an adolescent is able to make friends and be part of an accepting peer group is a major indicator of how well the adolescent will adjust in other areas of social and psychological development (Potter et al., 2001). Teacher interview data about the social challenges faced by the current freshmen revealed that the teachers believed the students felt less intimidated about entering high school since they were with students of their same age for most of the day, rather than with the older students all day. Data also indicated that the teachers perceived a new-found sense of camaraderie and belonging among their students as they learned to interact with students from the other feeder middle schools. Teachers claimed to foster this interaction by promoting teamwork within their classrooms. Literature in support of this data includes the research of Connell and Wellborn (1991) who found that student motivation, engagement, and achievement are supported by a positive school affect. As students and willing teachers work together to establish a learning culture that provides a secure base of belonging, research suggests that motivation and achievement will also be enhanced (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005).

Perceptions of freshman academy and transitional challenges: Administrator voice. Administrator interview data showed that the assistant principal in charge of the freshman academy believed that the freshman academy and its teachers had assisted the students in transitioning from middle school this year and had successfully eased the challenges faced by these students. The administrator's responses, in summary, matched those of the teachers. Academically, for example, the assistant principal talked about the ninth-grade courses *counting*, and how this added additional responsibility for the freshmen. Intellectually, adolescents are developing critical thinking skills and the ability to express more complex concepts through an expanded vocabulary (Potter et al., 2001). A review of the literature on transition shows that there appears to be mutual agreement

among researchers that there is often a decline in achievement following transition; ninth-grade teachers must understand the challenges faced by students entering high school and become expert at watching their students so they can intervene if they observe a student or students experiencing difficulty with different stages in adolescence (McGee, 2009).

Findings from the administrator interview showed that procedurally, like the teachers, the assistant principal chose to discuss the tardy policy, bells, and the increased freedom experienced by the ninth graders as they entered high school for the first time. The assistant principal shared that the design of the freshman academy made it easier to locate those students needing help. This was in direct contrast to the main high school, as it is much larger, and more difficult to supervise. As the research supports, freshman academies can exhibit many physical forms, but all have the same goal, which is to separate freshmen to help ease the transition to high school, and increase the number of successful ninth-grade students (McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010).

Freedom and friends were the top two responses for eighth- and ninth-grade students on what they are looking forward to most about high school (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001). Administrator interview data showed that the assistant principal recognized the potential impact of the freshman academy on the social challenges faced by the first-time freshmen. Chapman and Sawyer (2001) addressed the need for transition programs in their article, *Bridging the Gap for Students at Risk of School Failure*. These authors recognized the importance of the social adjustment to high school and cite that some of the issues students face as they approach high school are dealing with a greater number of peers, the interaction of adults in authority, and learning how to balance their competing need for social support with the need to experience increased autonomy.

Perceptions of freshman academy teachers: Student voice. Students agreed

that at least some of their teachers this year cared about them and worked together to provide instruction and to assist students as needed. As supported by the literature, caring teachers foster intrinsic motivation in their students, especially related to students' efforts and their mastery. For example:

> Teacher-learner relationships are founded on the fundamental human need of knowing that another person genuinely cares Teachers are effective when they deeply care about the learning of each student. Caring teachers persistently reward the efforts of students, their learning from mistakes, and their not giving up even though they sometimes struggle to learn. Caring teachers' expectations contribute to students' feelings that their efforts will be rewarded as learning becomes more meaningful. (Lumpkin, 2007, p. 159)

Conversations from a number of the students indicated, however, that some of their teachers appeared not to care about them and these teachers did not act happy to be at work, nor did they "actively teach." Students agreed that the non-caring teachers isolated themselves at their desks or computers and gave the students independent assignments, such as worksheets to complete on their own using just their textbooks. Students freely volunteered that these teacher-types did not foster their motivation to learn and, on the contrary, these teacher types actually lessened their desire to learn. Results of Raffini's (1993) study reaffirm that the beliefs teacher themselves have about teaching and learning and the nature of the expectations they hold for students also exert a powerful influence. To a large degree, if teachers expect their students to learn, the students expect to learn (Stipeck, 1988).

Students also discussed how the teachers' poor classroom management techniques decreased their desire to learn, and that these classes provided little to no opportunities to

enjoy learning. Students are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation to learn when their teachers provide optimal conditions for the enjoyment of learning (Sanacore, 2008). Tomlinson and Jarvis (2006) posited that effective teaching practices represent the power of teaching to students' strengths, of tapping into students' areas of greatest comfort, confidence, and passion.

