Academic Help Seeking Constructs and Group Differences: An Examination of First-Year University Students

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Abstract

Academic help seeking is viewed as a positive and beneficial academic behavior for students. The purpose of this study was to examine group differences in the academic help seeking behaviors of first-year university students in order to better understand how demographic factors relate to help seeking behaviors. Specifically, group differences were examined for several demographic variables across five constructs of academic help seeking: Instrumental Help Seeking, Executive Help Seeking, Help Seeking Threat, Help Seeking Avoidance, and preference for Informal versus Formal Help. A sample of 394 first-year university students at a public-research university in the western United States was surveyed in the spring of 2015. Results indicated that there were no group differences among the five constructs of help seeking by gender, ethnicity, SAT Score, first-generation college student status, and socioeconomic status. However, students with lower GPA’s reported greater levels of executive help seeking and help avoidance. Use of academic support services was also analyzed across the five help seeking constructs with no differences between students who used services and those students who did not use services. Help avoidance and SAT score were predictive of the number of distinct services used. Help avoidance, being female, and SAT score were predictive of first-semester GPA. Results from the study suggest that institutions should analyze the non-psychological barriers to help seeking and consider intrusive systems that encourage help seeking and reduce avoidance for students who need help most. Further research should examine help seeking beyond the constructs used in this study and include qualitative measures in order to obtain a deeper understanding of academic help seeking behaviors.
DEDICATION

To my wife Ana for always supporting and encouraging me in my education and to Emerson for I hope this will inspire and encourage you to always pursue knowledge and learning.
I would like to thank my chairperson Dr. Patricia Miltenberger for her guidance, insight, and encouragement throughout this process. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Bill Thornton for the invaluable statistical support; Dr. Rita Laden for the many reviews; and Dr. Shannon Ellis and Dr. Melisa Choroszy for the constant academic and professional support. Lastly, I thank my family, friends, and colleagues for helping me reach my academic goal.
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Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter will outline an introduction to the purpose of the study. First, the background of the study is presented using related literature to discuss the problem statement. Second, the purpose statement and research questions are outlined. Third, the theoretical framework, significance, limitations and delimitations of the study are explained. Lastly, the definitions of terms used in this study are provided.

Background of the Study

College student success is a critical issue for students, institutions of higher education, policy makers, parents, and other stakeholders. Many states have adopted performance funding formulas that focus on student outcomes, which play a key role in the amount of funding public institutions receive from the state (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). The National Center for Education Statistics (Snyder & Dillow, 2013) reports that only 59 percent of first-time, full-time students complete a bachelor’s degree within six years. The United States now lags behind several other countries in the proportion of adults aged 25 to 64 with a college degree (OECD, 2014). The extended time to graduation and low completion rates point to a need to further understand what makes students successful, or unsuccessful, in completing a baccalaureate degree.

First-year college students are among the most at-risk for leaving an institution of postsecondary education due to the variety of academic and social challenges (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). According to Shapiro, Dundar, Yuan, Harrell, and Wakhungu, (2014) 58.2% of students who started college in 2012 enrolled at the same institution for 2013 and only 68.7% continued to be enrolled at any postsecondary education institution for 2013. These numbers can reflect the multitude of challenges faced by new college
students including both academic and social transitions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Keup (2008) notes that first-year students experience challenges with multiculturalism, technology, defining the purpose of their education, and even mental health.

Given these individual challenges, as well as funding mechanisms focused on student completion, postsecondary institutions are continuously striving to improve student outcomes. Engle and O’Brien (2007) argue in their review of best practices that institutions that are successful in retaining and graduating students have strong academic and personal support systems along with an institutional culture of student success. However, such services and support systems must be utilized by students in order for institutions and students to improve their academic outcomes.

**Problem Statement**

This study examined the academic help-seeking behaviors of first-year students in a land grant research university. Academic help seeking is one strategy that students may use to overcome academic challenges and achieve academic success. The process of help seeking is “an act of effort; that is, the student is actively using available resources in order to increase the probability of success in the future” (Ames & Lau, 1982, p. 414). This definition of help seeking as an act of effort can be related to Astin’s (1984) seminal theory of involvement, which stresses both the quality and quantity of effort that students place on their involvement in the academic and social aspects of college life. Additionally, help seeking requires students to interact and learn in a social way, which is representative of Tinto’s (1975, 1982, 1993) social and academic integration theories of student retention. As a result, it is important to understand help-seeking behavior in first-year students due to its potential contribution to student outcomes and retention.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to quantitatively analyze an existing database from a single institution on the academic help-seeking behaviors of first-year college students and identify any potential differences in behaviors among student characteristics. Previous research indicates that there may be differences in help-seeking behaviors across student characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and academic performance (Alexitch, 2002; Butler, 1998; Ryan, Shim, Lampkins-Uthando, Thompson, & Kiefer, 2009). However, these studies have focused primarily on students in K-12 settings. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature on college students at public land grant universities using the help-seeking constructs of formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat, which were previously used in studies of help seeking of college students (Karabenick, 2003, 2004).

Research Questions

There were multiple questions guiding this study on the behaviors and outcomes of help-seeking among first-year college students. The following questions are addressed in this study:

1. When groups are established using selected demographic variables, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

2. When groups are established using reported use of an institutional academic support service are there group differences based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?
a. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the math center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

b. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the writing center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

c. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the tutoring center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

d. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of supplemental instruction, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

3. To what extent do the five help seeking constructs and the selected demographic variables predict the number of reported institutional academic support services used by each participant?

Theoretical Framework

Academic help-seeking was chosen as the theoretical framework because the purpose of this study was to better understand the academic help-seeking behavior of college students. Help-seeking is seen as a positive adaptive learning mechanism of
successful students (Järvelä, 2011; Nelson-Le Gall, 1985; Newman, 2000). Karabenick (2003, 2004) situates help seeking into five constructs, which have been used to study help-seeking behaviors of college students. These constructs are formal versus informal help seeking, instrumental help seeking, executive help seeking, help avoidance, and help seeking threat. Formal versus informal help seeking refers to the source of help sought by a student. Instrumental and executive help seeking explain the style of help that a student employs, whereas, instrumental is an adaptive behavior and executive help is a negative behavior (Karabenick, 2003). Help avoidance and threat are constructs which help to explain the reasons students do not seek help even when help is needed. Chapter II discusses help seeking as a theoretical framework in greater detail.

**Significance**

This study contributes to the knowledge base of student success in college. More specifically, it adds to the body of research on academic help-seeking behaviors by focusing on college students and the demographic relationships to help-seeking behaviors. This is important because help-seeking behavior can be a predictor of academic outcomes (Ryan & Shin, 2011).

Research on the help seeking of college students is not as rich as research in K-12 settings. Additionally, demographic variables are often not included in studies of college students’ help seeking behaviors. Many students may not seek help when needed, and this study adds to the research on academic help-seeking behaviors. In doing so, the study can provide student affairs professionals with additional information to best provide, and encourage the use of, academic support services to students.
Limitations

Because all data is derived from a single land-grant institution, results cannot be generalized to students in other postsecondary settings. Another potential limitation to the study is the response rate of the survey data. With just under 23 percent of the population responding, there were insufficient cases for some of the grouping variables and groups had to be collapsed. Moreover, data collection via a self-reported survey may not be entirely accurate of actual student help-seeking behaviors. This study also exclusively examines students who enrolled during the spring 2015 term. Thus, students who did not return for the second semester of their freshman year are not included in this study. Lastly, the researcher was limited in terms of help seeking questions that were able to be included in the survey due to the use of an existing database.

Despite these limitations, the study has value in informing the institution in this study about the help-seeking behaviors of its students. The methods utilized in this study can also be employed by other researchers and institutions to analyze student help-seeking behaviors in other postsecondary institutions.

Delimitations

This study will focus specifically on first-time, full-time freshmen at one large land-grant research institution in the western United States. Only students who enrolled for the spring 2015 term and who took the survey used in this study were used as participants. First-year students were specifically selected as the population for this study due to the academic transitional challenges they face. Because of this, their help seeking behaviors may be more pronounced than more experienced students. The literature reviewed in this study is focused on academic help seeking theory. Literature on non-
academic help seeking was not necessarily included in this review because the purpose is to review help-seeking as it relates to institutional academic support services rather than non-academic services. Although some of the research mentioned in this review is from the 1980’s and 1990’s they are seminal works in academic help seeking literature.

**Definition of Terms**

For purposes of this study the subsequent terms and definitions were utilized.

**First-Year College Student**

A first-time college freshman who is in his or her first full year of college.

**Help Seeking**

Students who recognize a need for assistance and actively seek assistance from a source such as friends, instructors, or institutional support services are said to be involved in the process of help seeking (Karabenick, 2006).

**First Generation College Student**

A college student whose parents and or guardians do not hold a four year college degree (Pike & Kuh, 2005). First generation status was determined by parent’s educational attainment.

**Institutional Support Service**

Institutional support services in this study will be defined as an academic service provided by a postsecondary education institution to support student success. Specifically, the institutional support services in the study include a writing center, math center, tutoring center, and supplemental instruction program.
Supplemental Instruction (SI)

The International Center for Supplemental Instruction at the University of Missouri, Kansas City (2015) defines supplemental instruction as:

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is an academic assistance program that utilizes peer-assisted study sessions. SI sessions are regularly-scheduled, informal review sessions in which students compare notes, discuss readings, develop organizational tools, and predict test items. Students learn how to integrate course content and study skills while working together. The sessions are facilitated by “SI leaders”, students who have previously done well in the course and who attend all class lectures, take notes, and act as model students (What is SI? Section)

Supplemental instruction services examined in this study are optional and there is no minimum or maximum number of SI sessions that students can attend. There is no fee for this service at the institution in this study.

Formal Help

Formal help refers to the source of help sought by a student. Specifically, formal help comes from a professional source directly related to the institution such as professor, support service, tutor, or online course portal (Karabenick, 2004; Makara & Karabenick, 2013).

Informal Help

Informal help refers to help from a non-professional source such as peers and internet searches (Karabenick, 2004; Makara & Karabenick, 2013).
**Instrumental Help Seeking**

Nelson- Le Gall (1981) defines instrumental help where the “help requested is limited to only the amount and type that is needed to allow the child to solve the problem or attain the goal in question for himself or herself” (p. 227).

**Executive Help Seeking**

Executive help seeking is a style of help seeking defined by Nelson-Le Gall (1981) where the help seeker’s “intention is to have someone else solve a problem or attain a goal on his or her behalf” (p. 227).

**Help Avoidance**

Ryan, Pintrich and Midgley (2001) define help seeking avoidance as “instances when students know that they need help but do not seek it” (p. 94).

**Threat**

Threat, in the context of this study, refers to the help seeker’s perceptions of the negative consequences of seeking help. These threats may or may not be real, but can prevent students from seeking help due to concerns that the negative outcomes of seeking help may outweigh the benefits.

**MAP Works**

A proprietary software system used by postsecondary institutions to manage student retention. Data from institutional sources along with surveys of students are compiled to allow institutions to make data-based decisions to improve student outcomes.
Socioeconomic Status

The American Psychological Association (2015) defines socioeconomic status as: “commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation” (p. 1).

Gender

Gender is defined as male or female as those were the only two categories utilized in the exiting database in this study and is a categorical variable. Gender is relevant to this study because past research indicates that there may be differences in help seeking by gender (Alexitch, 2002).

Ethnicity

Survey participants identified their ethnicity into one of the following categories in the database utilized in the study: Hispanic; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; White; two or more races. This variable is categorical. Ethnicity is relevant to this study because there is little study regarding differences in academic help seeking across race and ethnicity. However, studies of non-academic help seeking provide evidence to suggest help-seeking behaviors may differ across ethnicity (Bin Sheu & Sedlacek, 2004; Kearney, Draper, & Baron, 2005; Kuo, Kwantes, Townson, & Nanson, 2006).

