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Differences In Students' Motivation To Attend College: Large Versus Small High Schools

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DIFFERENCES IN STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO ATTEND COLLEGE:
LARGE VERSUS SMALL HIGH SCHOOLS

being

A Field Study Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays State University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Education Specialist

by

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ABSTRACT

The current study examined the relationship between the variables: school size, motivation, and college attendance to determine if the size of a student's high school, along with his/her motivational tendencies, influenced the student's choice to pursue a college education. Additionally, it was hypothesized that college students who had attended smaller high schools (enrollment of < 500) would exhibit motivational tendencies more characteristic of being intrinsically motivated, while college students who had attended larger high schools (enrollment = 500+) would be more extrinsically motivated.

Data was gathered from college students attending a small mid-west university ($N=266$) using a brief demographics survey as well as Vallerand et al.'s (1992) Academic Motivation Scale. Results of a factorial MANOVA revealed a significant main effect for sex on the motivational subscales: extrinsic motivation- identified ($M_{Male}= 5.80$, $M_{Female}= 6.16$), extrinsic motivation- external regulation ($M_{Male}= 5.94$, $M_{Female}= 6.24$), and amotivation ($M_{Male}= 1.89$, $M_{Female}= 1.43$). Additional follow-up analyses utilizing Pearson Correlations indicated the existence of significant, positive, linear relationships between approximate number of senior classmates and the following subscales: intrinsic motivation- towards accomplishment, extrinsic motivation- identified, and extrinsic motivation- introjected. Furthermore, these results indicated a significant relationship between approximate high school enrollment and intrinsic motivation- towards accomplishment and a marginally significant relationship between approximate number

of senior classmates and extrinsic motivation- external regulation. Results will be discussed in light of previous research and literature regarding secondary educational institutions, the various types of motivation, and their impact on students' academic performance.

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INTRODUCTION

There are over 49 million students enrolled in public schools with approximately 15 million of those reporting to public high school classrooms (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.). Of those, 70 percent will attend a high school whose numbers include at least 900 students, while hundreds of other high schools have enrollments exceeding 2,500 students (High School Reform, 2004). Furthermore, concerns have been expressed regarding the children being exposed to this type of educational environment. For instance, individuals teaching in schools with enrollments of over 1,500 students were more likely than individuals teaching in schools with less than 500 students to report problems with their students dropping out or falling through the cracks. Additionally, teachers from the smaller schools were 20 percent more likely to say struggling students would be identified to receive assistance, and were over six times as confident as the teachers from larger schools in reporting that faculty and staff would know most all students by name (Public Agenda, 2002).

Growing interest in school size and its effects on students' academic performance has led many individuals to give greater praise to the educational excellence of small schools and their attending students' scholastic abilities. In fact, nearly 40 years of research and literature regarding small schools suggest that children enrolled in this type of institution experience greater school attendance percentages; higher graduation rates; fewer dropouts; equal or better levels of academic achievement as measured by standardized test scores, course failure rates, and grade point averages; increased levels of

extra-curricular participation; more parental involvement; and a smaller occurrence of discipline and violence (Chicago Public Schools, 2003). In comparison, larger schools tend to be more often associated with less appealing educational characteristics such as lower student achievement (Eddy, 2004) and higher dropout rates (Gardner, Ritblatt, & Beatty, 2000; Pittman & Haughwout, 1987; Werblow & Duesbery, 2009).

In 2008, the National Center for Education Statistics indicated that more than 613,000 public high schools students had dropped out of school. This 4.1 percent event dropout rate is reflective of the percentage of public school students who were enrolled in the ninth through twelfth grades at some point during the 2007–2008 school year, but were subsequently not enrolled in school in October 2008 and had additionally not received a high school diploma or completed a state- or district-approved education program. This information included numbers reported from the District of Columbia, but not from Vermont, as they were considered invalid due to a high incidence of omitted data (Chapman, Laird, & KewalRamani, 2010).

Additionally, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2009), approximately one-third of all students in the United States exit high school without obtaining a diploma. This can lead to many potential difficulties for these individuals, including the task of finding a stable, well-paying job. A substantially documented earnings gap exists between high school graduates and those who dropout (Alliance for Excellent Education [AEE], 2007, 2009; Day & Newburger, 2002; “The Multifaceted Returns to Education,” 1998). Research has indicated this gap to be a difference of

nearly \$10,000 in yearly earnings (AEE, 2009), as well as ten times the amount of accumulated wealth for households headed by a high school graduate when compared to households that are not (AEE, 2007). In addition to negatively affecting the individual student, dropping out of school prematurely can also have less than desirable connotations for society. For instance, it has been suggested that dropouts from the class of 2008 alone will cost Kansas nearly \$2.6 billion in lost wages over the course of their lifetimes (AEE, 2009).

As evidenced by previously mentioned research, smaller schools are often found to be associated with several, beneficial results for their students. These may include higher levels of attendance coupled with lower dropout rates. Consequently, this may lead to greater gains in student learning and an increased percentage of students choosing to attend college (Werblow & Duesbery, 2009). However, if students are experiencing such positive outcomes from remaining in school and obtaining their high school degrees, what could be leading them to end their educational career so prematurely? According to Scheel, Madabhushi, and Backhaus (2009), school dropout is a situation that produces many distressing personal, as well as societal, consequences. Furthermore, they go on to suggest that individuals who become dropouts are generally not academically motivated.