Recommendations to ease ninth-grade transitional challenges. Although a single case study cannot supply a solid foundation for the practices used in ninth-grade transition, this study would propose that it does make a difference to offer support and structures to aid ninth graders in making the transition to high school. It is important to scrutinize the design and sustainability of those labors and elicit feedback from the members. Based on the findings from this study, the researcher proposes the following recommendations to the freshman academy teachers and administration:

1. Continue to house the freshman academy in a separate wing, as it is now. This segregation for the majority of the day provides the transitioning students an opportunity to adjust to the new facility, attain the skills to be successful in a competitive educational environment, and enjoy a sense of security comparable to what they experienced in middle school (Hertzog, 2006).

2. Continue the principal's visit at the feeder middle schools with the eighth graders. Continue the freshman orientation meetings. Strengthen the current transition program with the feeder middle schools so the responsibility of preparing ninth graders for high school is shared. This is supported by the research of Cohen and Smerdon (2009), who proposed that freshman transition programs range from one-time informational assemblies for incoming students to comprehensive monthly meetings among teachers, counselors, and administrators at both schools. Other programs involve

informational parent meetings, student shadowing programs, panel discussions, and high school course advising sessions. Smith (1997) added that full transition programs that involve complete support have the greatest positive effect on high school retention and experiences. In contrast, programs that target only a single aspect of the transition (students, parents, staff) showed no independent effect on these outcomes.

3. Enhance master schedule flexibility–continue to offer extended blocks of time for English and math, and make significant changes to the master schedule to utilize an interdisciplinary team approach. Interdisciplinary teams in freshman academies, similar to those found in middle schools, provide students with a support group in which teachers can connect with them on a regular basis to identify their needs and help them learn. Interdisciplinary teams, also known as teacher teaming, organize teachers from different subject areas into groups of varying numbers with an assigned common area of the school plant, a common schedule, and responsibility for a common group of students (Hecht, Roberts, Schoon, & Fansler, 1995).

Freshman academy document analysis. Results of the document analysis revealed mixed results. Upstate South Carolina High School does not write about its freshman academy on the school website, other than a depiction of the traffic pattern. The registration guide contains course information for all high school grades, but there is no reference to the freshman academy. The *School Improvement Council Report to the People*, except for 2009, does not mention the freshman academy. The 2009 *Report to the People* contains an informational description of the academy, including its design as a close community with the purpose of promoting academic and social success for all ninth graders, and ultimately reducing the number of ninth-grade repeaters. The article also describes the teachers as energetic and student-oriented. The *Freshman Survival Guide* is

an interesting pamphlet. The *Freshman Survival Guide* contains a focused emphasis on the academic and social challenges that the new students will face upon entering high school, and sound advice is given to these students about opportunities for involvement and where to go if they need assistance.

Recommendations to enhance freshman academy representation. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher offers the following recommendations to the freshman academy administration:

1. Continue to utilize the school's website, but strengthen promotion by including a rich variety of information about the academy—tell who you are, and why you exist. This is especially important for communicating with parents of current and future students. Parental involvement is key to a successful middle school to high school transition. Schools and teachers who specifically reach out to parents and encourage participation maintain higher levels of involvement, even though parental involvement in school tends to decrease once students reach high school. Students with involved parents tend to exhibit higher achievement, have lower dropout rates, and are better adjusted to the challenges involved in the transition to high school (Hartos & Power, 1997).

2. Continue to send the student registration guide and related information to students and parents while the students are still in middle school. Also, continue to provide the *Freshman Survival Guide*, but use it to strengthen the transition program by sending the guides to future students and their parents while the students are still in middle school. The literature suggests that parents should be well informed about details of the transition process, privy to curricular and course decisions that their child makes, and part of the planning for future articulation activities (Epstein, 1995).

Limitations

The findings from this research study are only applicable to the specific school examined. Therefore, no generalizations can be made in regards to the wider educational community. Additionally, it is obligatory to mention that the researcher, as an administrator in the same school district, may be viewed as being in a position of authority, as well as a close peer of the high school administration. Because of this, teachers in the interviews may have responded in ways that they perceived to be more favorable toward their school and/or administration.