Summary

This chapter has introduced the study including the background, problem, purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, significance, limitations, delimitations, and definitions. Chapter II will review the literature related to this study. In
Chapter III, the research methodology will be presented. Chapter IV will present the results of the data analysis with Chapter V discussing the findings and implications of the present study.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Help seeking in academic settings is an important topic that is rich in research literature but limited in higher education settings. This chapter will review this literature while focusing specifically on research related to student academic help seeking in P-16 settings. The review of the literature begins with a discussion of student success literature, definitions of help seeking, help seeking theoretical frameworks, discussion of the history of help seeking research, and presentation of the foundational theories. Next, extensions of the seminal theories will be described including motivation orientations, goal structures and performance orientations. Lastly, research is presented that specifically applies to students in a postsecondary setting.

**Student Success and Retention**

The current understanding of student success in college is a complex concept with many definitions and factors. Berger and Lyon (2005) highlight that student success in college is often defined within the context of graduation, retention, and persistence. However, predicting student success in these contexts often relies on standardized test scores and high school grade point averages. But, these predictors often only account for a small variance of performance in college.

Accordingly, many researchers have developed theories surrounding the factors that lead a student to complete, or not complete, a college degree. Tinto’s (1975, 1982, 1993) theories of student departure describe that students who experience a high level of integration into the social and academic aspects of an institution are less likely to drop out. The student success research has been focused on how institutions can create environments that promote academic and social integration. Indeed, institutional factors
can help to explain student outcomes. For example, institutions with low expenditures on teaching and support services have lower graduation rates as do large public universities with less-selective admissions policies (Astin & Oseguera, 2005b; Gansemer-Topf & Schuh, 2003-2004; Goenner & Snaith, 2003-2004).

Astin (1984; 1993) further theorized that student success is a function of the quality and quantity of effort and involvement by students in their education. Thus, study of student effort may be an essential component to understanding student success. Academic help seeking is seen as an act of effort in which students attempt to improve their outcomes (Ames & Lau, 1982). Understanding students’ academic help-seeking behaviors may provide further perspective on the role of student effort in academic success.

**Help Seeking Foundations**

In academic settings, students may often run into challenges that require knowledge beyond their current level. This can be seen everyday in P-16 settings whether a first grade student is attempting to read, or a college student is solving a complex scientific problem in a lab. In these situations students may seek assistance from outside sources including teachers, peers, books, online resources, support services and the like. As a result of this, researchers have developed a line of research that examines student help seeking.

The research on academic help seeking is based on a theoretical framework of learning and motivational paradigms. The basic concept of help seeking involves an individual who has a need that can be met through the assistance of others. More specifically to this review of help seeking in academic settings, Karabenick and Newman
define help seeking in the student context as those who recognize a need for assistance and actively seek assistance from a source such as friends, instructors, or support services. Ample research examines this type of help seeking through many different methodologies, perspectives, and settings, which are described in this review.

Help Seeking as Dependent

Help seeking as a research topic received little scientific inquiry until the 1980’s (Butler, 2006; Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985). However, initial discussions of help seeking focused primarily on the psychological aspects of seeking help in non-academic settings for social and personal issues (Nelson-Le Gall, 1985). Butler’s (2006) review notes that dominant social views in the United States during the early phases of help seeking research valued independence, self-reliance, and hard work. As a result, help seeking was seen a dependent behavior and framed in the negative (Beller, 1955, 1957; Winterbottom, 1958). In other words, help seeking was seen as an admission that the obstacle, or challenge, could not be overcome by one’s own intellect or ability. This deficit approach dominated research on help seeking into the early 1980’s (Nelson-Le Gall, 1985). The first major edited book of research was published in 1983 (DePaulo, Nadler, & Fisher) and focused on help receiving and seeking. However, the predominant theme of research in this volume examined help avoidance as a means to protect against public admissions of need and incompetence, thereby protecting an individual’s self-esteem.

Help Seeking as Independent

This deficit, or negative, view of help seeking existed until the 1980’s with the seminal works of Nelson-Le Gall (1981, 1985) which reframed help seeking as an activity where the help seeker is active in the process. Utilizing the learning theories of
Piaget (1964) and Vygotsky (1980), Nelson-Le Gall argued that help seeking is a beneficial learning strategy for young children. Piaget (1964) theorizes that individuals learn by being exposed to conditions that create a dissonance between existing knowledge and new knowledge. In this theory, individuals must find a way to incorporate new knowledge into an existing frame of knowledge in order to reduce dissonance. On the other hand, Vygotsky’s (1980) theories of learning discuss learning as a social action whereas individuals learn from others before integrating knowledge. Therefore when an individual encounters a learning challenge, the initial knowledge needed to overcome it comes from others. After the social interaction, the learner can then internalize knowledge in order to become more independent in future learning challenges. The construct of help seeking can be found in both of these theories of learning. As an individual is exposed to new knowledge or situations, a dissonance is formed with existing knowledge. Then, the individual must seek ways to remedy this dissonance. In the case of help seeking, the individual will seek to resolve this dissonance by learning from others rather than from the independent self.

Therefore, Nelson-Le Gall (1981, 1985) argued that an understanding of seminal learning theories could be used to ground the view of help seeking as a strategy of successful independent learners. The help-seeking individual was reframed as not having to rely on others to resolve a problem but instead seen as utilizing others as a tool for problem solving. This reframing moved research on help seeking towards a positive achievement activity perspective. Building off of this concept Ames and Lau (1982) were amongst the first to conceptualize help seeking as an “achievement behavior involving the search for and employment of a strategy to obtain success” (p. 414). Since this change
in perspective, help seeking research in academic settings has predominantly focused on help seeking as a tool used by self-regulated learners to improve academic mastery and performance (Butler, 1998; Karabenick & Zusho, 2015; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Self-regulated learning is defined as the “proactive processes that students use to acquire academic skill, such as setting goals, selecting and deploying strategies, and self-monitoring one’s effectiveness, rather than as a reactive event that happens to students due to impersonal forces” (Zimmerman, 2008, p. 166-167). Self-regulated learning has been found to be an important trait that can be the source of significant achievement differences in students (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1988). To this end, Bandura’s (1977, 1982, 1986) seminal works on self-efficacy and self-regulation are important to consider. Bandura (1986) identifies self-regulation as having three main processes: self-observations, self-judgments, and self-reactions. These three self-regulating processes are important to understanding the nature of the help-seeking process, and why academic help seeking is considered an important mechanism of self-regulated learning.

**Help Seeking Processes**

There are several models of the help seeking process for students (Nelson Le-Gall, 1981; Karabenick & Dumbo, 2011). In the earliest model presented by Nelson Le-Gall (1981) there are five stages of help seeking: (1) awareness and need for help; (2) decision to seek help; (3) identification of potential help (4) employment of strategies to elicit help, and (5) reactions to help seeking attempts. Karabenick and Dumbo (2011) present a more nuanced multi-step model that is not necessarily sequential. This model contains the following process components: (1) determine whether there is a problem; (2) determine whether help is needed/wanted; (3) decide whether to seek help; (4) decide on
the type of help (goal); (5) decide on whom to ask; (6) solicit help; (7) obtain help; and (8) process the help received. Karabenick’s model therefore relies on individual cognition of a problem to identify a problem and the type of assistance needed. Then, the individual must engage in a social learning process by obtaining help. Lastly, as with Vygotsky (1980) and Piaget (1964) the individual must process the help into their existing framework of knowledge in order for the help to resolve the dissonance and achieve the learning goal.

**Help Seeking Constructs**

### Formal and Informal Help Seeking

Karabenick (2004) indicates that there are two types of help-seeking behavior among students in terms of the source of help, which are termed formal and informal. Formal help seeking by students is identified as gathering assistance from a professional source such as a teacher, tutor, support service, or online class portal (Karabenick, 2004; Makara & Karabenick, 2013). On the other hand, informal help seeking comes from non-professional sources including peers, family, internet searches, and other unofficial sources. Each of these sources of help has benefits and different forms of threat. Seeking help from informal sources may be less threatening but may not yield high quality information whereas formal help seeking might be more threatening but will yield higher quality results (Karabenick, 2004).

### Executive Help Seeking

**Definition.** Executive help seeking is a style of help seeking defined by Nelson-Le Gall (1981) where the help seeker’s “intention is to have someone else solve a problem or attain a goal on his or her behalf” (p. 227). Karabenick and Knapp (1991)
further defined executive help seeking as being “designed to decrease the cost of completing tasks by enlisting the aid of others” (p. 221). In this definition executive help seeking is seen as a dependent behavior where the student relies solely on the helper to achieve a goal. For example, a student asking a peer for the answer to a difficult question on an assignment is exhibiting executive help seeking. In this example, the student seeks to reduce the cost of the task in terms of potential wrong answers and effort expended, by asking only for an answer and writing it down. The student does not attempt to learn the process for obtaining the answer, which could be used in future problem solving. This type of help seeking is also identified in the literature as expedient in which help seekers simply want to resolve the problem quickly (Butler, 1998).

**Theoretical basis.** The theoretical basis for executive help seeking comes from the distinction first made by Nelson-Le Gall (1981) between instrumental and executive help seeking. Since this distinction, researchers have assessed students on the spectrum of instrumental versus executive help seeking. Because executive and instrumental help seeking lie on either end of a help-seeking spectrum, they are highly related. A student’s preference for seeking help will fall somewhere between these two constructs. With respect to theory, researchers identify executive help seeking as a maladaptive learning strategy where help is sought to avoid doing the work of learning (Karabenick, 2004). Executive help seeking can result in successful outcomes, but can interfere with learning because the goal of help is the outcome rather than integration and knowledge (Magnusson & Perry, 1992). The preference for executive help seeking can be a factor of the task or classroom goal orientation but also of the goal orientation of the student (Butler, 1998; Karabenick, 2004; Magnusson & Perry, 1992; Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley,
In other words, tasks and learning environments focused on ability and outcomes see an increase in executive help seeking behaviors for some students. Similarly, the goal orientation of the student may also impact the selection of executive style help.

**Instrumental Help Seeking**

**Definition.** At the other end of the help-seeking spectrum is the construct of instrumental help seeking. Nelson-Le Gall (1981) defines instrumental help where the “help requested is limited to only the amount and type that is needed to allow the child to solve the problem or attain the goal in question for himself or herself” (p. 227). This type of help seeking is seen as a self-regulated and adaptive learning behavior because the individual seeks to “gain the minimum assistance sufficient to achieve independently” (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991, p. 221). Contrary to the example of executive help seeking, a student using instrumental help seeking would seek help by asking for assistance with the process or concept required to solve the problem rather than simply obtaining the answer. In this sense students may adapt this knowledge to future difficult problems, thereby increasing their ability to learn independently in the future. Instrumental help seeking may also be identified by the term autonomous help which Butler (1998) defines as: “behavior that (a) is initiated after the pupil spends time trying to solve a problem alone, (b) is expressed in requests for hints that clarify strategies rather than requests for the answer, and (c) results in improved capacity to solve subsequent problems independently” (p. 631).

**Theoretical basis.** As with executive help seeking, instrumental help seeking was conceptualized by Nelson-Le Gall (1981). Most recent studies of academic help seeking frame help seeking as a positive trait of successful learners (Karabenick, 2004; Makara &
Karabenick, 2013; Roussel, Elliot, & Feltman, 2011). Much of the research on the goal orientations of individuals and tasks as it relates to help seeking is applicable to both instrumental and executive help seeking (Butler, 1998; Karabenick, 2004; Magnusson & Perry, 1992; Ryan et al., 1998). However, in the case of instrumental help seeking it is most often seen in mastery goal oriented students and environments (Karabenick, 2004). Unlike ability goals, mastery goals focus on learning and self-improvement over performance outcomes.

**Help Seeking Avoidance**

**Definition.** A third construct in help seeking focuses on the intention of students to seek or avoid help. This construct does not examine how students seek help, but simply whether or not they seek help in some fashion. Ryan, Pintrich and Midgley (2001) define help seeking avoidance as “instances when students know that they need help but do not seek it” (p. 94). Avoiding help seeking strategies may be the result of a need for autonomy or a threat to competence (Ryan et al., 2001). Further, avoiding help when needed is an act of disengagement from the learning process, which may hinder students learning and performance evaluations.