In 2000, Margolin conducted a study concerned with discovering exactly which motivational influences and obstacles played a role in high school students' academic success. Three hundred sixty students from nine high schools located in inner city, urban, and rural areas of West Virginia were requested to complete a questionnaire and

participate in taped interviews. Significant results of this research indicated that college-bound students were receiving much better grades than other students who did not plan to attend post-secondary school. In addition, nearly 58% of fathers of college-bound students had completed college or graduate school themselves (a similar pattern was discovered in mothers), and only 6% of college-bound students qualified for free or reduced-price meals as compared to 48% of other students. Furthermore, Margolin's study noted the top ten motivators and obstacles for college-bound students. Motivators included such factors as family (26%), career (21%), self-satisfaction (11%), acceptance to college (10%), teachers (8%), friends (6%), grades (5%), love of learning (4%), winning a scholarship (3%), and sports (3%). Ironically, the top ten obstacles reported by high school students were comprised of several factors that were also found in the motivator list. They were sports (15%), homework (13%), boyfriend/girlfriend (12%), extracurricular activity other than sports (11%), personal/family problems (10%), teachers (9%), disruptive peers (8%), part-time job (7%), not enough sleep (6%), and school is boring in general (5%).

Motivation has been a topic of interest for many years now (Maslow, 1943), and thus, has been described in various ways, including “the psychological feature that arouses an organism to action toward a desired goal,” “the reason for the action,” “that which gives purpose and direction to behavior” (Miller, 2009), and “one of the most important psychological concepts in education” (Vallerand et al., 1992, p. 1004). The motivation behind one's academic success, more commonly known as academic

motivation, has been shown to be related to a variety of important educational outcomes including curiosity, persistence, learning, and performance. As awareness in these issues has increased, several theories have been proposed in order form a better understanding of this specific type of motivation.

For example, one approach suggests that an individual's behavior can be either intrinsically motivated, extrinsically motivated, or amotivated. Intrinsic motivation refers to activities that allow individuals to experience feelings of competence and self-determination. An activity done for the sheer pleasure and satisfaction obtained from partaking in the behavior, such as when a non-traditional student participates in a course offered by a local college because he/she believes the subject matter to be interesting, would be an example of someone displaying intrinsic motivation. Additionally, some theorists posit that intrinsic motivation can be further differentiated into three specific types, including intrinsic motivation to know, intrinsic motivation towards accomplishments, and intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation (Vallerand et al., 1992).

Intrinsic motivation to know is associated with such concepts as exploration, curiosity, learning goals, intrinsic intellectuality, and the intrinsic motivation to learn. An example of this may be seen in a young child who reads a book for the pure delight he/she finds in learning something new. Intrinsic motivation toward accomplishments is related to mastery motivation and the gratification and competence that are experienced by a person when attempting to create or achieve something. Students characterized as

overachievers may be displaying intrinsic motivation toward accomplishments because they appear to receive pleasure in trying to surpass the expectations set out for them.

Intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation affects someone when he/she receives a stimulating sensation, such as sensory pleasure or fun and excitement, from engaging in a specific activity. This type of motivation may be depicted in the student who attends class to participate in the class discussion because he/she believes it is exciting and is stimulated by it (Vallerand et al., 1992).

Contrasting with intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation is comprised of a wide range of behaviors that provide more of a means to an end, rather than simply being enjoyed for the sake of being enjoyed. However, in similar fashion to intrinsic motivation, researchers have broken down extrinsic motivation into three distinctive types, as well as ordered them along a continuum of self-determination. External regulation has been classified as the lowest level of self-determination and is associated with regulating behavior by using rewards and/or constraints. Introjected regulation is located within the middle of the continuum and is not completely self-determined, as its internalization is limited to past external contingencies. Identification falls at the highest level of the self-determination continuum, and is manifested when an individual chooses to participate in an activity or behavior because he/she has judged it to be of personal value and/or importance (Vallerand et al., 1992). To understand better how these behaviors would follow the continuum theory, examples of what a student might say while experiencing each type of extrinsic motivation are as follows: external regulation:

“I study the night before exams because my parents force me to,” introjected regulation: “I study the night before exams because that’s what good students are supposed to do,” and identification: “I’ve chosen to study tonight because it is something important for me” (Vallerand et al., 1992, pp. 1006-1007).

In 1985, Deci and Ryan proposed the existence of yet a third type of motivation, which they later termed amotivation. When individuals are neither intrinsically nor extrinsically motivated and do not associate the relationship between their actions and the resulting consequences, they are said to be amotivated. It was suggested that these individuals experience feelings of incompetence, uncontrollability, and believe that forces beyond their own control are what cause and influence their behavior.

American children’s academic achievement has been a source of great concern for the United States for quite some time. Consistently, it is documented that students’ standardized test scores trail far behind those of their foreign peers, especially children from Asian nations such as Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Japan (Dillon, 2007). In 2009, a study conducted specifically to compare American high school students with their Japanese counterparts evaluated possible factors contributing to students’ academic motivation from each country. To obtain data, the researcher interviewed a subject matter expert in both Japanese and United States education, over a period of three years, while the researcher chaperoned American students staying abroad in Japan (Kavanaugh, 2009).

Observations and information obtained from the study indicated that, essentially, students from Japan are trained to be academically motivated. Additionally, it was suggested that children are groomed from an early age to value effort, not only within the school setting, but also at home. Hard work and genuine effort is highly prioritized, while additional emphasis is placed on making an investment into oneself. Moreover, Japanese teaching methods were discovered to encourage individual ownership of learning and responsibility, which lend further to assist in developing students' intrinsic motivation in accomplishing their scholastic objectives at a superior level (Kavanaugh, 2009). On the other hand, schools' curriculums in the United States have been more greatly developed as a way of producing results that lead to a particular goal, instead of being concerned with the amount of effort one puts forth in achieving the outcome. In essence, students are being held accountable for their end results; rather than being assessed on their progress and the learning process it took them in accomplishing the given objective (Haysom & Sutton, 1973).