Summary of Findings

Findings from this study indicate that the students, teachers, and administrator had a reasonable understanding of the freshman academy concept and believed that the Upstate South Carolina High School freshman academy had eased the transition of its current ninth graders to high school. The students indicated that the structure, design, and support of the academy diminished the potential hindering effects of the academic, procedural, and social challenges that they faced this year. Students also clearly pointed out that their teachers directly impacted their intrinsic motivation to learn. Most comments were positive, indicating that the majority of the students found their teachers to be engaged, caring, and helpful. Some students, however, clearly blamed their teachers for having a deleterious effect on their intrinsic motivation to learn. Most of these comments center on teacher disengagement, which the students perceived to mean that these teachers did not care about their students, nor did they care about their jobs. They also cited that the teachers who had poor classroom management diminished their intrinsic desire to learn. Teachers perceived that they focused on motivating their students to learn their subject matter, and provided specific examples as to how this was

accomplished. As stated earlier, the students offered many comments in support of their teachers as motivators. However, statistical analysis revealed a probable disconnect between what the teachers said they did to motivate their students and what the students identified as motivational to them. Additionally, CAIMI mean scale scores were relatively low in all subject areas and were also low in general motivation toward school learning. It is apparent from the voices of the students, teachers, and administrator involved in this study that this freshman academy is supported by these stakeholders as a positive reform effort to diminish the dropout rate at Upstate South Carolina High School. It is also apparent, however, that the opportunity for improvement exists. It is the desire of the researcher that this school will use the findings of this study to enlighten their understanding of the students they serve. They are encouraged to continue to research instructional designs, strategies, and techniques that have the greatest potential to increase their students' academic intrinsic motivation to learn English, math, science, history, and their general motivation toward school learning.

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Appendix A

Informed District Consent

Dear Superintendent and Participating Principal:

I am currently working to complete a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction at Gardner-Webb University. One of the requirements of the degree is to write a dissertation. I have chosen to research how freshman academy experiences impact student intrinsic motivation to learn English, math, science, social studies, and to school learning in general. Both of the high schools in the district have freshman academy programs, and I would like to focus my field research on one of these high schools. I am planning to conduct a mixed-methodology case study using a paper-based survey and focus group interviews of students, teachers, and the assistant principal assigned to oversee the freshman academy.

Survey information will be anonymous and focus group interview information will be strictly confidential. All school and school district information will remain confidential, except when legally bonded to report. The participation in this research is completely voluntary, but all of the students in four ninth grade English classes, four freshman academy teachers, and the assistant principal assigned to oversee the freshman academy at the selected school will be invited to participate. All student and staff research participants may choose to opt out of the study at any point during the research process.

If you have any questions you may contact the researcher, Shirley C. Sealy, by phone at [redacted] or by email at [redacted]. Any questions regarding the research or requirements for Gardner-Webb University may be directed toward the chair of the dissertation committee, Dr. Jane King at (704) 406-2015.

If all parties are in agreement of this proposed study, please sign below. Thank you for your time and your interest in this study.

Sincerely,

Shirley C. Sealy
Doctoral Candidate, Gardner-Webb University

_____ _____

Superintendent Signature Date

_____ _____

Principal Signature Date

Appendix B

Student Permission Letter

Dear Parent:

My name is Shirley Sealy and I am a doctoral candidate at Gardner-Webb University. I am currently finishing the requirements for my degree by completing a dissertation. For this dissertation, I am researching what students think about their freshman academy experiences and how these experiences this year have affected their desire to learn English, math, science, history, and their general orientation toward school learning. I have chosen to focus my research on one particular school, and your child has been selected to participate in this study as a student at this school.

As a research participant, your student will be asked to complete a paper-based survey during his/her English class at school. He/she may also be asked to participate in an interview during English class at school. Survey responses will be anonymous, and focus group responses will be confidential. All responses will only reviewed by the researcher. No student names or information will be used in the research report. Your child may choose to opt out of the study at any time during the research process.

Please respond to this letter by signing one of the following options:

_____My child and I agree that he/she may participate in the research study.

_____My child and I agree that he/she may NOT participate in the research study.

Signature_____

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, you may contact me by email at [redacted].