**Theoretical basis.** Help avoidance is a construct which has been studied primarily in the context of goal orientations but has many complex factors. Help avoidance can be related to both personal and environmental influences (Ryan et al., 2001). Within the personal influences research has examined cognitive and social competency, achievement goals, and social goals. Much of the research on help seeking avoidance focuses on competency issues (Middleton & Midgley, 1997; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Newman, 1990). Cognitively and socially, students who do not rate
themselves as particularly competent are less likely to seek help (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). The achievement goals of students also impact help seeking styles, sources, and frequency (Butler, 1998; Karabenick, 2004; Roussel et al., 2011; Ryan & Shin, 2011). That is, students with ability and performance goals are likely to seek executive help from peers and likely to avoid help more.

Environmental factors such as the achievement goal structures of the help seeking environment also contribute to help seeking avoidance. Karabenick (2004) found this to be true in college classrooms with perceived performance-avoidance goals predicting help seeking avoidance by students. Additionally, an accepting peer environment and caring teachers, or helpers, can reduce help avoidance patterns in students (Ryan et al., 1998; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997).

**Help Seeking Threat**

**Definition.** Newman (1998) describes that many students do not seek help because they fear it may advertise or confirm their deficiencies. This concept can be defined as help seeking threat. In other words, students examine the costs of seeking help, which in turn may lead to differing help seeking behaviors depending on the threat level. Therefore, the entire help seeking process is influenced by student’s perceived level of threat (Ames & Lau, 1982; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Kitsantas & Chow, 2007). Essentially, students may view help seeking as a signal to both teachers and other students that they have deficiencies with the material. Threat to help seeking often is the result of the help seeking styles and goal orientations of the student.

**Theoretical basis.** Advertising one’s deficiencies is an important source of help seeking threat (Newman, 1998). In this case, students are often passive participants in
the classroom environment. However, self-regulated learners are aware of their
deficiencies, and have a different view of learning than those who do not seek help
(Newman, 1998). Self-regulated learners see help seeking as a means to remedy
difficulties and deficiencies rather than an admission of dissonance, or failure, in learning
the material.

The literature focuses on issues of self-esteem and competence as it relates to
threat (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Kitsantas & Chow, 2007; Middleton & Midgley,
1997; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Students reporting low self-esteem are more threatened by
seeking help than students with high self-esteem (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991). Perceived
threat to self-esteem for students during the help seeking process may come in the form
of judgments by peers or teachers (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). However, threat to self-
estee m can also stem from stereotypes (Wakefield, Hopkins, & Greenwood, 2013) and
even culture (Ryan, Shim, Lampkins-Uthando, Thompson, & Kiefer, 2009; Volet &
Karabenick, 2006). This threat is particularly present in adolescents who are still
developing cognitively and socially (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). In other words, students
may feel that seeking help is threatening to their self-esteem because it may signal
incompetency or challenges to peers and evaluators.

**Interrelationships Among Constructs**

The help seeking constructs mentioned here are highly interrelated. Because
instrumental and executive help styles are at either ends of a continuum, they are highly
related. Research studies found in the literature often relate student and environmental
factors to each style of help seeking (Karabenick, 2004; Roussel et al., 2011; Ryan &
Shin, 2011; Shim, Kiefer, & Wang, 2013). Based on this literature, students who have
mastery focused goals are likely to adopt instrumental help-seeking styles while students with ability and performance goals are likely to prefer executive style help seeking. This same pattern holds true for classroom goal structures. In fact, achievement goals for students also relate to help-seeking styles when extended into a digital learning environment (Cheng, Liang, & Tsai, 2013; Vaessen, Prins, & Jeuring, 2014).

Avoidance, threat, and help-seeking styles are also interrelated. Karabenick and Knapp (1991) found that intentions to seek help were inversely related to perceived threat to self-esteem. Perceived threat is also related to the style of help seeking with more threatened students preferring executive style help rather than instrumental help (Karabenick, 2004). Additionally, Karabenick (2004) found that more perceived threat led to greater help avoidance patterns of behavior. With respect to source of help, seeking help from informal sources may be less threatening but may not yield quality information whereas formal help seeking might be more threatening but will yield higher quality results (Karabenick, 2004). Help avoidance, threat, and executive help seeking styles are frequently found to be associated while an instrumental help seeking style is associated with low perceptions of threat and avoidance behaviors (e.g. Butler, 1998; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Karabenick, 2004; Kitsantas & Chow, 2007; Roussel et al., 2011; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Ryan & Shin, 2011).

Help Seeking and Goal Orientation

Goal orientation has been used as a framework for examining help seeking in P-16 settings (C. Ames, 1992; Butler & Neuman, 1995; Ryan et al., 2001). Motivation plays a key role in developing goal orientations and thus help-seeking behaviors (Magnusson & Perry, 1992). Goal orientations are presented as either mastery or ability
focused throughout the literature. Mastery goal orientations for students focus on learning, progress and engagement whereas ability goal orientations focus on grades, performance, and correct answers (Ryan et al., 2001). Goal orientations can be examined from the individual perspective but also from the perspective of the academic setting (Ryan et al., 2001). In this sense individuals may have personal goal orientations while teachers, or academic settings, may also have goal orientations. Butler and Newman (1995) tested this idea in students in grades two and six by manipulating the learning environment to be either ability or mastery oriented. The findings suggested that students in mastery-oriented environments sought more help than students in ability goal orientations. In another K-12 study, Ryan and Pintrich (1997) found that students’ personal mastery goal orientations in math successfully predicted help seeking behaviors and perceptions of usefulness of help. Shim, Kiefer, and Wang (2013) examined this issue in a middle school environment by studying 373 students. In this study, mastery goal focused classrooms predicted positive, or adaptive, help seeking behaviors in students.

Karabenick (2004) corroborated these findings in his study of college students’ goal orientations and perceived goal orientations in the classroom. Using surveys of 883 students in two introductory chemistry courses, students were asked to identify their own achievement goals, perceived classroom goal orientations, and their help seeking behaviors. Controlling for personal goal orientations, perceived classroom goal orientations related to mastery positively predicted help seeking behaviors while classroom ability goal orientations predicted help seeking avoidance behaviors. Roussel, Elliot, and Feltman (2011) and Karabenick (2004) identified that the type of goals a
student has towards learning will not only impact the amount of help but also the type of help sought. Karabenick (2011) sums up the goal orientation to help seeking relationship:

Students with stronger mastery orientations (who focus on understanding) are more likely to seek instrumental help, not so threatened by help seeking, less likely to avoid seeking help, and less likely to seek expedient/executive help. In contrast, students with performance-approach (focus on performing better than others) and performance-avoid orientations (concern about performing worse than others) are more threatened by help seeking and more likely to avoid seeking help and to seek expedience help. (p. 35)

**Help Seeking in K-12 Education**

Help seeking in academic settings has been studied widely especially at the K-12 levels of education. As mentioned earlier, help seeking is seen as a highly positive adaptive strategy that is employed by self-regulated learners in education (Karabenick, 2011; Newman 2000, 2006). Many of these studies focus on the help seeking of students in elementary and secondary settings. However, the theories of help seeking developed in the primary and secondary school settings can be instrumental in understanding students in the postsecondary setting.

Allison Ryan and colleagues have been instrumental in studying academic help seeking in K-12 contexts (Ryan et al., 1998; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Ryan & Shin, 2011). In their 1997 study Ryan and Pintrich examined help seeking in seventh and eighth grade math classes using surveys of 203 students. Findings indicated that student help seeking was mediated by the perceived threat and benefits of seeking help. In other words, students who viewed help as threatening to their perceived competence and only
somewhat beneficial were less likely to seek help. Building off this study, Ryan et al. (1998) examined 516 sixth grade students and found that avoidance of help seeking in the classroom was predicated on students’ views of their self-efficacy, gender, and classroom goal structure. Males were less likely to seek help, as were students who had lower self-ratings of academic self-efficacy. Classroom structures focusing on learning and improvement instead of ability saw less avoidance of help seeking. Lastly, Ryan and Shim (2011) investigated the relationship between help seeking and grade outcomes for 217 sixth graders. The study suggests that help seeking is related to academic outcomes and specifically that adaptive help seeking is positively related to grades while avoidant help seeking is negatively related to grades.

Richard Newman and research partners (1995; 1990) have also contributed significant work to the help seeking literature. In 1990, Newman studied third, fifth, and seventh graders and found that intentions to seek help were different for younger and older students. That is, younger students intended to seek help because they were more dependent on the teacher and motivated to challenge themselves, whereas the older students’ intended help seeking was based on a cost-benefit analysis. In Newman and Schwager’s (1995) study, sixth graders were placed into groups based on achievement level and asked to solve math problems in both achievement and learning goal contexts. Students in the learning goal context were more likely to use adaptive help seeking strategies while students in achievement goal contexts were more likely to pursue maladaptive help seeking strategies where obtaining steps to arrive at the answer was more important than learning the process on their own.
Other researchers have also examined help seeking in K-12 settings. Shim et al. (2013) investigated both the goal structure and peer climate in classrooms for 373 middle school students and found that positive peer climate leads to increased help seeking but not specifically adaptive help seeking. Middleton and Midgeley (1997) also studied middle school students and introduced a new motivational construct to help seeking: performance avoidance. In this construct, students seek to avoid showing a lack of ability. In examining 703 sixth graders, high levels of performance avoidance beliefs negatively predicted academic efficacy while positively predicting help seeking avoidance and test anxiety. A few studies address academic help seeking in the high school context. Roussel et al. (2011) examined once again the connection between help seeking and goal orientations but specifically studied informal help from peers. As such, they also examined social factors related to help seeking. By studying 551 high school students in two separate studies, mastery approach, mastery avoidance, and friendship approach were all positive predictors of instrumental or adaptive help seeking. Zusho and Barnett (2011) also studied help seeking high school students but only studied female students in math and English. Findings from this study corroborate much of the previous research showing that students with mastery goals who use self-regulated learning strategies are likely to seek help.

Help Seeking in Postsecondary Settings

In addition to the literature on help seeking in K-12 settings, there are studies focused on the academic help seeking of students in postsecondary education. Ames and Lau (1982) provided one of the first help seeking studies of college students. By assessing 198 college students and their attendance at pre-exam help sessions, they found
that students were more likely to seek help when they believed that the help offered could remedy past poor performance, and they had received information about the usefulness of the help offered. Therefore help seeking decisions in this study were based on prior performance, attributions about the cause of poor performance, and perceived usefulness of helping resources.

Karabenick and colleagues have built off this research and produced many of the seminal studies of academic help seeking of college students. Karabenick and Knapp (1988) studied help seeking in the context of a specific course where a curvilinear relationship between help seeking and need for help was found. In other words, students were most likely to seek help when the need was moderate. Students with low need or very high need for assistance were the least likely to seek help. Following up on their previous research, Karabenick and Knapp (1991) once again examined help seeking in a specific course and found that help-seeking tendencies were related to students’ academic achievement behaviors. Thus, help seeking was confirmed to be a positive academic behavior of successful learners.

Karabenick (2003) provided yet another view of help seeking in the classroom tied to achievement goals in large class settings. Findings from this study suggest that the majority of students were avoidant help seekers who commonly sought executive style help. On the other hand, only a small percentage of students were strategic instrumental help seekers. Additionally, strategic instrumental help seekers earned higher grades than the avoidant executive help seekers. Lastly, Karabenick (2004) also found that the goal structure of a given course could impact students’ help seeking behaviors. Classes where the goal structure encouraged mastery of the material were likely to create an
instrumental help-seeking behavior among students, while courses that had performance focused goals created an environment where executive help seeking was more prevalent. Other studies have corroborated and built upon the early work of Karabenick such as Magnusson and Perry (1992) who studied 226 Canadian college students in an introductory psychology course. By placing students into either an ego or task-involved setting, they examined help-seeking styles based on classroom orientation. As expected, task involved settings resulted in greater instrumental help seeking.