In trying to determine which type of motivation students best respond to, Haywood, Kuespert, Madecky, and Nor (2008) conducted a study involving 88 elementary and high school students who were reported by their teachers as displaying a lack of motivation. These opinions were based on the results of evaluations regarding the students' homework, grades, attitudes, classroom participation, and performance, but were more firmly established using teacher surveys, administration interviews, and observation checklists. Previously, teachers had discovered that a large majority of their

students required verbal reminders and tangible rewards if classroom participation was expected of them. However, no long-term success had been found in either of these interventions.

Throughout the course of the study, a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational tactics were implemented within the classrooms, including verbal praise, written praise, cooperative learning groups, and tangible rewards. Initially, students responded positively to all four methods, but eventually regressed back to their previous levels of performance. The researchers hypothesized that this might be attributable to the students' perceptions that the rewards were not always guaranteed, or that the rewards did not warrant enough value to be worth the time taken in trying to obtain them (Haywood et al., 2008). Although this particular study did not result in lasting success with the use of either type of motivator, other educational literature has indicated the importance of intrinsic motivation taking precedence over extrinsic motivation regarding students' overall achievement (Albrecht, Haapanen, Hall, & Mantonya, 2009; Fenzel, Domingues, & Raughley, 2006; Flaherty & Hackler, 2010).

The purpose of the present study is concerned with examining the relationship among the variables: school size, motivation, and college attendance. More specifically, the research question I will try to answer is, does a difference exist among motivational influences for attending college between students who have attended small high schools and those who have attended large high schools? The vast majority of past research has indicated that smaller schools display a greater school attendance percentage, higher

graduation rates, lower dropout rates, and an equivalent or superior level of academic achievement when compared to schools with larger enrollments (Chicago Public Schools, 2003; Eddy, 2004; Gardner et al., 2000; Pittman & Haughwout, 1987; Public Agenda, 2002). It has also been suggested that these factors have an affect on whether or not students are choosing to attend post-secondary school after completing their high school education (Werblow & Duesbery, 2009). Furthermore, literature indicates that intrinsically motivated individuals demonstrate a greater internal desire and propensity towards life-long learning (Kavanaugh, 2009). In accordance with the previously mentioned information, I hypothesize that students who have attended smaller high schools will possess characteristics more typical of being intrinsically motivated, while students who have attended larger high schools will appear to be more extrinsically motivated.

METHOD

Participants

The sample population for this study was comprised of 283 undergraduate college students (*Male* = 113, *Female* = 170) from a small mid-western university who were attending on-campus, psychology courses at the time of the research. Participants ranged in age from 18 years old to 49 years old ($M = 21.04$ years, $SD = 3.53$ years) and were primarily White/Caucasian (86.9%), freshman (30.0%) students. Tables 1 and 2 present a more detailed breakdown of participants' ethnicities and college classifications.

Participation in this study was strictly voluntary; however, students were offered course

credit or extra credit per class instructor, as an incentive for taking part in experimental research. Upon completion of the students' participation, they were read a debriefing statement, which contained the primary investigator's contact information, as well as contact information for the university's student support center.

Materials

Information regarding participants' motivation was obtained through the completion of Vallerand et al.'s (1992) Academic Motivation Scale (AMS), which assesses an individual's intrinsic motivation (IM), extrinsic motivation (EM), and amotivation towards post-secondary education. This measure, originally developed in French and titled the Echelle de Motivation en Education (EME), was later translated to English and appropriately renamed. This scale specifically asks the question, "Why do you go to college?" and lists 28 items representing possible answers. Participants were asked to rate each answer on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "*does not correspond at all*" to "*corresponds exactly.*"

Overall, the answers provided include seven subscales of four items each which evaluate an individual's IM to know ("Because I experience pleasure and satisfaction while learning new things."), IM towards accomplishment ("For the pleasure I experience from surpassing myself in my studies."), IM to experience stimulation ("For the intense feelings I experience when I am communicating my own ideas to others."), identified EM ("Because I think that a college education will help me better prepare for the career I have chosen."), introjected EM ("To prove to myself that I am capable of completing my

college degree.”), external regulation EM (“Because with only a high-school degree I would not find a high-paying job later on.”), and amotivation (“Honestly, I don’t know; I really feel that I am wasting my time in school.”). Higher scores attained on each subscale correspond to an individual’s greater tendency toward being either intrinsically motivated, extrinsically motivated, or amotivated. More specifically, these scores indicate which type of intrinsic, extrinsic, or amotivation the participant is most motivated by.

The translation of the EME to the AMS was performed by university students and included a three-step, cross-cultural procedure. They found the internal consistency (mean alpha value= 0.81) and temporal stability (mean test-retest correlation= 0.79) of the AMS to reach satisfactory levels over a period of one month. Results obtained using a confirmatory factor analysis (LISREL) verified the structure of the measure’s seven subscales. Furthermore, gender differences originally acquired with the EME were essentially replicated when using the AMS. These results indicate that the AMS has adequate factorial validity and reliability and can be utilized in the research of academic motivation (Vallerand et al., 1992).

In addition to completing the AMS, participants filled out a brief, self-generated survey consisting of items that inquired about their current demographics (e.g. age, gender, college classification) and previous high school experience at the time of their senior year (e.g. family’s SES, school attended, number of classmates). Within this survey, participants were also requested to provide information as to whether they had a

choice to attend any other school besides the high school that they were enrolled in during their senior year. Table 3 presents the frequency and percents of the various types of high schools that participants indicated were options available to them.

