

**Focusing on the sophomore
experience: Characteristics related to
the social and academic involvement
of second-year college students**

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STUDENT LIFE

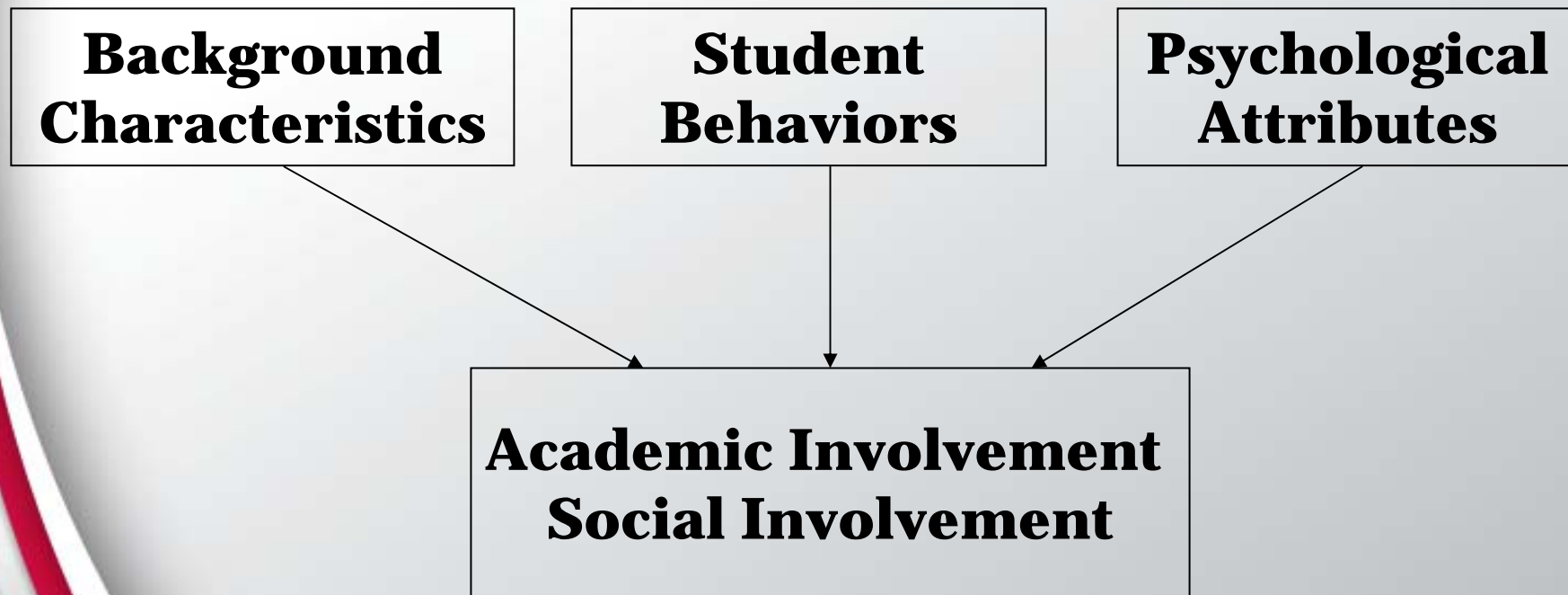
Introduction

- Involving students in academic and social activities represents a helpful approach to facilitating students in achieving desirable educational outcomes (e.g. Astin, 1977; Bean, 1986, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Tinto, 1993; Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003).
- The second year in college can be a critical time in students' academic career where the support promoting college involvement and integration can be less structured.
- This study was conducted to support a university-wide initiative in developing a comprehensive second-year experience.

Research Question

What are the characteristics associated with the social and academic involvement among second-year students ?

Conceptual Framework



Survey Instrument and Sample

- The instrument includes items regarding student involvement, student attitudes towards, perceptions of, and satisfaction with various aspects of college life, and demographic information.
- The survey was sent to a random sample of 10,000 undergraduate students enrolled at a Midwestern, public research university in the winter quarter of 2009. A total of 1,957 students responded to the survey for a response rate of 19.6%.
- For the purpose of this particular study, we retained only second-year students. Out of the 2,069 second-year students in the random sample, 402 (19.4%) completed the survey.