More recently, Bembenutty and White (2013) investigated how help seeking and other beliefs relate to homework completion and satisfaction among college students. Adaptive help seeking was positively related to homework satisfaction. White and Bembenutty (2013) also studied help seeking among 86 college students enrolled in a teacher education program. Using cluster analysis, three types of help seekers were identified: those who avoid help so as to not appear inadequate, those that see help as an important and helpful strategy, and those who view help seeking as an admission of inadequacy but still seek help when necessary.

Academic help seeking research is not limited to the physical classroom. Due to advances in technology, a recent strand of research examines college students’ help seeking in the digital age. In fact, Järvelä (2011) and Makara and Karabenick (2013) discuss the need for further research into how help seeking functions in new technological settings. Roll, Aleven, McLaren, and Koedinger (2011) developed and tested a help seeking tool, which was built into an intelligent tutoring system for math. They found that help seeking and metacognitive behaviors could be improved through the use of this tool and was applicable to other disciplines. Further, the relation between
achievement goals and help seeking in an intelligent tutoring system has been studied (Vaessen et al., 2014). The results of this study relate computerized help seeking to student goals by analyzing click patterns in the software. Help seeking from online sources is also being researched. Cheng, Liang, and Tsai (2013) created scales to specifically test college students’ online help seeking behavior and tested them versus self-regulated learning scales. Additionally, Makara and Karabenick (2013) studied the sources that students prefer to use when seeking help and found that students prefer seeking help from online impersonal sources rather than face to face. However, high performing students preferred to use face-to-face help more than low performing students. Kitsantas and Chow (2007) further explored help via digital sources by studying differences in help seeking behaviors across class types including distance, distributed, and traditional classrooms. Their results suggest that students in all class environments prefer to seek help online and specifically through email with instructors. However, students in non-traditional class settings felt less threatened to seek help than those in traditional classrooms.

The research literature on help seeking in college students has also focused on campus services. In one of the earliest studies of help seeking behaviors of college students (Tinsley, De St. Aubin, & Brown, 1982) the findings suggested that help seeking behavior is a function of the type of problem and the perceptions of the helper. Although this study had a small sample of 136 students, results indicated that students preferred to seek help from friends and family for personal problems while professional campus help was preferred for academic and career issues. In keeping with this theme, student help
seeking behavior is closely related to the characteristics and professional titles of potential campus help providers (Tinsley, Brown, De St. Aubin, & Lucek, 1984).

In an academic sense, Alexitch (2002) studied help seeking and the relationship to academic advising in Canadian college students. Learning orientation, grade orientation, gender, and academic performance were found to be associated with help seeking tendencies. Females, high achieving students, and students focused on mastery goals were more likely to seek help. Amador and Amador (2013) also examined academic advising but used a qualitative design to study help seeking through social media. Participants were comfortable seeking help from an academic advisor through social media.

Help seeking has also been examined as a mediator for parental attachment of first year college students (Holt, 2014). That is, because parental support and attachment are believed to support students’ transition to college, then help-seeking behaviors may be a proxy measurement of attachment. Holt (2014) hypothesized that help seeking is a behavior created by parental attachment prior to college. Thus, help-seeking behaviors may influence student transitions. Ultimately, the study found that help seeking was connected to improved self-ratings of academic adjustment at the end of the first year of college.

**Non-Academic Help Seeking**

There is ample research on non-academic forms of help seeking behaviors by college students. Primarily these studies examine help seeking in the context of mental health and counseling services. In these instances there are barriers to help seeking. Czyz et al. (2014) examined the help seeking of students at risk for suicide and found that
student perceptions that help was not needed, lack of time, and preference for self-help were the most common barriers to help seeking. Other barriers to help seeking include student’s recognition that help is needed, perceived benefits of help, and attitude towards being helped by others (Thomas, Caputi, & Wilson, 2014). A perceived lack of need for seeking professional mental health help is a common issue found in the literature, especially for male students (Hess & Tracey, 2013; Lowinger, 2011). However, barriers to help seeking can be overcome through educational interventions. Joyce and Weibelzahl (2011) also found that barriers to help seeking can be overcome through intrusive encouragement via technology.

**Differences in Help Seeking Behaviors**

Demographic variables such as ethnicity, gender, being low-income or the first in the family to attend college play a role in predicting student outcomes (Engle & Tinto, 2008). As the student population attending postsecondary education becomes increasingly diverse both economically and socially this can present challenges for institutions in understanding how students succeed. In fact, large achievement gaps exist for low-income students and students who are the first in their family to go to college compared to non-low income, non-first-generation students (Mortenson, 2012). While there are disparities in achievement based on socioeconomic status, there are also disparities among ethnicities. As of 2009, 58 percent of Asian Americans and 36 percent of Caucasians aged 25 to 29 held a bachelor’s degree (Kim, 2011). On the other hand, 18 percent of African Americans, 12 percent of Hispanics, and 10 percent of American Indians aged 25 to 29 held bachelor’s degrees (Kim, 2011).
Differences in academic help seeking behaviors across student characteristics are an understudied area of the topic. However, there are several studies examining these differences in college students for non-academic help such as counseling and health services. While these studies focus on a different aspect of help seeking they can be instructive in understanding the help seeking behaviors of students across individual characteristics. Several studies have examined differences in help seeking behaviors between students of various ethnicities with respect to psychological and counseling services (Bin Sheu & Sedlacek, 2004; Chiang, Hunter, & Yeh 2004; Davidson, Yakushka, & Sanford-Martens, 2004; Kearney, Draper, & Baron, 2005; Kuo, Kwantes, Townson, & Nanson, 2006). These studies found that there are differences in the likelihood of help seeking by students of various ethnicities. Specifically, students of underrepresented ethnic groups underutilize counseling services. White students on the other hand are shown to attend significantly more counseling sessions than other ethnic groups (Kearney et al., 2005). Further, Asian American and African American college students are less likely to know someone who has sought psychological help and more likely to have less favorable views of psychological help seeking (Masuda et al., 2009).

In addition to the actual use of services, students of underrepresented ethnicities also have different patterns of help seeking behavior such as only using formal help seeking for impersonal matters while preferring informal sources of personal matters (Bin Sheu & Sedlacek, 2004). One potential explanation for these behaviors is cultural congruity with the college or university setting (Gloria, Hird, & Navarro, 2001; Madni, 2008). Examining cultural congruity and help seeking behaviors, Gloria et al. (2001) suggested that white students were more likely to seek help than students from
underrepresented racial and ethnic groups due to a lack of cultural congruity with the institutional environment and help providers. Additionally, Volet and Karabenick (2006) present cultural variables as an important aspect of differences in help seeking behaviors.

Help seeking differences are not limited to racial, ethnic, and cultural differences however. Many studies consistently show differences in help seeking behaviors across genders (Alexitch, 2002; Benenson & Koulnazarian, 2008; Davies et al., 2000; Wimer, 2009). These gender differences begin in early childhood as shown by Benenson and Koulnazarian (2008) who studied three to six year old children and found that males had increased latency time in requesting help as compared to females. Wimer (2009) indicates in his study of college men that this help seeking avoidance may be due to gender roles, and that higher levels of conformity to masculine norms is associated with higher levels of help seeking avoidance. Other demographic variables are also related to help seeking. Verhasselt (2008) studied group differences in college students’ help seeking beliefs and found that less experienced students such as first-year students preferred executive style help seeking. Further, students with more demands on their time such as being married, commuting to campus, and working also were more likely to prefer executive to instrumental help.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature related to help seeking behavior in P-16 students with a particular focus on students in postsecondary education. The foundational ideas of academic help seeking were presented along with research that expanded on those concepts. Specific studies relating to the behaviors of P-12 students and postsecondary students were discussed along with the differences in behavior across
characteristics. This study contributes to the academic help seeking literature by examining students in a single land grant research university in the context of student success. Chapter III will present the methods that were employed in this study.
Chapter III: Methodology

Chapter II reviewed the literature related to academic help seeking. Chapter III will discuss the methods utilized in this study. The research questions are presented first followed by the design of the study. A quantitative design was used to study the academic help-seeking behaviors of first-year college students. A discussion of the key design components of the study including data collection, population and sample, instrumentation, variables to be analyzed, and data analysis procedures are included.

Research Questions

Although academic help seeking has been studied thoroughly, it often does not address the social and discipline domain functions of help seeking (Karabenick & Zusho, 2015). Additionally, help seeking studies in postsecondary settings have been limited to specific courses with homogenous student populations (Karabenick & Knapp, 1988; Karabenick, 2003, 2004). Very few studies included demographic and student characteristics in the analysis (Alexitch, 2002; Madni, 2008; Mcgee, 2005). Lastly, the examination of institutional support services as a source of academic help is extremely limited (Alexitch, 2002; R. Ames & Lau, 1982; Madni, 2008; Mcgee, 2005). The purpose of this study was to examine the differences among the academic help-seeking behaviors of first year-college students, their personal characteristics, and use of services.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. When groups are established using selected demographic variables, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?
2. When groups are established using reported use of an institutional academic support service are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?
   a. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the math center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?
   b. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the writing center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?
   c. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the tutoring center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?
   d. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of supplemental instruction, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

3. To what extent do the five help seeking constructs and the selected demographic variables predict the number of reported institutional academic support services used by each participant?
Study Design

Data Source

An existing survey database was utilized for the analysis in this study. The data was collected at a large land grant university in a western state during the spring 2015 term as a regular part of an annual survey administered by the Office of Student Persistence Research. The survey was distributed and collected in an online format during the first six weeks of the spring 2015 term. The purpose of survey research is to “provide a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2014, p.155). Creswell (2014) also states that in survey research the characteristics of a sample of a larger population can be determined in order to make generalizable inferences. The use of existing survey data is appropriate for this study because the research questions seek to analyze the help-seeking behaviors of first-year college students as distributed based on several variables. The survey data is cross-sectional because data was collected only during the spring 2015 term.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was all first-year college students at the aforementioned university, which totaled 3,223 students in spring 2015. The survey was administered online to the entire population during the spring 2015 term and obtained 736 responses for a response rate of 22.8%. All first-year students were invited to complete the survey through an email letter sent by the Office of Student Persistence Research. Follow-up emails were sent to students who did not respond at one-week intervals. The email invitation and follow-up emails included a personalized link for each
student to complete the survey online. The survey was open for a period of one month before closing.

**Instrumentation**

The instrumentation used to collect the existing data in this study provides important context for the methods. The data was collected using an online survey instrument, which assesses first-year college students’ transition to college, entitled the MAP-Works First-Year Spring Survey. This survey is owned by Skyfactor (formerly EBI MAP-Works) and is part of a larger system purchased by the institution in this study to improve student success by examining the factors that contribute to student retention (EBI MAP Works, 2014). Although the survey itself is proprietary, this study solely uses the survey system as a vehicle for delivering institutional specific questions on help seeking and to collect demographic information. To this end, the institutional committee included a modified set of 12 questions addressing five existing academic help-seeking scales developed by Karabenick (2003) to the regular spring 2015 administration of this survey. Only data from institutional questions and sources were analyzed in this study. Institutional questions were developed by student affairs professionals representing a cross-section of departments.

The 12 institutional questions were derived from Karabenick’s (2003) academic help seeking scales and were modified by the researcher for this survey. Karabenick’s (2003) language in the original scales was designed for survey administration in one specific class, so the researcher modified the questions to broaden the scope from a specific class to a hypothetical class. The modified academic help seeking scales that were included in this survey contain a total of 12 items and measure help-seeking goals
(instrumental versus executive), preferences for sources of help-seeking (informal versus formal), help-seeking threat, and help-seeking avoidance. Survey items are expressed as statements with one to five Likert-type response choices ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Questions asked students to express their agreement with help-seeking behaviors in hypothetical situations (e.g. If I were having trouble in a course I would prefer to ask a teacher rather than another student). Previous studies indicate that using student intentions and preferences for help seeking is an appropriate technique for measuring help-seeking behaviors (Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Karabenick, 2003, 2004).