Procedure

Research took place within various available classrooms at the university, where participants were read a recruiting script, given a consent form, asked to fill out a demographics survey and the Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand et al., 1992), and then read a debriefing statement. The consent forms, surveys, and scales were gathered upon completion; separated according to content (i.e. consent form or survey); and kept in unmarked manila envelopes to ensure anonymity.

Information obtained through the demographics survey regarding participants' SES and primary caregivers' educational background was utilized as controlling variables, as past research has shown that a majority of students who come from more affluent households and have parents who have completed post-secondary education are more likely to attend college themselves (Margolin, 2000). Additionally, participants' listed high schools were researched online in order to determine their approximate enrollments for grades 9-12. Participants who attended schools with enrollments of less than 500 were assigned to the small high school comparison group, while participants who attended schools with enrollments of 500 or more were assigned to the large high school comparison group, based on categorization from previous research (Public Agenda, 2002). Nine of the participating students' data was discarded during this process

due to a lack of information that made it impossible to categorize them as attending either of the particular comparison groups.

RESULTS

In preliminary data screening, box plots were used to test the assumption of multivariate normality, which resulted in the removal of eight data points. These particular cases had values located beyond the lower outer fences or upper outer fences of the box plots and, therefore, were considered to be extreme in nature. Additionally, in evaluating the homogeneity of covariance matrices, results from Box's Test were not found to be significant, and thus data transformation was not warranted (Warner, 2008).

A factorial MANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of sex ($N_{Male} = 105$, $N_{Female} = 161$) and the size of high school attended ($N_{Large} = 99$, $N_{Small} = 167$) on college students' reported levels of intrinsic motivation (IM to know, IM towards accomplishment, IM to experience stimulation), extrinsic motivation (EM identified, EM introjected, EM external regulation), and amotivation. Results of this analysis indicate that there was no significant main effect for school size or for the interaction between school size and sex. However, significant results were found for the main effect of sex [Wilks' $\Lambda = .922$, $F(7, 256) = 3.082$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .078$] on 3 of the 7 motivational subscales including: extrinsic motivation- identified [$F(1, 262) = 9.374$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .035$], extrinsic motivation- external regulation [$F(1, 262) = 7.139$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .027$], and amotivation [$F(1, 262) = 12.303$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .045$]. Table 4 presents the means and standard deviations for the previously mentioned motivational subscales according to sex.

Follow-up analyses utilizing Pearson Correlations were performed in order to gain a better understanding of the data. Significant, positive, linear relationships were found to exist between student's perceived size of high school and intrinsic motivation- towards accomplishment [$r(282) = .022, p < .05$], student's perceived size of high school and extrinsic motivation- identified [$r(282) = .024, p < .05$], and student's perceived size of high school and extrinsic motivation- introjected [$r(282) = .049, p < .05$]. Additionally, the correlational analyses showed significant results for actual size of high school and intrinsic motivation- towards accomplishment [$r(276) = .035, p < .05$] and marginally significant results for student's perceived size of high school and extrinsic motivation- external regulation [$r(282) = .055, p > .05$].

DISCUSSION

Prior research has indicated that students who are enrolled in smaller school environments, as compared to those students who are enrolled in larger school environments, typically are subjected to more positive and beneficial educational experiences. Examples include greater levels of school attendance, higher graduation rates, and increased academic achievement (Chicago Public Schools, 2003). Additionally, more often than not, educational literature suggests that instilling a sense of intrinsic motivation within students should take precedence over the employment of extrinsic motivational techniques (Albrecht et al., 2009; Fenzel et al., 2006; Flaherty & Hackler, 2010). Students who exhibit motivational tendencies more closely associated with intrinsic motivation tend to complete their scholastic tasks at a higher level than

students whose academic achievement more greatly depends on them obtaining some type of reward upon task completion. Furthermore, individuals who are intrinsically motivated generally display greater internal aspirations and an inclination towards continued learning throughout their lifetimes (Kavanaugh, 2009).

The status of American students' academic success has been a concern of our nation for many years and was most notably brought to the public's attention in 1983 with President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education's report entitled "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative For Educational Reform." However, despite these concerns and the consistent documentation that shows American students' performance to be far behind that of other countries' youth (Dillon, 2007), an examination of the literature resulted in the retrieval of few studies that were primarily concerned with the type of motivational influences behind students' decisions to complete high school and pursue a college education. Other examples cited as the cause for individuals forgoing college included factors such as finances, students' indecisiveness (i.e. uncertainty regarding what to do with the rest of their lives), and a lack of knowledge about the college process and/or experience in general (i.e. not knowing how to apply, which school to go to, if they will fit in, etc.) (College Tools for Schools, 2009; Perez, 2008; Scholarships.com, n.d.). Furthermore, some students simply feel as if college is not the next logical step for them and are following alternative paths such as an apprentice program. These programs, while not as readily accepted within the United States as in foreign nations, may be more appealing than a college career to some

high school students for several reasons. For instance, they do not follow the typical classroom setup (i.e. utilize more hands-on learning than textbook and paper assessment), are generally able to be completed by the individual's high school graduation, and allow for a quicker entry into the job market (Marklein, 2010).

