

Psychosocial Influences on the Sophomore Year

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Session Objectives

- Highlight the recent policy shift in higher education.
- Review theoretical foundations of student identity development.
- Direct focus on psychosocial influences relative to the sophomore transition.
- Define the scope of self-efficacy in the college environment.
- Share supportive research.
- Discuss programmatic implications.

Why is the sophomore transition so important?

- Warrants further investigation.
- Realize the impact of the first-year initiative.
- Greater focus on student retention.
- Policy shift in American higher education.

Policy Shift

- Focus on persistence and completion beyond the first year of college.
- 2008 Federal Completion Agenda-Obama Administration.
- Private foundation influence-Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation.
- Performance-based funding policies.

College Completion

- By 2008, 69% H.S. grads enrolled in 2- and 4-year institutions.
- Degree attainment flat with only 2.5% increase from 2000-2010, even though 69% of H.S graduates enrolled in college.
- 2- and 4-year degree attainment has remained flat.
- Baccalaureate only increased 2.5% between 2000 and 2010 compared to 7% from 25 years prior.

How Do We Define Sophomores?

- Credit hour threshold?
- Second year regardless of credit hours?
- Native versus transfer?
- First-generation?
- Dual-enrollment/Advanced Placement?

Theoretical Foundations of Student Identity Development

Sophomore Developmental Factors

- In the midst of Establishing Identity and Developing Purpose (Chickering's Seven Vectors).
- Often in a position of Multiplicity (Perry's Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development).
- Exhibiting transitional knowing (Baxter's Model of Epistemological Knowing).

Establishing Identity

- Comfort with one's body, gender, sexual orientation, social and cultural heritage.
- Clear self-concept and secure sense of self in light of feedback from others.
- Personal stability and integration.

Developing Purpose

- Clear vocational goals.
- Meaningful commitments to personal interests and activities.
- Strong interpersonal commitments.
- Intentional decision-making.

Multiplicity

- Honoring diverse views when answers not yet known.
- All opinions are equally valid.
- Peers are a legitimate source of knowledge in addition to authority.

Transitional Knowing

- A crossroads between relying on external formulas and achieving self-authorship.
- Acceptance that some knowledge is uncertain.
- Movement away from authority as the holder of all knowledge.
- Expect delivery of knowledge to be applied in a way that is understandable.

Sophomore Psychosocial Challenges

- New academic terrain (Edman & Brazil, 2008).
- Dispersed peer group. Deficit in community (Shreiner et al., 2012).
- Feelings of invisibility/sense of abandonment (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Sanchez-Leguinel, 2008; Tobolowsky, 2008).
- Increased pressure (Hunter et al., 2010).
- Quality/quantity of interaction with faculty (Shreiner et al., 2012).

Sophomore Psychosocial Challenges Cont.

- Self-exploration. Who am I? (Hunter et al., 2010)
- Transfer sophomores start over and must establish themselves.
- Low levels of persistence of transfer sophomores (Ishitani, 2008).
- Lack of academic and student services targeted at first-generation sophomores (Vuong et al, 2010).

Implications of Psychosocial Challenges

Motivation

Performance

Persistence

Schlossberg's Transition Model

A transition is defined as an event or nonevent resulting in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and/ or roles.

Situation/**Self**/Support/Strategies



Self-Efficacy in the College Environment

According to Gore (2006), self-efficacy beliefs help to determine what activities individuals will pursue, the effort they expend in pursuing those activities, and how long they persist in the face of obstacles" (p. 92)

Conceptual Frameworks

Albert Bandura's Conceptual Framework for Self-Efficacy, a social cognitive theory.

"Belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action necessary to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1995, p. 3).

Marcia Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship

"Holistic meaning-making capacity" characterized by "internally generating and coordinating one's beliefs, values, and internal loyalties" (Baxter Magolda et al., 2010, p. 4).