Karabenick’s (2003) scales have acceptable construct validity in that Cronbach’s alpha is between .62 and .81 for each scale. Cronbach’s alpha assesses which items on an instrument are contributing to overall reliability of the instrument (Sprinthall, 2007). This level provides internal consistency of each scale to measure the overall construct of academic help seeking. Thus, reliability of the academic help seeking scales instrument used in this study has been established. However, these help seeking scales were designed to measure academic help seeking within a specific course context and were modified by the researcher to account for general academic help seeking situations a student may encounter. As a result, additional tests of reliability and validity were conducted on the data to ensure that Cronbach’s alpha levels remain consistent with Karebenick’s (2003) original scales. The full-modified academic help seeking scales are provided in the Appendix. All institutional questions that are included in the survey were reviewed and approved by an institutional committee of student affairs professionals. Therefore face validity of the survey was established.
Institutional Review Board and institutional consent to use the data in this study were obtained prior to the analysis. The researcher also obtained permission for data use from the institutional committee and administrator that manage the survey. The data contained several participant identifiers, which were removed by the institutional administrator prior to providing the data to the researcher. Therefore, all data analyzed in this study was confidential for the participants, and anonymous to the researcher.

Variables

Research question 1: When groups are established using selected demographic variables, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

The first question examines the differences among the help-seeking constructs measured in Karabenick’s (2003) scales and the identified student demographics. The dependent variables that were used in addressing question one were the scores on each of the help seeking scales: formal versus informal help, executive versus instrumental help, help avoidance, and threat. The independent variables were the student demographics, which for purposes of this study are:

- gender,
- ethnicity,
- socioeconomic status (SES),
- first-generation college student status,
- first semester GPA,
- SAT test score.
The variable SES was measured by whether or not a participant received a Pell Grant. Pell Grants are awarded to students with financial need and are based on expected family contribution and cost of attendance. According to the Pell Institute (2015) Pell Grant awards are typically awarded to low-income families. As a result Pell Grants can be used as an indicator of low-income, or SES, status. Participants receiving a Pell Grant were placed into a low-SES category while those not receiving a Pell Grant were placed into a high-SES category.

**Research question 2:** When groups are established using reported use of an institutional academic support service are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

a. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the math center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

b. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the writing center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

c. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the tutoring center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

d. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of supplemental instruction, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?
The second research question examined differences among the reported use of institutional academic support services and the five help seeking constructs. Additionally, question two examined if there were differences in this relationship by the four support services. These services included: a writing center, a math center, a general tutoring center, and course specific supplemental instruction. The reported use of several institutional academic support services were the dependent variables. Reported use of help seeking services is categorical due to the fact that survey participants indicated whether or not they had used each support services during the fall 2014 term. The scores of the help-seeking scales were the independent variables.

**Research question 3**: To what extent do the five help seeking constructs and the selected demographic variables predict the number of reported institutional academic support services used by each participant?

The third research question sought to determine if the help seeking constructs and demographic variables could create an exploratory model, which predicts reported number of academic support services used. To address this, scores on each of the five help-seeking scales (formal versus informal help, instrumental help, executive help avoidance, and threat) along with each of the demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, SES, first-generation college student status, first semester GPA, and ACT test score) were the independent variables. The dependent variables were the reported number of academic support services used by each survey respondent.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The data set was analyzed with both descriptive and inferential statistics. Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22 software was utilized to conduct all
data analysis for the study. The descriptive statistical analyses were conducted first and included computations of frequency, mean, median, range, interquartile range, skewness, kurtosis, and standard deviation for each variable. This analysis was done for the demographic variables first. The descriptive statistics were analyzed to determine if response rates are adequate for specific groups within the population. Because this study used grouping variables such as ethnicity and income level, the descriptive analysis is particularly important to ensure that there are enough cases in each group for further analysis. Grouping variables with unacceptable frequencies for further analysis, categories were collapsed or removed from the analysis. After the demographic variables were analyzed, descriptive analysis of the five help-seeking scales was conducted in order to identify the academic help-seeking behaviors of first-year college students. Descriptive statistics are also important to begin assessing normality, which is needed for further inferential tests.

**Research Question 1:** When groups are established using selected demographic variables, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

To address this research question six one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests were conducted. This is appropriate for this question because group differences are examined using multiple dependent variables (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013). In this case, the dependent variables in research question one are the quantitative scores of the five help seeking scales and the independent variables are the aforementioned categorical demographic variables. The demographic variables of gender, ethnicity, SES, first-generation status, GPA, and ACT test scores were used to establish groups. Based
upon the results of the initial descriptive statistical analysis each demographic variable was grouped. Tests of statistical assumptions were conducted prior to the MANOVA tests. Statistical assumptions for this test include independent observations within the sample, multivariate normality, homoscedasticity, and linear relationships between the dependent variables (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013). Box’s Test was used to test for homogeneity of variance.

Each of the six MANOVA tests were examined for significance. If a MANOVA test was significant for a demographic variable, post-hoc analysis was utilized to determine which of the five-help seeking scales were significantly different. For demographic variables containing two groups, post-hoc ANOVA tests were conducted to determine differences. Mean scores from the ANOVA were viewed for each group to examine which group differed for each scale. For demographic variables containing three or more groups, post-hoc analysis was carried out using Tukey’s HSD to determine mean differences and establish which groups had significant differences. If a MANOVA test was not significant for a variable, no further tests were conducted.

**Research Question 2:** When groups are established using reported use of an institutional academic support service are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

a. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the math center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?
b. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the writing center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

c. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the tutoring center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

d. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of supplemental instruction, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

To address research question two, two separate one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were conducted following the protocol for question one. The independent variables to address this question were the quantitative scores of the five help seeking scales and the dependent variables being the reported use of academic support services. The reported use of academic support services were grouped as either yes or no. Tests of statistical assumptions were again conducted prior to the MANOVA. If the MANOVA was significant, post-hoc ANOVA tests were conducted to determine specific differences. Mean scores from the ANOVA for the group that used services and for the group that did not use services were viewed to determine if groups differed for each help seeking scale.

Another MANOVA was conducted to answer question 2 a. by grouping use of academic service by the four services in the database. For example, one group was created for those that used the math center and another group for those that used the
writing center. If the MANOVA was significant, post-hoc analysis was carried out using Tukey’s HSD because there were four groups. The post-hoc analysis determined mean differences and established if groups had significant differences.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent do the five help seeking constructs and the selected demographic variables predict the number of reported institutional academic support services used by each participant?

Addressing question three required a different statistical test because the goal was to determine to what extent the demographic variables and five help seeking constructs could predict the use of an academic support service. An exploratory multiple regression was utilized to address this research question. This type of regression is appropriate for this situation because the goal is to predict values for a dependent variable based on a set of independent variables that are quantitative (Merlter & Vannatta, 2013). In this case, the categorical dependent variable was whether or not support services were used. The independent variables included both categorical and quantitative variables because the scores of the academic help-seeking scales along with the demographic variables were used.

Because categorical variables were employed in this regression analysis, they had to be recoded into binary form. Utilizing binary coding is an acceptable method of including categorical variables into regression analysis (Hardy, 1993). This type of coding is accomplished through the creation of dummy variables for each category in a categorical variable and assigning each a binary code (Hardy, 1993). By using dummy variables, categorical data can be included in a regression analysis and analyzed alongside continuous variables. This method is sensitive to outliers however, and care
must be utilized as there are several different methods of interpreting the results (Braun & Oswald, 2011; Hubert & Rousseeuw, 1997). This regression analysis method provided a method of exploring to what extent any of the help seeking constructs and selected demographic variables may predict whether or not students sought help from support services.

**Summary**

Chapter III examined the methodology of this study. The chapter introduced a proposed research study using a quantitative approach to investigate the academic help-seeking behaviors and differences among first-year college students. Research questions along with the research design to address these questions were discussed. Utilizing an existing database and appropriate statistical techniques this discussion shows that the research questions could be appropriately addressed using this design.
Chapter IV: Results

This chapter summarizes the findings of the present study. A discussion of data screening procedures precedes the presentation of descriptive statistics for demographic and help seeking variables. Statistical procedures and results are then presented for each research question.

Data Screening

Prior to conducting the primary analyses to address the research questions, data was screened and analyzed. The screening was conducted to establish a description of the sample while testing to ensure that statistical assumptions were met for the primary analyses. Data screening included analysis of missing data, univariate and multivariate outliers, normality, and descriptive statistics.

Missing Data

The original sample obtained by the researcher contained 736 cases, which were screened for missing data. Upon screening, it was determined that 44 cases indicated their ethnicity as nonresident/alien and all were missing SAT score. Because this ethnicity designation does not indicate a specific ethnicity and may include foreign nationals of many ethnicities, these 44 cases were removed from further analysis. A total of 95 cases had missing SAT scores and were removed. Further, 144 cases were removed from the data set due to no response or substantial missing data on the scales measuring help seeking behaviors. Finally, 11 cases were removed for missing data on parents’ education attainment, which was needed to analyze first-generation status. After removing missing data, 442 cases remained in the data set.
A common method for managing missing values requires deleting variables from analyses or replacing values with series means (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013). Due to the importance of each variable in addressing the research questions, deleting entire variables was not an acceptable method. Further, utilizing the mean of each variable as replacement values was not employed in this study due to the potential to reduce variance on a given variable. Given that so many missing values occurred in the help seeking scales, using series means may have increased the likelihood of a type II error. As a result, cases with missing data were removed from the data set.

**Outliers**

Using SPSS, the data was screened for univariate and multivariate outliers. A total of 46 outliers on the help seeking scales were identified. After thorough inspection, there was no discernible pattern among the outliers as they were distributed equitably among the demographic variables. The 46 univariate outliers were removed from the analyses. Multivariate outliers were examined using Mahalanobis’ distance statistic. Cases that exceeded the critical value were eliminated ($n = 2$). The reported sample size ($N = 394$) represents the actual number of cases used in the subsequent analyses.

**Normality**

Quantitative variables were examined for univariate and multivariate normality. Univariate normality tests were significant. However skewness and kurtosis statistics were smaller than ±1 on all variables. Multivariate normality was assessed using scatterplots (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013), which revealed some elliptical shapes. Although this method is subjective, MANOVA is robust to moderate violations of normality (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013) so the analysis proceeded without transformations.
Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Variables

Descriptive statistics for the demographic variables were analyzed. The gender variable had 234 (59.4%) females and 160 (40.6%) males. Ethnicity of the sample is shown in Table 1. Students identified as white represented 61.2% \((n = 241)\) of the sample while the remaining 38.8% \((n = 153)\) identified as non-white ethnicities. This representation is similar to that of the institution, which reports that students of non-white ethnicities represent 34.6% of the student population (University of Nevada, Reno 2015). Ethnicity of the sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>08.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic of Any Race</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>06.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>04.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>00.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The SAT scores of students in the sample ranged from 670 to 1540, with a mean score of 1095.02 \((SD = 148.76)\). First-Semester GPA for the participants in the sample
ranged from 0.0 to 4.0 with a Mean GPA of 3.06 ($SD = .91$). Summary statistics for SAT scores and GPA from the sample are presented in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Summary Statistics of GPA and SAT Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAT Score</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>1540</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>1095.02</td>
<td>148.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 195 (49.5 %) participants in the sample were identified as first-generation college students with the remaining 199 (50.5 %) identified as not first-generation college students. For the socioeconomic status variable 288 (73 %) participants were identified as not from a low-socioeconomic background based on not receiving a Pell Grant. The remaining 106 (27 %) participants in the sample were identified as coming from a low-socioeconomic background.