The purpose of the present study was to determine if college students' choice to attend a post-secondary educational institution was affected by the size of their high school (i.e. 9th-12th enrollment of <500 versus 9th-12th enrollment of 500+) as well as by their motivational tendencies (i.e. intrinsic motivation to know, intrinsic motivation towards accomplishments, intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation, identified extrinsic motivation, introjected extrinsic motivation, external regulation extrinsic motivation, and amotivation). More specifically, when utilizing the Vallerand et al. (1992) Academic Motivation Scale (AMS), college students who attended larger high schools were expected to show greater levels of extrinsic motivation, while college students who attended smaller high schools were expected to show greater levels of intrinsic motivation. Results of this study indicated that significant relationships were found to exist between students' perceived size of high schools and intrinsic motivation-towards accomplishment, students' perceived size of high schools and extrinsic motivation- identified, students' perceived size of high schools and extrinsic motivation-introjected, and the actual size of students' high schools and intrinsic motivation- towards accomplishment. Additionally, a marginally significant relationship was found between students' perceived size of high schools and extrinsic motivation- external regulation. In

all of the relationships, higher scores on the motivation subscales were associated with larger perceived or actual school size.

These findings suggest that as students' perceived senior class size increases, so too do their scores on the extrinsic motivation portion of the AMS, which support the idea that students from larger high schools exhibit greater levels of extrinsic motivation. These findings also relate to previous research which indicates that developing a student's intrinsic motivation is of greater importance regarding overall scholastic achievement (Albrecht et al., 2009; Fenzel et al., 2006; Flaherty & Hackler, 2010), and that in comparison to larger schools, smaller schools are typically associated with more positive educational characteristics that assist in facilitating the academic achievement and success of their students (Chicago Public Schools, 2003; Eddy, 2004; Gardner et al., 2000; Pittman & Haughwout, 1987; Public Agenda, 2002; Werblow & Duesbery, 2009). Furthermore, as perceived senior class size and estimated high school enrollment increased, so too, did the students' scores on the intrinsic motivation-towards accomplishment subscale. These last results, while contrary to the initial hypothesis, may be explained by the similar qualities of intrinsic motivation-towards accomplishment and extrinsic motivation-identified.

Prior research has suggested that when an individual is motivated while attempting to create or achieve something, the feelings that he/she experiences are related to intrinsic motivation-towards accomplishment (Vallerand et al., 1992). In a sense, by creating or achieving something, the individual has acquired some sort of a means to an

end, as seen with extrinsic motivation, rather than being strictly compelled to participate in the activity for sheer enjoyment. Additionally, extrinsic motivation-identified has been described as being the type of motivation involved with an individual when he/she engages in a behavior because he/she has determined it to be of personal value or importance. In striving to create or achieve something, as with intrinsic motivation-towards accomplishment, the activity must be of personal value or importance to the individual, or else it is likely that the person will lose his/her desire to complete the particular task and possibly quit. Furthermore, on Vallerand et al.'s self-determination continuum, extrinsic motivation-identified is located towards the higher end of self-determination, nearer to those characteristics more closely associated with intrinsic motivation, and therefore more liable to share some overlapping qualities. Therefore, although educational literature has frequently pointed to the preference of utilizing intrinsic over extrinsic motivational methods in regards to students' academic success, results from this study indicate that a combination of techniques may be warranted in achieving the most favorable outcomes.

The motivational tendencies between males and females were compared as well, with females reporting significantly higher levels of both extrinsic motivation-identified and extrinsic motivation-external regulation. Males, however, showed significantly higher levels of amotivation. These results are similar to the findings indicated in Vallerand et al.'s (1989) original study involving the Echelle de Motivation en Education (EME) in that females were found to be less amotivated than males and also, that no

significant differences were found between males and females regarding intrinsic motivation-towards accomplishment. In a second study conducted by Vallerand et al. in 1992, results showed that males scored higher on the amotivation subscale, while females scored higher on the extrinsic motivation-regulation subscale and significantly higher on all three measures of intrinsic motivation than did males. Moreover, the results of all three studies suggest that females generally display a more self-determined motivational profile as compared to males.

The current study also examined the educational level of students' male and female primary caregivers, as previous research has shown parents' education to be a significant predictor of children's academic success (Margolin, 2000). In this sample, it was discovered that 34.7 % of participants' male primary caregivers and 52.6 % of participants' female primary caregivers had completed some type of post-secondary educational program by obtaining either an associates (Male= 8.8 %, Female= 18.0 %), bachelors (Male= 22.6 %, Female= 24.7 %), masters (Male= 7.1 %, Female= 8.1 %), professional (Male= 2.5 %, Female= 0.7 %), or doctorate degree (Male= 2.5 %, Female= 1.1 %). However, education level was not found to significantly predict these students' levels of motivation. Furthermore, students' socioeconomic statuses were analyzed, as Margolin's research indicated that this was also a significant motivating factor involved with students' academic success. In contrast to these findings, results of the current study did not suggest that socioeconomic status significantly influenced participants' responses. In November of 2009, survey results obtained from 400 low-income parents indicated

that 89 percent of respondents stated that it was “extremely” or “very important” that their child go to college, although historically, this population of students has been one of the least well-served by higher education. Students with less affluent upbringings have been described as being some of the least likely candidates to pursue a post-secondary educational career, and if they do enroll, are some of the most at-risk for not completing it (Marklein, 2010). Therefore, results obtained from the current study could be encouraging because they illustrate that, despite possibly being a first generational college student or coming from a lower socioeconomic background, these individuals demonstrated motivational levels comparable to their peers who have not experienced such similar circumstances.