Self-Efficacy: Its Role and Sources

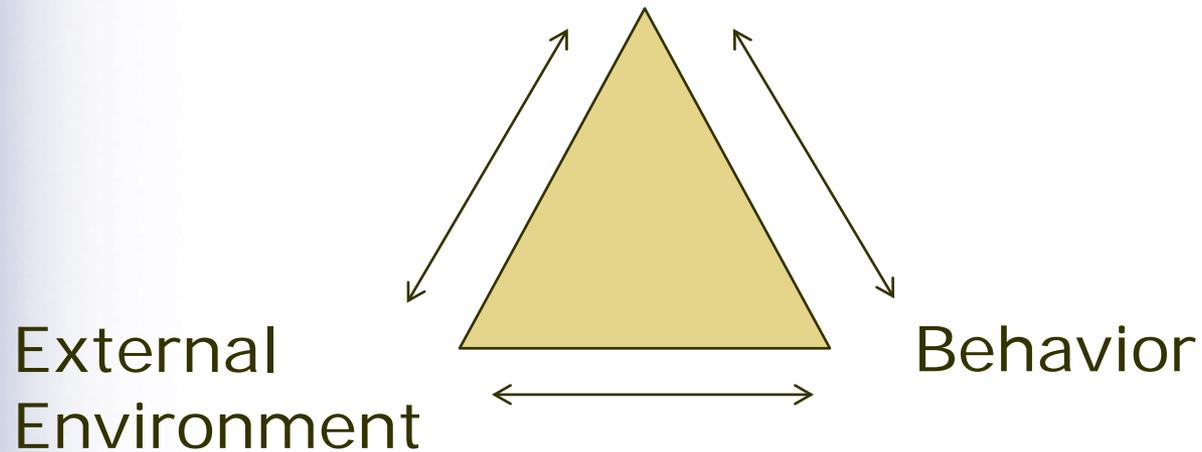
Yildirim, C. & Guner, E. (Producers). 2011. *Self Efficacy: Its Role and Sources* [Youtube Video]. Available from <http://youtu.be/wrzzbaomLmc>.

Sources of Efficacy Beliefs

- Mastery experiences (most authentic source).
- Vicarious experiences provided by social modeling.
- Social persuasion (least influential).
- Physiological and emotional states.

Triadic Reciprocal Causation

Internal personal cognition



“A functional dependence between events.”

(Bandura, 1997, p.5)

Self-efficacy vs. Self-Concept/Esteem

Self-concept is concerned with global image.

Self-esteem involves judgment of self-worth.

Self-efficacy is judgment of personal capability and is context-specific.

Relative Research Findings

Research Findings

Lent et al. (1984) found both level and strength of SE related to academic outcomes. Lent et al. (1986) SE was most useful in predicting grades and retention among males and females, both **freshmen and sophomores.**

Multon, et al. (1991) found positive and significant relationships between SE, academic performance, and persistence in a **meta-analysis of 39 studies with 42 different samples.**

Zimmerman (2000) maintained SE judgments play a causal role in academic motivation and are **influenced by instructional experiences.**

Research Findings Cont.

DeWitz et al. (2009) found self-efficacy was most significant predictor of **purpose in life** of **undergraduates** enrolled in a psychology course.

Majer (2009) found significant positive relationships between academic self-efficacy and cumulative GPA with socio-demographic characteristics among **ethnically diverse first-generation college students.**

Vuong et al. (2010) found self-efficacy is positively related to grade point average and persistence of **first-generation sophomores.**

Programmatic Implications

Lent et al. (1986, p. 296)
purported students with
increased self-efficacy are more
likely to be congruent with field
of study, less likely to report
negative consequences of their
choice, and more likely to report
positive consequences.

Intervention/ Programming

- Explore self-efficacy beliefs in relation to academic problems, study habits, and frequent changes in major. Recommended program development focus on modification of efficacy beliefs (Lent et al., 1986).
- Guide students to develop internal belief system, engage in new knowledge, and create vibrant community (Hodge et al., 2009).

Intervention/ Programming

- Meaningful/significant interactions with faculty, the shaping of a cognitive connection between the curriculum and students' future, and helping students develop a sense of purpose and meaning (Schreiner et al., 2012).
- Foster a sense of membership and belonging, forge an ability for students to contribute and have a voice, and model positive interactions (Schreiner et al., 2012).

Current Sophomore Initiatives

- Class identity and second-year traditions.
- Social engagement with peers.
- Student-faculty interaction.
- Major and career exploration.
- Academic engagement and leadership.

Sophomore Programming

- Sophomore Seminars
- Sophomore Orientations
- Residence Hall Programs
- Career Programming
- Sophomore Website

Concluding Thoughts

- Sophomore transition is crucial and is influenced by students' emotional and social health.
- Research supports the relationship between high SE and motivation, performance, and persistence.
- Colleges and universities need to develop new programming to support student transitions across all levels.
- Outcomes to support institutional investment in sophomore transitions can be tied to psychosocial growth.
- Race, gender, identity, H.S. concurrent enrollment, and college transfer issues warrant further investigation.

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