Sincerely,

Shirley Sealy, Doctoral Candidate, Gardner-Webb University

Appendix C

Permission to use CAIMI-HS

PAR
Creating Connections. Changing Lives.
16204 N. FLORIDA AVENUE • LUTZ, FLORIDA 33549
Telephone: 813.968.3003 • Fax: 813.968.2598 • Web: www.parinc.com

CAIMI Sealy CAIMI-HS - 1-12-2012

Sent Via Email: [redacted]

January 12, 2012

Shirley Sealy
[redacted]

Dear Ms. Sealy:

In response to your recent request, permission is hereby granted to you to modify the Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (CAIMI) Test Booklet by instructing your participants to regard "Reading" as "English" and "Social Studies" as "History" for administration of the CAIMI-HS using the published CAIMI Test Booklets for your dissertation research titled, *How Do Freshman Academy Experiences Impact Student Intrinsic Motivation to Learn*. If additional changes are needed, it will be necessary to write to PAR for further permission.

Permission is also granted for you to include up to a total of three (3) sample items from the CAIMI in the appendix of your dissertation.

This Agreement is subject to the following restrictions:

(1) Any and all materials used will contain the following credit line:

"Adapted and reproduced by special permission of the Publisher, Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., 16204 North Florida Avenue, Lutz, Florida 33549 from the Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory by Adele E. Gottfied, Ph.D., Copyright 1986. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission of PAR."

(2) None of the material may be sold, given away, or used for purposes other than those described above.

(3) Payment of a royalty/license Figure 5 will be waived, contingent upon the purchase of the published CAIMI Test Booklets for administration purposes.

(4) One copy of the material reproduced will be sent to the Publisher to indicate that the proper credit line has been used.

TWO copies of this Permission Agreement should be signed and returned to me to indicate your agreement with the above restrictions. I will then sign it for PAR and return a fully executed copy for your records.

Sincerely,

Vicki M. McFadden

Vicki M. McFadden
Permission Specialist

vmark@parinc.com
1-800-331-8378
1-800-727-9329

ACCEPTED AND AGREED:

By_____
SHIRLEY SEALY

DATE_____

ACCEPTED AND AGREED:

By_____
VICKI M. McFADDEN

DATE_____

Appendix D

Scoring CAIMI/Profile Report Form

Name _____ Boy or Girl _____ Age _____

Date of Administration _____ School _____

Class _____ Grade _____ Birthdate _____

CAIMI

Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory

Profile Report Form

Adele Eskeles Gottfried, Ph.D.

Percentile	T-Score	R	M	SS	Sc	GEN	T-Score	SD
≥99	≥80						≥80	+3*SD*
	75						75	
98	70						70	+2*SD*
93	65						65	
84	60						60	+1*SD*
69	55						55	
50	50						50	*M*
31	45						45	
16	40						40	−1*SD*
7	35						35	
2	30						30	−2*SD*
	25						25	
≤ 1	≤20						≤20	−3*SD*
		R	M	SS	Sc	GEN		
Raw Scores		_____	_____	_____	_____	_____		
T-Scores		_____	_____	_____	_____	_____		
Percentiles		_____	_____	_____	_____	_____		

Instructions

1. Enter the raw scores from a scored CAIMI booklet.
2. Determine the T-scores from Tables A2 or A3 in the CAIMI manual. Draw a line to indicate the obtained T-score.
3. To plot bands for each scale, add and subtract the standard error of measurement from each plotted T-score (3 T-score points for subject areas, 4 for the General scale). Draw lines to indicate upper and lower limits of the band. You may darken this area with pen or pencil.
4. Bands that overlap indicate that scales do not differ from each other. Bands that do not overlap indicate scales that do differ from each other.
5. You may also plot the profile by connecting the lines for the obtained T-score.
6. Percentiles can be obtained from the corresponding column on the left or the corresponding tables (A2 or A3) in the manual.

PAR • 16204 N. Florida Ave. • Lutz, FL 33549 • 1.800.331.8378 • www.parinc.com

9 8 Reorder #RO-1228 Printed in the U.S.A.