**Help Seeking Scales**

Items for each of the help seeking scales were scored using a Likert scale with each response scoring between one and seven. Students rated their agreement with the help seeking behavior described in each question thereby reporting their intentions to exhibit the behavior if they encountered a similar situation. A response of strongly disagree was given a score of one while a response of strongly agree was scored as a seven. This scoring method was done for question items on each of the five help seeking construct scales: instrumental help, executive help, help seeking threat, help avoidance,
and formal versus informal help. Once all items were scored, a total for each scale was computed by summing the responses of question items in that scale.

The scales were constructed so that higher scores on each scale indicate greater intentions to exhibit the behavior measured by that particular scale. For example, a low score on the executive help seeking scale would indicate that the participant would not employ executive help seeking behaviors when confronted with a help-seeking situation. A high score on the executive scale would indicate high level of intention for executive help seeking behaviors. The scale for formal help versus informal help is slightly different. A low score indicates agreement with informal help seeking behaviors while a high score indicates agreement with formal help seeking behaviors.

The scales for instrumental, executive, and formal versus informal help included two items and had a possible maximum score of 14. The help threat and avoidance scales included three items with a possible maximum score of 21. The instrumental help seeking scale had a mean score of 11.31 with scores ranging from seven to 14 out of a possible 14. The mean score on the executive help seeking scale was 5.57 with scores ranging from two to 14 out of a possible 14. Scores on the help seeking threat scale ranges from three to 17 out of a possible 21 with a mean score of 7.49. Help avoidance included scale scores ranging from three to 15 out of a possible 21 with a mean score of 6.72. The scale for formal versus informal help had a mean score of 7.71 with scores ranging from two to 13 out of a possible 14. Table 3 presents summary statistics for the five help seeking construct scales including actual minimum and maximum scores in the sample.

Additionally, Cronbach’s Alpha was computed for each scale using SPSS. Values for Cronbach’s Alpha on the help-seeking scales ranged from .63 to .88. Values in this
range are acceptable, especially given the small number of items on each scale. Table 3 presents the results of reliability analysis by including Cronbach’s Alpha values.

Table 3  
*Summary Statistics for Help-Seeking Construct Scales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th># Items</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7/14</td>
<td>14/14</td>
<td>11.31</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>14/14</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>17/21</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>15/21</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Vs. Informal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>13/14</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Institutional Support Service Use**

Of the participants in the sample, 229 (58 %) reported that they had utilized at least one of the institutional academic support services included in this study. The remaining 165 (42 %) participants reported that they had not used any of the services. Of those who reported that they had used a service, the mean number of distinct services used was 1.69 ($SD = .90$). The math center was the most used center followed by the writing center and supplemental instruction. The least used service was the tutoring center. A frequency count of service use by the math center, writing center, supplemental instruction, and tutoring center along with the percentage of users who used each service is included in Table 4. Note that the frequency count of service use in Table 4 is duplicated.
Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were utilized to analyze relationships among the variables. Several variables were significantly correlated and positively related. Measures of GPA and SAT Score \((r = .273, p < .01)\) as well as Instrumental score and GPA \((r = .166, p < .01)\) and the number of services used and instrumental score \((r = .105, p < .05)\) were positively and significantly related. Therefore, positive help seeking behaviors (instrumental) were related to positive academic performance and service use. However, the percent of explained variance for these relationships were relatively low.

In terms of negative help seeking behaviors, threat score and executive score \((r = .266, p < .01)\), and executive score and avoid score \((r = .232, p < .01)\) had significant positive relationships. The variables with greatest positive and significant relationship were threat score and avoid score \((r = .680, p < .01)\). These two help seeking constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th># Used</th>
<th>% Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>229</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

Summary of Institutional Academic Support Service Use
were highly related with 46 percent of the variance in the variables being accounted for.

The negative help seeking constructs (executive, threat, and avoidance) were all positively related. This demonstrated that negative behaviors across all constructs increased in conjunction with one another.

A number of variables had significant inverse relationships. The two opposite help seeking styles (executive and instrumental) were negatively related \((r = -.191, p < .001)\). Again, negative help seeking behaviors were at negatively related with academic performance, positive instrumental help seeking, and service use. In terms of academic performance, executive score and GPA \((r = -.156, p < .01)\), threat score and GPA \((r = -.115, p < .05)\), and avoid score and GPA \((r = -.221, p < .01)\) were all inversely related. These significant correlations between negative help seeking behaviors and GPA indicate negative outcomes for those students with preferences for executive help, feelings of threat, and help avoidance. These correlation results indicated that as GPA values went up negative help seeking behaviors went down.

For the help seeking constructs, threat score and instrumental score \((r = -.437, p < .01)\), avoid score and instrumental score \((r = -.511, p < .01)\) were related. Correlations between instrumental help and threat and avoidance show that high levels of threat and avoidance are at odds with a preference for positive instrumental help seeking. Lastly, avoid score and services used \((r = -.111, p < .01)\) were related, which reveals that being help avoidant relates to a reduction in service use. Overall, many of the variables were significantly correlated, however, many of the correlations accounted for a small amount of the variance in these relationships. A correlation matrix of the continuous demographic variables, Help Seeking Construct Scales, and services used is displayed in Table 5.
Table 5

*Correlations of Continuous Demographic Variables, Five Help Seeking Construct Scales, and Services Used*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>SAT Score</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Instrumental Score</th>
<th>Executive Score</th>
<th>Threat Score</th>
<th>Avoid Score</th>
<th>Formal Vs. Informal Score</th>
<th>Services used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SAT Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. GPA</td>
<td>.273**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Instrumental Score</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>.166**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Executive Score</td>
<td>-.034</td>
<td>-.156**</td>
<td>-.191**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Threat Score</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>-.115*</td>
<td>-.437**</td>
<td>.266**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Avoid Score</td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>-.221**</td>
<td>-.511**</td>
<td>.232**</td>
<td>.680**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Formal Vs. Informal Score</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>-.028</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>-.090</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Services Used</td>
<td>-.093</td>
<td>-.044</td>
<td>.105*</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>-.094</td>
<td>-.111*</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .05^{*}$

*N = 394*
Analysis by Research Question

Research Question 1: When groups are established using selected demographic variables, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

Six one-way multivariate analysis of variance tests were conducted to address Research Question 1. The first one-way MANOVA was conducted with gender as the independent variable and the five Help Seeking Construct Scales as the dependent variables. The test was conducted following the data screening techniques previously described in this chapter. The variable gender established two groups, male and female. The MANOVA results revealed no significant differences among the two groups based on the dependent variables of instrumental help, executive help, help seeking threat, help avoidance, and formal versus informal help [Wilks’ $\Lambda = .979$, $F(5, 388) = 1.64$, $p = .148$, $\eta^2 = .021$]. That is, the male and female groups did not significantly differ in their help-seeking behaviors. Table 6 presents a summary of group means and standard deviations of the dependent variables.
Table 6

*Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Help-Seeking Constructs Grouped by Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help Seeking Constructs</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Form/inform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>11.17</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>11.40</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine if there were group differences by ethnicity based on the five Help seeking Construct Scales. Due to low frequencies in many of the ethnicity categories, the categories were collapsed into two groups to create more equal sample sizes among the groups. The categories were collapsed into one group comprised of participants identifying as “White” and one group labeled “underrepresented” that included participants who identified as Black or African American, Hispanic of any race, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or two or more races. The MANOVA results revealed no significant differences among the two groups [Wilks’ Λ = .984 $F(5, 388) = 1.5243$, $p = .288$ $\eta^2 = .016$]. The results of the analyses reveal that the White group and Underrepresented group did not significantly in their help-seeking behaviors. Table 7 displays a summary of means and standard deviations for the five Help Seeking
Construct Scales grouped by the two ethnicity groups. For purposes of this table, the underrepresented group is labeled “non-white”.

Table 7
*Summary Means and Standard Deviations for Help-Seeking Constructs Grouped by Ethnicity Grouping*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>11.37</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A third one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine if there were SAT score differences in the five Help Seeking Construct-Scales. Prior to the test, SAT scores for Critical Reading and Math were combined to obtain a score on a 510-1600 scale. The scores were then divided into three roughly equal groups for use in the MANOVA test. A low SAT score group representing the bottom third of scores in the sample was established with a range from 670 through 1027. A mid SAT score group representing the middle third of scores from the sample was established with a score range of 1028 through 1160. A high SAT score group representing the top third of scores in the sample was established using a score range of 1161 through 1540. The MANOVA results revealed no significant differences in the SAT score groups based on the dependent variables of the Help Seeking Construct Scales [Wilks’ $\Lambda = .990 F(10, 774) = .400, p =$]
.947 \eta^2 = .005]. Therefore, low range, medium range, and high range SAT score groups did not significantly differ in their help seeking behaviors. Table 8 presents a summary of means and standard deviations for the Help Seeking Construct Scales grouped by SAT score category.

Table 8

*Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Help Seeking Constructs Grouped by SAT Score Category*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help Seeking Constructs</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Form/inform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT Score</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>11.37</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>11.24</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A fourth one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine if there were first-semester GPA differences in the five help seeking construct scales. Prior to the MANOVA test, GPA scores were grouped into score groups. A low GPA group was established using the bottom third of GPA’s in the sample which represents GPA’s ranging from 0 through 2.950. A mid GPA group was established using the middle third of GPA’s in the sample representing GPA’s ranging from 2.951 through 3.5933. A high GPA group was established using the top third of GPAs in the sample, which represents GPAs ranging from 3.594 through 4.0.
The MANOVA results indicated significant differences among the GPA groups based on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales [Wilks’ Λ = .937, \(F(10, 774) = 2.56, p = .005, \eta^2 = .032\)]. Post-Hoc analysis using ANOVA was conducted for each help seeking scale because the MANOVA test was significant. ANOVA for Executive help indicated that GPA groups were significantly different for executive help [\(F(2, 391) = 3.384, p < .05, \eta^2 = .017\)]. The variable GPA included three groups; therefore additional post hoc analysis was required. Tukey HSD post-hoc analysis was then conducted and revealed that executive help scale scores for the low GPA group significantly differed from scores for the high GPA group.

The ANOVA for Help Avoidance also returned significant group differences for help avoidance [\(F(2, 391) = 9.126, p < .001, \eta^2 = .045\)]. Tukey HSD post-hoc analysis was then conducted and revealed help avoidance scale scores for the low and mid GPA groups significantly differed from the high GPA group while avoidance scale scores for the low GPA group did not significantly differ from the mid GPA group.

The ANOVA for Instrumental Help had no significant group differences [\(F(2, 391) = 2.691, p = .069, \eta^2 = .014\)]. The ANOVA for help-seeking Threat had no significant group differences [\(F(2, 391) = 2.071, p = .127, \eta^2 = .010\)]. The ANOVA for Formal versus Informal Help also had no significant group differences [\(F(2, 391) = 1.563, p = .261, \eta^2 = .008\)]. Table 9 presents a summary of means and standard deviations for the Help Seeking Construct Scales by GPA group.
Table 9

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Help Seeking Constructs by GPA Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Form/inform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>11.02</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>11.33</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A fifth one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine if group differences existed in the five Help Seeking Construct Scales by first-generation college student status. Two groups were established using the first-generation college student definition described in Chapter III. The MANOVA results indicated no significant differences among the first-generation and not first-generation groups based on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales [Wilks’ $\Lambda = .989$, $F(5, 388) = .856$, $p = .518$, $\eta^2 = .011$]. These results demonstrated that help seeking behaviors were no different for the first-generation group compared to the not first-generation group. Table 10 displays a summary of means and standard deviations for each Help Seeking Construct Scale by first-generation and not first-generation status groups.
Table 10

*Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Help Seeking Constructs Grouped by First-Generation Status*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help Seeking Constructs</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Form/inform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Generation Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>11.32</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final test to address research question one was a sixth one-way MANOVA to explore if group differences existed among groups based on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales when groups were established by socioeconomic status. A low SES group was established by identifying students eligible for a Pell Grant while a not low SES group was established by all students in the sample who were not eligible for a Pell Grant. The MANOVA results revealed no significant differences among the low and not low SES groups based on the Help Seeking Construct Scales [Wilks’ $\Lambda = .997$, $F(5, 388) = .256, p = .937, \eta^2 = .003$]. Results from this analysis indicate that help seeking behaviors do not differ for the low SES group when compared to the not low SES group. Table 11 presents a summary of means and standard deviations for the Help Seeking Construct Scales by socioeconomic status groups. For purposes of this table Other was used to represent the not low SES group.
Research Question 2: When groups are established using reported use of an institutional academic support service are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

To address research question two, a one-way MANOVA was conducted to examine if differences existed among groups based on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales among those who used an academic support service and those who did not. A service use grouping variable was established from the data. One group included participants who reported the use of either the math center, writing center, supplemental instruction, or tutoring center. A second group included all those participants who did not report using any of the aforementioned academic support services. The MANOVA was conducted using the two service use groups as the independent variable with the Help Seeking Construct Scales being the dependent variables. The MANOVA results showed
that there was no significant difference among the service use group and the non-service use group on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales [Wilks’ $\Lambda = .988$, $F(5, 388) = .971$, $p = .435$, $\eta^2 = .012$]. Thus, no statistically significant differences were found based on the help seeking behaviors of the service use group compared to the non-service use group.