Independent Variables

- **Background Measures**
 - Gender
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Transfer status
 - First generation status
 - International status
 - Age

Independent Variables

- **Student Behaviors**
 - Work hours
 - Living situation
 - Financial dependence

Independent Variables

- Psychological Attributes
 - Institutional commitment
 - Academic self-efficacy beliefs

Outcome Measures

- Classroom engagement
- Independent learning
- Academic-related interaction
- Peer interaction
- Interaction with faculty and academic advisor

Analytical Approaches: Principal Component Analysis

- Classroom Engagement (.90*)
 - e.g. The frequency of contributing to small-group discussions in class
- Independent Learning (.73*)
 - e.g. The frequency of reviewing course materials (textbooks, notes, etc.) after class
- Academic-related Interaction (.75*)
 - e.g. The frequency of contacting faculty members for academic purposes
- Social Interaction with Peers (.80*)
 - e.g. The frequency of interacting with student peers in non-academic settings

*Cronbach's alpha value

Analytical Approaches: Principal Component Analysis

- Interaction with Faculty and Academic Advisor (.78*)
 - e.g. The frequency of turning to academic advisor when needing advice on personal-related issues
- Institutional Commitment (.63*)
 - Sense of belonging towards the university
- Academic Self-Efficacy (.68*)
 - e.g. I will do well in most of the classes that I take at the university.

*Cronbach's alpha value

Analytical Approaches: Regression

- OLS regression models were employed to understand the relationship between the independent measures and each of the five areas of involvement.

Results: Classroom Engagement

Significant Predictors	<i>B</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)	<i>Beta</i>
Age	.106** (.046)	.134
Financial dependence	-.293* (.158)	-.112
Institutional commitment	.222*** (.077)	.159
Academic self-efficacy	.175*** (.061)	.155
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$		

Results: Independent Learning

Significant Predictors	<i>B</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)	<i>Beta</i>
First generation college student	.199* (.119)	.094
Living on campus	.212** (.096)	.135
Institutional commitment	.165*** (.046)	.195
Academic self-efficacy	.098*** (.037)	.143
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$		

Results: Academic-related Interaction

Significant Predictors	<i>B</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)	<i>Beta</i>
Age	.103*** (.034)	.176
Institutional commitment	.229*** (.056)	.224
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$		

Results: Peer Interaction

Significant Predictors	<i>B</i>	<i>Beta</i>
Asian	-.530**	-.097
Transfer	.382**	.118
First generation	-.295*	-.084
Work hours	-.014**	-.127
Living on campus	.604***	.231
Financial dependence	.281**	.107
Institutional commitment	.460***	.329
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$		

Results: Interaction With Faculty and Academic Advisor

Significant Predictors	<i>B</i> (<i>s.e</i>)	<i>Beta</i>
Black	.355* (.213)	.091
Age	.106*** (.040)	.156
Institutional commitment	.271*** (.065)	.227
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$		

Policy Implications

- Work to instill a greater sense of institutional commitment in second-year students
 - More signature events geared towards the second year
- Pivotal years: The second year experience and beyond
 - First year students

Policy Implications

- **Transfer student programs and services**
 - Comprise nearly 20% of second-year students
 - Higher level of involvement with peers
 - Tap into the transfer experience
- **First Generation Student programs and services**
 - Significantly more independent learns
 - Less involved with peer interaction

Limitations

- Our data do not allow us to account for students' pre-college academic ability. The absence of this information limits our ability in interpreting the results and the findings might be less reliable or lead to biased estimates of other variables in the models.
- Our study is based on single institution data. Though our findings may have helpful implications for institutions of similar type, size, and student enrollment, etc., our focus on one institution may pose some threats in interpreting our findings as generalizable and representative.
- Non-response bias.

Future Research

- Exploring possible social and academic barriers facing second-year students/students in transition at the university
- More in-depth within group analyses, e.g. Asian American student involvement.
- Understanding the relationship between involvement and student long-term academic success at the institution.
- Incorporating more relevant psychological attributes to explain involvement.