Appendix E

CAIMI Percentiles and Normalized T-Scores

(Table A3 from CAIMI Manual)

Table A3
Percentiles and Normalized T-Scores for CAIMI Scales: Junior High School Norms (Grades 7-8)

	CAIMI Scale Score					
Percentile	Reading	Math	Social Studies	Science	General	*T*-Score
<1	47-52	38-50	≤45	≤53	≤48-49	<20
1	53	51	46-51		50	20
2	54	52-53	52	54	51	30
3	56-58	54-61	56-60	59-62	53	31
4		67	61	63	54	32
5	59-62	70-71	62-63	65-66	55	33
6	63	72		67		34
7	64-65	73	64	68	56	35
8		75	65	69		36
9	67	76	67-68	71		36
10	68		69			37
11	69	77	71	72	57	38
12		78	72	73	58	38
13	70	79				39
14	71-72		73	74		39
15		80-81	74-75	76	59	40
16	73	82	76		60	40
17	74	83		77		40
18	75		78-79	78	61	41
19		84			62	41
20				79		41
21	76		80			42
22		85			63	42
23			81			43
24	77			80-81		43
25		86		82		43
26			83		64	43
27		87				44
28			84	83		44
29			85			44
30	78	88	86	84	65	45
31						45
32		89	87	85		45
33		90				46
34			88		66	46
35	79	91		86		46
36						46
37		92		87		47
38	80		89	88		47
39		93				47
40						47
41	82		90		67	48
42		94				48
43						48
44				89		48
45	83	95	91			49
46		96			68	49
47	84		92			49
48				90		49
49						50
50		98		91		50
51			93	92		50
52	85					51
53	86-87	99	94		69	51
54			95			51
55	88					51
56		100		93	70	51
57		101	96			52
58	89					52
59	90					52
60		102	97	94	71	53
61			98			53
62				95		53
63	91	103	99	97		53
64						54
65		104		98		54
66	92		100			54
67		105		99		54
68	93				72	55
69						55
70		106	101	100	73	55
71	94	107		101		56
72			102-103			56
73			104		74	56

Table A3 (continued)
Percentiles and Normalized T-Scores for CAIMI Scales: Junior High School Norms (Grades 7-8)

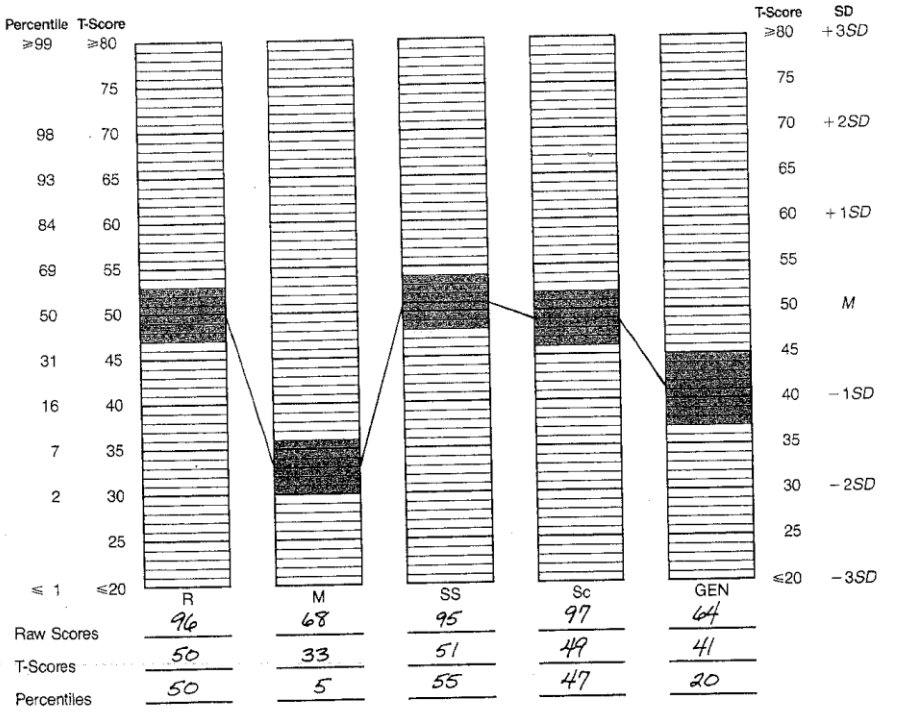
	CAIMI Scale Score					
Percentile	Reading	Math	Social Studies	Science	General	*T*-Score
74	95					56
75		109		102		57
76	96		105	103	75	57
77		110				57
78	97	111	106			58
79				104		58
80	98				76	58
81		112	107	105-106		59
82	99		108			59
83	100					60
84	101					60
85		113	109	107	77	60
86	102					61
87		114	110	108		61
88	103			109		62
89			111	110	78	62
90		115	112	111		63
91	104			112		63
92	105-106	116			79	64
93	107	117		113	80	65
94	108	118	113	114	81	66
95			115	115		66
96		119	117	116	82	67
97	109-112	120	118	118	83	69
98	114	121		119		70
99	115	123	119	120	84-85	80
>99	⩾117	124	⩾120	⩾121	⩾86	⩾80

Note. Norms based on Studies 2 and 3 combined. $N = 152$.