Table 12 displays a summary of means and standard deviations for the help seeking scales grouped by academic support service use and non-use.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help Seeking Constructs</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Form/inform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>11.17</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>11.41</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 2a.** When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the math center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

A one-way MANOVA test was conducted to determine if differences among groups were present based on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales among help seekers.
who used the math center and those who did not. For purposes of this test, all participants who did not report using at least one service were removed from the analysis. As a result, this analysis consisted of 229 cases. Groups were established by service users who had used the math center and service users who did not use the math center. The MANOVA results indicated no significant group differences based on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales among the group who used the math center and the group who did not [Wilks’ Λ = .982, $F(5, 223) = .808, p = .545$, $η^2 = .018$]. Table 13 presents a summary of means and standard deviations for the five Help Seeking Construct Scales grouped by use and non-use of the math center.

Table 13

*Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Help Seeking Constructs Grouped by Math Center Use*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help Seeking Constructs</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Form/inform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>11.28</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>11.50</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 2b.** When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the writing center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of
academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

A one-way MANOVA test was conducted to determine if there were group differences based on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales among help-seekers who used the writing center and those who did not. For purposes of this test, all participants who did not report using at least one service were removed from the analysis. As a result, this analysis consisted 229 cases. Groups were established by service users who reported utilizing the writing center and those who did not report using the writing center. The MANOVA results indicated no significant group differences based on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales among the group who used the writing center and group who did not [Wilks’ Λ = .995, F(5, 223) = .221, p = .953, η² = .005]. Table 14 presents a summary of means and standard deviations for the five help seeking construct scales grouped by use and non-use of the writing center.
Table 14

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Help Seeking Constructs Grouped by Writing Center Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help Seeking Constructs</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Form/inform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Use</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>11.42</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>11.39</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 2c.** When groups are established by reported use or non-use of the tutoring center, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

A one-way MANOVA test was conducted to determine if there were group differences based on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales among help-seekers who used the tutoring center and those who did not. For purposes of this test, all participants who did not report using at least one service were removed from the analysis. As a result, this analysis consisted of 229 cases. The two groups for this analysis were established by all service users who reported using the tutoring center and all service users who did not report using the tutoring center. The MANOVA results indicated no significant differences based on the five help seeking construct scales among the group who used the
tutoring center and the group who did not [Wilks’ $\Lambda = .985, F(5, 223) = .694, p = .629, \eta^2 = .015$]. Table 15 presents a summary of means and standard deviations for the five help seeking construct scales grouped by use and non-use of the tutoring center.

Table 15

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Help Seeking Constructs Grouped by Tutoring Center Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help Seeking Constructs</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Form/inform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring Use</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>11.41</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>11.40</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2d. When groups are established by reported use or non-use of supplemental instruction, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

A one-way MANOVA test was conducted to determine if group differences existed based on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales among help-seekers who used supplemental instruction and those who did not. For purposes of this test, all participants who did not report using at least one service were removed from the analysis. As a result, this analysis consisted of 229 cases. Groups for this analysis were established by one
group that had reported using supplemental instruction and one group who did not report using supplemental instruction. The MANOVA results indicated no significant differences based on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales among the group who used supplemental instruction and the group who did not [Wilks’ Λ = .959, $F(5, 223) = 1.89$, $p = .097$, $η^2 = .041$]. Table 16 presents a summary of means and standard deviations for the five Help Seeking Construct Scales grouped by use and non-use of supplemental instruction.

Table 16

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Help Seeking Constructs Grouped by SI Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help Seeking Constructs</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Form/inform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI Use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>11.86</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 3:** To what extent do the five help seeking constructs and the selected demographic variables predict the number of reported institutional academic support services used by each participant?

Exploratory multiple regression was utilized to address research question three. Prior to the analyses, the categorical demographic variables were coded as dummy
variables so that they could be included in the analyses (Hardy, 1993). The dummy variable coding technique resulted in each of the categorical variables of gender, ethnicity group, first-generation status, and socioeconomic status to be coded as either a one or a zero. For example, each student’s gender was coded as a one for female or a 0 for male. Unlike the MANOVA analyses previously described, GPA and SAT scores were not grouped and instead raw scores were used in the regression analyses.

Next, the regression was conducted using a stepwise method where each variable is entered into the model; only the combination for variables resulting in a significant model were included in the regression equation. Tolerance statistics for each variable were reviewed to ensure no issues with multicollinearity and no issues were found as all values were greater than .1. Regression results indicated an overall model with two predictors (SAT Score and Help Seeking Avoidance Score) that significantly predict the number of different academic support services used \( [R^2 = .022, R^2_{adj} = .017, F(2, 391) = 4.42, p < .05] \). With two variables this model accounted for only 2% of the variance in the number of different academic support services used. Table 17 presents the model summaries for the regression.

Table 17

Regression Model Summaries for Dependent Variable Number of Services Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>( R )</th>
<th>( R^2 )</th>
<th>( R^2_{adj} )</th>
<th>( \Delta R^2 )</th>
<th>( F_{chg} )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
<th>df(_1)</th>
<th>df(_2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Avoid Score(^a)</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SAT Score(^b)</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More specifically, beta coefficients indicated that both SAT Score ($\beta = -.099$) and Help Seeking Avoidance Score ($\beta = -.116$) were negative. Thus, the regression equation can be interpreted to show that a slightly lower level of help avoidance and lower SAT score predict a greater number of services used for the students included in this study. Table 18 presents the coefficients for the significant regression models that predicted the number of services used.

Table 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>Bivariate $r$</th>
<th>Partial $r$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Avoid Score</td>
<td>-.040</td>
<td>-.111</td>
<td>-2.21</td>
<td>-.111</td>
<td>-.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Avoid Score</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>-2.32</td>
<td>-.111</td>
<td>-.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT Score</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>-.099</td>
<td>-1.98</td>
<td>-.093</td>
<td>-.099</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Analyses

In addition, GPA was meaningful in this research study as group differences on the five Help Seeking Construct Scales by GPA group were found. It was determined that further analysis was warranted on GPA. After the analyses were conducted to address the research questions, an additional regression analysis was utilized to further examine GPA in relation to help seeking. For this regression, raw first-semester GPA was used as the dependent variable while all Help Seeking Construct Scale scores, demographic variables, and the number of support services used were entered as the independent variables.
A stepwise method was used and the regression test was conducted. Tolerance statistics for each variable were reviewed to ensure no issues with multicollinearity. No issued with multicollinearity were found. Regression results indicate an overall model of three predictors (SAT Score, Gender, and Help Seeking Avoidance Score) that significantly predict the number of different academic support services used \([R^2 = .162, R^2_{adj} = .037, F(1, 392)= 17.34, p < .001]\). With three variables this model accounted for 16.2% of the variance of GPA. Due to the dummy coding procedure used, males were used as the reference group while females were included in the equation directly. That is, gender in the results refers to the predictive value of being female. Table 19 presents the model summaries for the regression.

Table 19

Regression Model Summaries for Dependent Variable GPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>(R^2)</th>
<th>(R^2_{adj})</th>
<th>(\Delta R^2)</th>
<th>(F_{chg})</th>
<th>(p)</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SAT Score(a)</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>31.66</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SAT Score(b)</td>
<td>.353</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>22.23</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. SAT Score(c)</td>
<td>.402</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>17.34</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examination of beta coefficients indicated that SAT score (\(\beta = .278\)) and gender (\(\beta = .212\)) had positive values in the predictive regression equation. Avoid score
\( (\beta = -0.194) \) had a negative value. The coefficient values demonstrated that increasing SAT scores, being female, and decreasing levels of avoidance predicted GPA for participants in this study.

Table 20

*Coefficients for Significant Models Predicting GPA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>Bivariate ( r )</th>
<th>Partial ( r )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SAT Score</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SAT Score Gender</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.416</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>.203</td>
<td>.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. SAT Score Gender Avoid</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.278</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Avoid Score</td>
<td>.394</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.203</td>
<td>.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid Score</td>
<td>-.059</td>
<td>-.194</td>
<td>-4.16</td>
<td>-.221</td>
<td>-.206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

This chapter presented the results of the study including descriptive statistics and quantitative results related to each research question. For research question 1 group differences in the help seeking scales were significant only for GPA on executive and help avoidance. In addressing research question two, group differences in the help seeking scales were not significant by service use or specific services. Research question three examined the number of services used and found that help avoidance and SAT score were the only predictive variables. Lastly, an additional regression analysis found that SAT score, gender, and help avoidance score predicted GPA. Chapter V will discuss the findings of the study in greater detail.
Chapter V: Discussion

Chapter IV provided a detailed presentation of the quantitative findings of the study. Chapter V presents a discussion of the results of the study. A summary of the study and findings is presented followed by a discussion of the implications and insights as they relate to the research literature. Further, limitations and recommendations for future research and practice are presented to provide researchers and professionals with information gained from this study in order to better assist students and conduct research on academic help seeking.

Summary of the Study

This study sought to quantitatively examine existing data from a single institution to analyze the academic help seeking behaviors of first-year college students and identify any differences in those behaviors based on several demographic variables. The research literature presents evidence that demographic differences in help seeking behaviors exist but had not been thoroughly studied at the postsecondary education level. This study contributes to the literature by focusing on students in a postsecondary setting. Utilizing the help seeking constructs identified in the literature and scales developed by Karabenick (2003, 2004) three primary research questions were developed for this study:

Research Question One

When groups are established using selected demographic variables, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?
Research Question Two

When groups are established by reported use or non-use of services, are there differences among groups based on the five constructs of academic help seeking: formal versus informal, executive, instrumental, avoidance, and threat?

Research Question Three

To what extent do the five help seeking constructs and the selected demographic variables predict the number of reported institutional academic support services used by each participant?

To address the research questions, existing data from the Spring 2015 semester of 394 first-year students at the University of Nevada, Reno was utilized. Demographic variables included gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and first-generation college student status. Other variables included first-semester GPA, SAT score, academic support services used, and scores for each of the five help seeking scales developed by Karabenick (2003, 2004): formal or informal help, instrumental help, executive help, help seeking threat, and help avoidance. Descriptive and multivariate statistics were employed for the data analysis including MANOVA and stepwise multiple regression.

Discussion of the Findings

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis indicated several significant findings. First, instrumental help seeking had positive relationships to GPA and the number of services used. This corroborates the literature, which describes instrumental help seeking as a positive academic behavior (Nelson-Le Gall, 1985, 1986). While a causal relationship is not
established by this study, the positive relationship between these variables provides evidence for the positive nature of help seeking.

Another significant finding from the correlation analysis is that the negative help seeking constructs were all positively related including executive help, help seeking threat, and avoidance. Additionally, the negative constructs had an inverse relationship to GPA. Again this does not infer causation but the relationships among the negative help seeking constructs and their inverse relationship to GPA reveal a connection between academic performance and negative help seeking behaviors.