Overall, the results obtained from this study indicated that the larger the participants sensed their senior class size to be, the more their reasons behind attending college hinged on receiving some type of means to an end. Specific examples cited by these individuals included factors such as not being able to find a high-paying job without a college degree, needing the job preparation provided in college in order to follow a chosen career path, and/or being able to prove their intelligence by completing their post-secondary education. Additionally, these results suggested that participants who perceived their senior class size to be large, along with the size of their high school enrollment truly being larger, the more these students were motivated by engaging in the process of accomplishing and/or creating a particular achievement. For example, these participants acknowledged that choosing to attend college gave them a personal sense of

satisfaction when they were able to surpass themselves in their search for excellence in their studies.

Furthermore, females were found to be significantly more motivated than males by the use of constraints or in receiving some type of reward, and also if engaging in a behavior was judged to be of personal value. Some of the motivational factors important to these individuals included wanting to have “the good life” later on, or the opportunity that a college education would give them for entering the job market in a field of personal preference. Conversely, males exhibited significantly more amotivational tendencies than females. In other words, these participants do not primarily display intrinsic or extrinsic motivational characteristics, but tend to sense that their behaviors are caused by forces outside of their control and do not grasp the relationship between their own personal actions and the resulting outcomes. From an educational standpoint, males may have feelings of discouragement and begin to question their choice of attending college. Some responses given from these participants as to why they go to college reflected feelings of uncertainty, and that at one time they may have had good intentions, but that now they believe it to be a waste of time. The demographics of this study support these results, as only 39% of the participants were male, which may be explained by their more negative attitudes and possible decision to not complete their post-secondary educational careers. Moreover, as stated previously, females tended to have generally more self-determined motivational profiles than males, which is also in line with the previously

discussed information from the demographics data and may account for their nearly 61% participation rate.

In recent years, the rates of males' college attendance, as well as program completion, have raised concerns (Marklein, 2010). According to the government's March 2010 Current Population Survey, of adults 25 years and older, approximately 20.1 million women and nearly 18.7 million men have earned their bachelor's degree, while 10.6 million women as compared to 10.5 million men have gone on to obtain some type of advanced degree (Associated Press, 2011). Additionally, data recently released from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that women are 60 percent more likely than men to have completed their bachelor's degree by the age of 23 (HuffPost College, 2011).

The primary limitations involved with this study are related to its sample demographics. As mentioned previously, a convenience sample was utilized, which greatly reduced the ability for one to be able to generalize its findings to a larger, more diverse population. Data was collected from only on-campus, undergraduate, psychology courses from a single, four-year university. Additionally, this data indicated that a majority of the participants identified their ethnicity to be White/Caucasian, while research has shown that minority races have a much higher likelihood of not completing, or even entering, post-secondary educational programs (ACT, 2010; North Carolina Voices, 2007; Pathways to College Network, 2004).

Furthermore, collecting all data during the spring semester may have had some influence on the results, as the size of these classes were reported as being much smaller

than those which had previously occurred in the fall (J. M. Bonds-Raacke & J. D. Raacke, personal communication, March 2011). However, on the other hand, research has shown that a higher percentage of students tend to drop out during, or shortly thereafter, their first semester, which could have made the spring semester a more ideal time to gather data regarding students' motivation for attending college (Gerson, 2010). In other words, it is likely that the data that was collected came only from those students who are truly committed and motivated towards furthering their education, rather than students who initially had exhibited similar intentions, but then decided to give up for one reason or another.

Another limitation related to this study is that the measure utilized in evaluating an individual's motivation was static, whereas people's motivational tendencies may actually fluctuate throughout the course of their lifetime. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 47 percent of individuals reported that they did not enroll in college immediately after graduating from high school, but that by the age of 22, 27 percent of individuals had indicated that they were attending some type of post-secondary educational institution (HuffPost College, 2011). Research related to students' motivation and its influence on their choice to attend college may benefit from the conduction of longitudinal studies as a way of determining if, and how, an individual's motivational tendencies vary, especially during one's late high school and early college years.

Despite the limitations involved with this study, the data gathered and educational implications garnered from this research are of importance for several reasons. First, participants' motivational profiles were evaluated using several sub-types of motivation, exceeding the typical distinction of only intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. As a result, a clearer analysis of the reasoning behind students' responses regarding college attendance was able to be obtained. In reviewing this information, high schools could begin to implement strategies targeted specifically towards each type of educational establishment (i.e. large or small) and/or by gender.

For example, in larger schools with students who are more extrinsically motivated, presentations or group activities could be designed that emphasize the importance of continuing one's education in order to acquire a more desirable job coupled with a better salary. Additionally, educators may begin to brainstorm ideas as to how a sense of intrinsic motivation might be developed within these students, as prior literature has stressed the preference of students having an internal desire to engage in academic behaviors rather than wanting to complete a task as a way of receiving a reward. Regarding gender, some of the same types of strategies employed in larger schools may work well with females too, as they were shown to be more extrinsically motivated as well. However, with males, using techniques that assist in alleviating their feelings of uncertainty related to college attendance, while simultaneously developing a stronger sense of intrinsic motivation, may prove to be beneficial. Overall, schools may also greatly assist students simply by providing more information related to the college

experience as a whole, rather than focusing the majority of their efforts towards the application process. While knowing how to get into college is of extreme importance, many dropouts occur shortly thereafter because of students becoming so overwhelmed by the lack of preparation regarding what to do once they arrive, that they cannot adequately manage the situation long enough to complete the requirements for a degree (Marklein, 2010).