Appendix F

Sample CAIMI Completed Profile Report Form

Figure 1
Case Study 1
CAIMI Scores



Appendix G

Student Focus Group Questions

Student Focus Group Questions

1) Do you know that you are attending a freshman academy this year? If so, how did you know?
2) Do you think your school experiences this year have been different than those experiences of students that do not attend a freshman academy? If so, how?
3) Do you believe the freshman academy has helped you transition from middle school /junior high school to high school? If so, in what ways? (To help you answer, think about the following changes you may have encountered this year when you entered high school: Changes in academics / course requirements, changes in school procedures / rules, and /or changes in the social / friends aspect.)
4) Tell me what subject(s) you'd like to learn more about. Why do you want to learn more about this/these subject(s)? Can you give me an example from this school year?
5) Tell me about a challenging task that you've done this year. Did you want to quit or stick with it? Explain.
6) In general, what has motivated you this year about your school learning?
7) Do you believe that the adults in the freshman academy care about you, the students? Can you give me examples of why or why not?
8) Do you think your freshman academy teachers work together to plan their lessons? If so, how do you know?
9) Do you think your freshman academy teachers talk to each other about you, their students? If so, in what way(s)?

Appendix H

Teacher Interview Questions

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Please share your understanding of freshman academies.
2. Describe the freshman academy at this school.
3. Do you think this freshman academy helps students transition ACADEMICALLY from middle / junior high school to high school? If so, in what ways?
4. Do you think this freshman academy helps students transition PROCEDURALLY from middle / junior high school to high school? If so, in what ways?
5. Do you think this freshman academy helps students transition SOCIALLY from middle / junior high school to high school? If so, in what ways?
6. Describe what you do as a teacher to impact student motivation to learn your subject matter (include how you get your students to stick with the learning and not give up, especially with difficult or challenging tasks / assignments).
7. As a teacher in this freshman academy, how does what you do differ from what teachers in non-freshman academies do?
8. Did you receive specific training / staff development to help prepare you for teaching in this freshman academy? If so, please describe.

Appendix I

Administrator Interview Questions

Administrator Interview Questions

1. Please share your understanding of freshman academies.
2. Describe the freshman academy of this school; include the history of its development if possible.
3. Do you think this freshman academy helps students transition ACADEMICALLY from middle / junior high school to high school? If so, in what ways?
4. Do you think this freshman academy helps students transition PROCEDURALLY from middle / junior high school to high school? If so, in what ways?
5. Do you think this freshman academy helps students transition SOCIALLY from middle / junior high school to high school? If so, in what ways?
6. Describe what the teachers in the freshman academy do to impact their students' motivation to learn "their" subject? (Include what they do to get their students to stick with the learning and not give up, especially with difficult or challenging tasks / assignments.)
7. As a freshman academy administrator, how is what you do different from that of a non-freshman academy administrator?

Appendix J

Staff Permission Letter

Dear Teacher/Assistant Principal:

My name is Shirley Sealy and I am a doctoral candidate at Gardner-Webb University. I am currently finishing the requirements for my degree by completing a dissertation researching the impact of freshman academy experiences on students' academic intrinsic motivation to learn English, math, science, history, and their general orientation toward school learning. I have chosen to focus my research on one particular school. You have been selected to participate in this study as a teacher/assistant principal at this school.

As a research participant, you will be asked to take part in an individual interview. All information collected will be completely anonymous and all responses will only be reviewed by the researcher. No teacher names or information will be collected or used for this study other than to state permission. No teacher names or information will be used in the research report. Also, you may opt out of this study at any time during the research process.

Please respond to this letter by signing one of the following options.

_____ I agree to participate in the research study.

_____ I do not agree to participate in the research study.

Signature: _____

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, you may contact me by email at [redacted].