Lastly, the correlation analysis results demonstrated the interrelationships and dichotomies of the help seeking constructs as have been discussed in the literature (Nelson-Le Gall, 1985, 1986; Karabenick, 2003, 2004). The negative constructs were related, as were the positive constructs. Additionally, dichotomous constructs such as executive and instrumental help were inversely related, which was to be expected. Lastly, it is important to note that many of the correlations accounted for a small percentage of the variance.

**Research Question One**

The results from the six MANOVA tests used to address research question one revealed no significant differences among five of the six demographic variables on Karabenicks’s (2003, 2004) five help seeking construct scales. Therefore, statistically similar help seeking behaviors by gender, race, socioeconomic status, first-generation status, and SAT score groups were found.

However, there were differences among GPA groups based on the help seeking scales. More specifically, there were differences for executive help seeking and help
avoidance. This finding showed that those students with low GPA’s had higher levels of executive style help seeking than students with high GPAs. In terms of help avoidance, students with low (less than 2.5) and medium (2.5-3.593) GPAs reported higher levels of help avoidance behaviors than students with high GPAs (above 3.594).

The finding that help seeking behaviors did not differ by demographics, except GPA, is interesting when considering the literature. Alexitch (2002) noted differences in help seeking by gender, but this was not found in this study. Although no differences by race were found in this study, several studies have noted differences in help seeking behaviors for college students by race (Bin Sheu & Sedlacek, 2004; Kearney, Draper, & Baron, 2005; Kuo, Kwantes, Townson, & Nanson, 2006). However, these studies focused primarily on psychological help seeking. Madni (2008) found differences by race in reported service use but did not employ the same help seeking constructs as this study. Therefore, this study neither corroborates nor contradicts the limited research on academic help seeking by race.

The examination of first-generation and socioeconomic status as it relates to help seeking of college students was a concept not found in the literature. This study resulted in no difference in these groups’ behaviors. No differences in the demographic categories included in this study may be related to the idea that help seeking behaviors are developed by students earlier in the educational system (Ryan et al., 2011). Additionally, help seeking behaviors of college students may be the result of other factors that are not influenced by socially constructed demographic categories.

The finding that help seeking behaviors differ by GPA groups appears to be consistent with literature. Because help avoidance and executive style help seeking are
viewed as negative academic behaviors (Nelson-Le Gall, 1985) it is consistent with the literature that students exhibiting higher levels of these behaviors would have lower academic outcomes such as those found in this study. Interestingly, positive instrumental help seeking behaviors did not differ by GPA, which appears to indicate that this type of behavior may not necessarily improve outcomes. Another point to consider is the chronological process behind the relationship between help avoidance and GPA. The help seeking behavior measures were taken after the first semester GPA had been established. Because of this, it is plausible that the reported help avoidance behaviors may be a result of low academic performance. On the other hand it is plausible that help avoidance contributed to low academic performance. Neither of these notions were established by the results of the study.

**Research Question Two**

The MANOVA tests to address research question two also yielded no significant differences. Users and non-users of academic support services were found to exhibit statistically similar behaviors with respect to the five help seeking constructs of instrumental help, executive help, threat, avoidance and formal versus informal help. This finding revealed that the students seemed to use or not use services regardless of their help seeking preferences. Some students with reported preferences for instrumental help seeking with low threat and avoidance did not use services. On the other hand, some students with high levels of threat and avoidance did use services. These findings point to other potential barriers to seeking help not that were not measured by the help seeking constructs used in this study.
Karabenick’s (2003, 2004) studies indicated that the help seeking scale items were developed to measure help seeking behaviors by using intentions for help seeking under hypothetical scenarios. This type of measurement on the scales did not translate into actual reported service use for the participants in this study. Contrary to the literature (Karabenick 2003, 2004), survey measures of preferences for help seeking may not be indicative of actual academic help seeking behaviors of students in postsecondary settings.

Lastly, there were no differences in the help seeking constructs by the different support services. As a result, students of all types of help seeking preferences and attitudes used each service. This finding confirms that seeking help for a given service is not a product of the help seeking constructs used in this study.

**Research Question Three**

Help avoidance score and SAT were the only predictors of the number of services used by students in this study. However, the statistical model created in this study accounted for a very small variance in the number of services used. In the predictive model, the number of different services used increases as avoidance score goes down. Thus, students who are less avoidant of help will use slightly more services. Interestingly, SAT score was significant in this model with a negative coefficient. Although the coefficient was very small in the regression equation, it seems to indicate that students who seek help from more services have slightly lower SAT scores. This analysis showed that the help seeking constructs and demographics are not highly efficient in predicting service use.
Other Analyses

An additional regression was conducted beyond the scope of the research questions to examine the variables’ role in predicting GPA. Because differences in the help seeking constructs were found by GPA, the researcher wanted to explore help seeking’s predictive qualities for academic outcomes. This regression resulted in significant models predicting GPA with the variables SAT score, gender, and help avoidance. This significant model accounted for 16.2% of the variance, which like the regression in question three, is a not a large amount of the variance. However, these results reveal that higher SAT scores are predictive of higher GPA’s. This is consistent with the SAT’s purpose in providing an admissions benchmark for future academic success potential.

The finding that gender predicted GPA is also consistent with the literature, which indicates that females generally have a small advantage in GPA over males (Voyer & Voyer, 2014). Because Hardy’s (1993) methods of regression using dummy variables were employed, interpretation of this finding must be done carefully. Males were used as the reference group in the dummy variable coding. Therefore, when interpreting this variable in the regression output, the model indicates that being female is predictive of GPA.

Help avoidance score was once again found to be a predictive variable. In this regression model, lower levels of avoidance predict higher GPA’s. Therefore, being avoidant of help clearly has a predictive relationship to academic performance and service use. However, due to the nature of this study it is unclear if performance
decreases because students did not seek help or if they developed avoidant attitudes about help because of poor first-semester academic performance.

**Implications for Practice**

The results of this study have several implications for practice. First and foremost, academic support services should be prepared to serve all students regardless of academic performance and demographics. Because there were no differences by demographics such as first-generation, race, socioeconomic status, and gender, services should provide help in a way that is inclusive of all students. Additionally, services are utilized by students at all levels of academic performance, meaning that services will need to prepare supports for various academic ability levels.

This study suggests that being avoidant of help is related to lower GPA. Services may want to promote service use by normalizing help seeking as a behavior of successful students. Further it may be emphasized by services that students of all ability levels should be open to seeking help as a means to improving academic outcomes. Because students who were more avoidant of help had lower GPA’s, it is imperative that services conduct outreach to academically struggling students. Perhaps early alert systems (Jayaprakash, Moody, Lauría, Regan, & Baron, 2014) or other institutional mechanisms can be used to intrusively encourage the use of academic support services and combat help avoidance.

Lastly, the study demonstrates a need for greater institutional examination of help seeking. The help seeking constructs used in this study are largely psychological in nature. The fact that no differences among the constructs existed for support service users and non-users reveals that psychological attitudes about help seeking are only partial
determinants of service use at best. Additional systemic, social, or other barriers likely exist for students when seeking help (Davies et al., 2000; Joyce & Weibelzahl, 2011; Madni, 2008). As Verhasselt’s (2008) dissertation notes, surveys of preferences for seeking help may be improved by including data points beyond the five help seeking construct scales to include other barriers. Students may perceive barriers to help in the form of availability of services, scheduling, location, and others. Practitioners may find it useful to do a self-audit of barriers to service use while also conducting further study and assessment of students’ perceived and real barriers to service use.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This study resulted in limitations and findings that warrant further research. This study utilized existing data, which limited the ability to include additional questions regarding help seeking beyond the five help seeking constructs and reported service use. These items, along with the demographics, did not account for much of the variance in service use. Expanded survey research on help seeking in postsecondary settings may seek to include additional questions regarding goal orientations and perceived barriers to develop a richer data set for analysis.

The finding that group differences in GPA exist among the help seeking scales presents possibilities for further analysis. The GPA used in this study was from participants’ first-semester while responses to the help seeking scales were collected during their second semester. Further analysis may attempt to address whether responses to the help seeking behavior scales were impacted by a low first-semester GPA or if a low GPA is the result of certain attitudes towards help seeking. In other words, do help
seeking behaviors result in low GPA or do low GPA measures result in negative attitudes towards seeking help in the future?

Although Karabenick (2003, 2004) has conducted previous research using the help seeking scales included in this study, future research may refine this instrument. The present study found that there were no differences in reported use of academic support services by the scales. This indicates that participants in this study who reported being highly apt to seek help and those who reported being highly avoidant of help sought help at roughly the same rate. It is hypothesized that the scales may require additional items to develop a more nuanced picture of help seeking behaviors. Additionally, social desirability bias (Fisher, 1993) should be examined with respect to the language in the instrument to ensure that items do not indicate a bias towards positive or negative help seeking behaviors. Additional variables may also be considered for future survey research. Variables such as students’ locus of control, stereotype threat, and academic major all may provide additional insight into academic help seeking.

Future research should also take into account reported or actual instances of help seeking in addition to the scales. The scales in this study measure intentions to seek help under given scenarios and this study also included self-reported use of services. However, continued examination of the relationship between help seeking beliefs and intentions may provide useful insights for academic support professionals.

Lastly, further research addressing how and why students seek academic help in postsecondary settings would provide an important contribution to the research on the topic. Makara and Karabenick (2013) discuss a need for qualitative and mixed-methods research on academic help seeking due to a dearth of studies employing these
methodologies. The present study supports this need because the results signify that help-seeking behaviors are far more complex than the five help seeking constructs and demographics included in this study. Qualitative research of academic help seeking behaviors and attitudes would provide a deeper understanding and context for the previous literature, which is primarily quantitative in nature. Additionally, this study raises many questions that cannot be addressed through quantitative analysis. Understanding students’ lived experiences with seeking academic help in postsecondary settings, as well as how these experiences were shaped by primary and secondary education experiences, would further the literature on academic help seeking.

Conclusion

The present study examined academic help seeking of first-year students in a postsecondary setting. Findings suggest that students with a low first-semester GPA preferred executive style academic help seeking and were more avoidant of help than students with a high first-semester GPA. There were no differences in help seeking preferences among users and non-users of services in general and by the available academic support services. Only help avoidance and SAT score predicted the number of distinct services used while SAT score, gender, and help avoidance predicted GPA.

With help avoidance being connected to GPA on several tests in this study, there is evidence to suggest that academic help seeking behaviors and beliefs may be related to academic outcomes. The use of academic support services by postsecondary students is important to consider in connection to student success. Additional research that explores this connection will provide postsecondary administrators with further means to help improve student outcomes.
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Appendix

Help Seeking Scales and Questions

The 12 statements below were utilized in the survey for this study. These questions were modified from Karabenick’s (2004) study by the researcher and reviewed by an institutional committee that distributed the survey. The statements were presented to the participants along with a Likert scale asking their agreement with each statement. Each statement corresponds to a help seeking construct noted in bold.

Instrumental Help Seeking

1. If I were having trouble understanding the material in a course I would ask someone who could help me understand the general ideas.

2. Getting help would be one of the first things I would do if I were having trouble in a course.

Executive Help Seeking

3. The purpose of asking somebody for help in a course would be to succeed without having to work as hard.

4. Getting help in a course would be a way of avoiding doing some of the work.

Help-Seeking Threat

5. I would feel like a failure if I needed help in a course.

6. I would not want anyone to find out that I needed help in a course.

7. Getting help in a course would be an admission that I am just not smart enough to do the work on my own.
Help-Seeking Avoidance

8. If I didn’t understand something in a course I would guess rather than ask someone for assistance.

9. Even if the work was too hard to do on my own, I wouldn’t ask for help with a course.

10. I would rather do worse on an assignment I couldn’t finish than as.

Formal Versus Informal Help Seeking

11. If I were to seek help in a course I would ask the teacher rather than another student.

12. I would prefer asking another student for help in a course rather than the instructor.