Future research should include ideas on expanding the diversity of participants involved, so that results can be more easily applied to the general population. For instance, ideally, a follow-up study would be comprised of the data collected from a majority of incoming freshmen students, rather than only those in psychology courses, who are attending numerous types of post-secondary institutions such as technical programs, junior colleges, private colleges, and four-year universities from a variety of geographic locations. Additionally, results of the current study indicated that significant motivating factors for students were largely external in nature. This supports past research which states that curriculums in the United States primarily focus on the end results of academic achievement rather than the process and effort a student puts forth in attaining that goal (Haysom & Sutton, 1973). While initially this may not seem like such a terrible circumstance, several studies have indicated that the use of extrinsic rewards does not provide positive, long-term results (Haywood et al., 2008). Moreover, it has been shown that our foreign counterparts, who utilize a more intrinsic motivational approach in education, are consistently ahead of American students in the academic arena

(Dillon, 2007). Therefore, future research should also focus on examining the methods and techniques being employed in these countries to determine if we could implement similar practices within our own educational systems.

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TABLES

Table 1
Breakdown of Participants' Ethnicities

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Hispanic/Latino	9	3.2
Asian	11	3.9
African American	8	2.8
White/Caucasian	246	86.9
Other	9	3.2
Total	283	100.0

Table 2
Breakdown of Participants' College Classification

College Class	Frequency	Percent
Freshman	85	30.0
Sophomore	73	25.8
Junior	67	23.7
Senior	58	20.5
Total	283	100.0

Table 3*Alternative High School Options Available to Participants*

Types	Frequency	Percent
Charter	6	2.1
Magnet	2	0.7
Independent	6	2.1
Parochial	9	3.2
Proprietary	1	0.4
Home	5	1.8
Other	35	12.4
2+ Options	11	3.9
Total	75	26.6

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations for Motivational Subscales by Sex

Motivational Subscale	Male		Female	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
EM- Identified	5.80	0.849	6.16	0.764
EM- External Regulation	5.94	0.848	6.24	0.672
Amotivation	1.89	0.993	1.43	0.784

APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Recruiting Script

Introduction:

Hi! My name is Brittney Horyna, and I'm a Fort Hays State University graduate student in the process of completing my Education Specialist degree.

Purpose:

As part of my thesis, I'm conducting a research study to examine students' motivational tendencies regarding their choice to attend college. I was wondering if you'd like to participate in my study by completing a brief demographics survey, as well as another survey over academic motivation.

Terms of Participation:

You are not required to participate in this study. It's completely voluntary. Also, if you decide to participate in this study, but then change your mind part way through, you may stop at any time without penalty. You will not receive any compensation for your participation; however, extra credit or course credit may be given by your professor if he/she so chooses to offer it.

Conclusion:

If this seems like something you'd be interested in, I have an informed consent sheet that further explains the details of this study. You can read through it and then sign and date at the bottom if you'd like to participate. Thank you!

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Department of Psychology, Fort Hays State University

Study title: Differences in Students' Motivation to Attend College: Large Versus Small High Schools

Name of Researcher: Brittney Horyna

Contact Information: blhoryna@scatcat.fhsu.edu

Name of Faculty Supervisor & Contact Information, if student research:

Dr. Jennifer Bonds-Raacke

Email: jmbondsraacke@fhsu.edu

Phone: 785.628.4403

You are being asked to participate in a research study. It is your choice whether or not to participate. Your decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on your academic standing or performance in the course to which you are otherwise entitled. Please ask questions if there is anything you do not understand.

What is the purpose of this study? The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between the variables: school size, motivation, and college attendance. More specifically, it is concerned with examining potential differences among motivational influences for attending college that may exist between students who have attended smaller high schools as opposed to students who have attended larger high schools.

What does this study involve? If you decide to participate in this study, you will view two surveys and answer questions about each survey. You will not be required to provide your name or any other identifying information. If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form after you have had all of your questions answered and understand the implications of your involvement. Consent forms will be stored separately from survey responses. After completing the survey, the survey will be collected and you will be read a debriefing statement. The length of time for your participation in this study will be approximately 15 minutes. It is estimated that 300 participants will be in this study.

Are there any benefits from participating in this study? There will be no benefits to you should you decide to participate in this study. However, your participation will assist others in gaining knowledge regarding students' choice to attend college and the motivational variables influencing their decision.

Will you be paid or receive anything to participate in this study? You will not receive any financial compensation for your participation. However, it may be possible to receive partial course credit or extra credit, if so explained by the professor of your class.

What about the costs of this study? There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time you will spend in completing the surveys.

What are the risks involved with being enrolled in this study? It is unlikely that participation in this project will result in harm to participants. It is unlikely that you are at risk for psychological, legal, physical, social harm, or any other risk that is more than minimal. However, should you feel distressed or become upset by participating; you may contact the campus counseling center, the psychology department ethics chair, or the course instructor.

How will your privacy be protected? No names or identifying information will be asked. Responses to survey questions will be entered into a computer program and stored for five years, after which the data will be deleted. Original survey documents will be shredded after the information is entered into the computer program. Only the student researcher and faculty advisor will have access to the database. Results of the survey will be shared with the scientific community through presentation and possible publication. When results are shared, information will be presented in aggregate form and will contain no names or other identifying information.

Other important items you should know:

- **Withdrawal from the study:** You may choose to stop your participation in this study at any time. Your decision to stop your participation will have no effect on your academic standing.

- **Funding:** There is no outside funding for this research project.

Whom should you call with questions about this study? Questions about this study can be directed to the FHSU Ethics Chairperson in Psychology: Dr. Janett Naylor at jmnaylor@fhsu.edu or the faculty supervisor overseeing this study: Dr. Jennifer Bonds-Raacke at jmbondsraacke@fhsu.edu. If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions about human research at FHSU, you may call the Office of Scholarship and Sponsored Projects at FHSU (785)-628-4349 during normal business hours.