Sincerely,

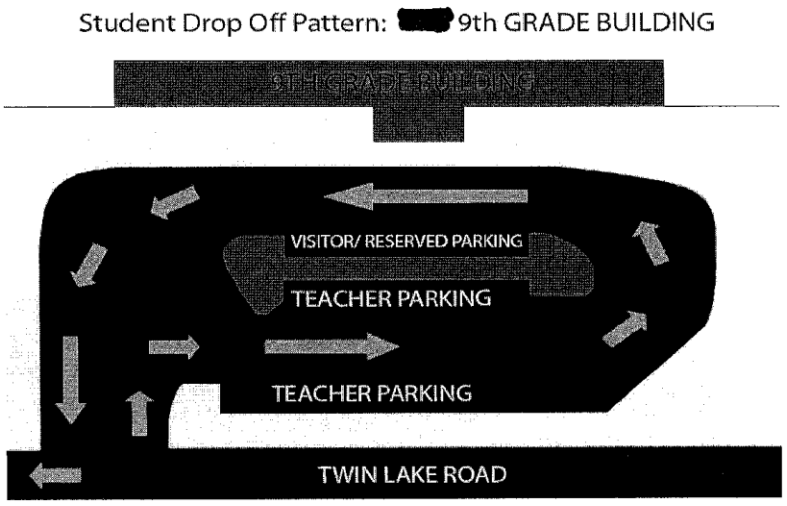
Shirley C. Sealy

Doctoral Candidate, Gardner-Webb University

Appendix K

Freshman Academy Website

Ninth Grade Academy


Student Drop Off Pattern: [redacted] 9th GRADE BUILDING
[redacted] GRADE BUILDING
VISITOR/ RESERVED PARKING
TEACHER PARKING
TEACHER PARKING
TWIN LAKE ROAD

Appendix L

Freshman Survival Guide

Clubs

✓ Join at least one club. It's the best way to meet other students and different teachers. Get involved! Besides being fun, participation looks good on college, scholarship, or job applications.

Sports

- Attend at least one sporting event!
- Catch some school spirit!!!!

Physical Education

You must participate during P.E. Not doing so could cause you to fail the class. One unit is required for graduation, so not participating is pointless!

Freshman Survival Guide
Welcome to [redacted]

The Front Office can answer almost any question you have—or at least, point you in the right direction.

You must wear your ID at all times. This valuable card will let you eat and check out a book.

The "CARD" can ward off teachers and other adults who will look for students without IDs. In some situations, you will receive a lovely "write-up," based on the ID policy. The "CARD" can be replaced for $5.00.

Cha-ching! The safest place for your money is at home. There is no reason to have a lot of money with you at school.

"Bits and Bytes" to Help You Hang Tight!

- Make new friends. Leave middle school behind. You are now faced with new rules, new faces, and new policies.
- Get organized. Use an agenda!! It might seem dorky, but it will remind you when assignments are due, which, in turn, helps you keep your grades up.
- Keep an open mind about people. We all change a lot from year to year- hopefully you will, too.

You may not know much about it now, but in a few short years you will think about your GPA (grade point average). Keep your grades up; be aware that good grades will help you in getting a scholarship and/or a job. Your very first grade at GHS will start the "GPA" cycle!

Keep up with your work/homework. Don't slack in the beginning! It's easier to do a little everyday than to try to do it all at once. Ask questions so that you don't get hopelessly lost. Pay close attention in class, and DON'T be afraid to ask for extra help.

Notes to ride another bus MUST be turned in to [redacted] first thing each morning. If the note is not given to [redacted] in the morning, you may not be allowed to ride that bus. Notes must include a phone number for a parent or guardian!

Turn in excuses to [redacted] in the Front Office. Notes requesting early sign out should also be given to her each morning. Get the idea? ☺ She likes all of her notes in the morning. [redacted] can be reached by phone at [redacted] Don't forget that a parent or guardian phone number must be included on every note!

NEW POLICY
CELL PHONE/PAGING DEVICES
Found on Page 44
First Offense: returned to parent only.
Second Offense: one day OSS; held until the end of the school year; returned to parent only.
Refusal to surrender a cell phone can be considered an interruption of school, which can result in a call to law enforcement.

Tardy Policy
Found on Page 39
Up to 3 tardies per nine weeks are allowed. Each tardy over 3 will result in 1 day of OSS per tardy.

You can only miss 10 days per year long class and 5 days per semester class. Missing more than the allowed number of days MAY cause you to receive an "FA," which is failure due to attendance. THIS IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT THAN MIDDLE SCHOOL. You will be earning Carnegie units in high school, which means that attendance is crucial! (The State Department of Education sets the attendance requirements.)