CONSENT

I have read the above information about *Differences in Students' Motivation to Attend College: Large Versus Small High Schools* and have been given an opportunity to ask questions. By signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this study and affirm that I am at least 18 years of age. I understand that I am not giving up any legal rights and can withdraw my consent at any time.

Participant's Signature and Date

Appendix C: Demographics Survey

Please answer each question to the best of your ability or check the most appropriate answer supplied.

1.) Age:

2.) Sex:

Male _____

Female _____

3.) College Classification:

Freshman _____

Sophomore _____

Junior _____

Senior _____

Graduate _____

4.) Ethnicity:

Hispanic/Latino _____

American Indian/Alaskan Native _____

Asian _____

African American _____

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander _____

White/Caucasian _____

Other _____

5.) Combine Family Income (your senior year of high school):

< \$20,000 _____

\$20,000-\$59,999 _____

\$60,000-\$99,999 _____

\$100,000+ _____

I do not know _____

6.) Highest Degree or Level of Education Completed by FATHER (or MALE primary caregiver):

No Schooling _____

Some Primary (i.e. up to 8th grade) _____

Some Secondary (i.e. up to 12th grade) _____

High School Graduate _____

Some College _____

Associates Degree (i.e. AA, AS) _____
 Bachelors Degree (i.e. BA, AB, BS) _____
 Masters Degree (i.e. MA, MS, MBA) _____
 Professional Degree (i.e. MD, DDS, LLB) _____
 Doctorate Degree (i.e. PhD, EdD) _____
 I do not know _____

7.) Highest Degree or Level of Education Completed by MOTHER (or FEMALE primary caregiver):

No Schooling _____
 Some Primary (i.e. up to 8th grade) _____
 Some Secondary (i.e. up to 12th grade) _____
 High School Graduate _____
 Some College _____
 Associates Degree (i.e. AA, AS) _____
 Bachelors Degree (i.e. BA, AB, BS) _____
 Masters Degree (i.e. MA, MS, MBA) _____
 Professional Degree (i.e. MD, DDS, LLB) _____
 Doctorate Degree (i.e. PhD, EdD) _____
 I do not know _____

8.) Please Provide Answers for the High School You Attended Your Senior Year:

Name _____
 Location (City and State) _____
 Approximate Number of Senior Classmates _____
 Number of Years That You Attended This High School _____

9.) Did you have more than one option to choose from when picking a school to attend your senior year of high school?

Yes _____
 No _____

10.) If you answered YES to Question #9, what were your alternative options? (Check all that apply)

Charter School _____
 Magnet School _____
 Independent School _____
 Parochial School _____
 Proprietary School _____
 Home Schooling _____
 Other (Please Specify) _____

Appendix D: Academic Motivation Scale

WHY DO YOU GO TO COLLEGE?

Using the scale below, indicate to what extent each of the following items presently corresponds to one of the reasons why you go to college.

Does not correspond at all	Corresponds a little	Corresponds moderately	Corresponds a lot	Corresponds exactly		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

WHY DO YOU GO TO COLLEGE?

1. Because with only a high-school degree I would not find a high-paying job later on.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Because I experience pleasure and satisfaction while learning new things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Because I think that a college education will help me better prepare for the career I have chosen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. For the intense feelings I experience when I am communicating my own ideas to others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Honestly, I don't know; I really feel that I am wasting my time in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. For the pleasure I experience while surpassing myself in my studies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. To prove to myself that I am capable of completing my college degree.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. In order to obtain a more prestigious job later on.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. For the pleasure I experience when I discover new things never seen before.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Because eventually it will enable me to enter the job market in a field that I like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. For the pleasure that I experience when I read interesting authors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. I once had good reasons for going to college; however, now I wonder whether I should continue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. For the pleasure that I experience while I am surpassing myself in one of my personal accomplishments.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Because of the fact that when I succeed in college I feel important.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Because I want to have "the good life" later on.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. For the pleasure that I experience in broadening my knowledge about subjects which appeal to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Because this will help me make a better choice regarding my career orientation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. For the pleasure that I experience when I feel completely absorbed by what certain authors have written.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I can't see why I go to college and frankly, I couldn't care less.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. For the satisfaction I feel when I am in the process of accomplishing difficult academic activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. To show myself that I am an intelligent person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. In order to have a better salary later on.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. Because my studies allow me to continue to learn about many things that interest me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. Because I believe that a few additional years of education will improve my competence as a worker.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. For the "high" feeling that I experience while reading about various interesting subjects.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. I don't know; I can't understand what I am doing in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Because college allows me to experience a personal satisfaction in my quest for excellence in my studies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Because I want to show myself that I can succeed in my studies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix E: Debriefing Statement

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Thank you for participating in this research study! The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the variables: school size, motivation, and college attendance. More specifically, the research question I will try to answer is, does a difference exist among motivational influences for attending college between students who have attended small high schools and those who have attended large high schools? Furthermore, if a significant difference is discovered, I am predicting that students who have attended smaller high schools will possess characteristics more typical of being intrinsically motivated, while students who have attended larger high schools will appear to be more extrinsically motivated.

If you would like to view the results of this study after its completion, a copy will gladly be furnished upon request. No names or other identifying information will be displayed within these results.

To obtain this information, or if any questions or concerns should arise about your participation in this research, please feel free to contact:

Brittney Horyna- Primary Investigator
blhoryna@scatcat.fhsu.edu
(620)-255-6466

Although we do not expect answering these surveys to cause any discomfort or anxiety, if you feel distressed after completing the surveys, please contact the Kelly Center (785-628-4401). Speaking to someone at the Kelly Center is a free service for students.

Once again, thank you for participating.