

Examining Attitudes in Transitioning to College: Action Research on Attitudes of First- Generation Students

Jess Gagliardi
Adams State University
NADE 2018
Concurrent Session C12.7

Abstract

One of the most interesting student populations to study in regards to experiences and transition into college are first-generation students. First-generation students have more obstacles to overcome that can be overwhelming. This action research aims to produce a narrative at one MSI institution in Colorado exhibiting their experiences.

The Importance of this research

- First-Generation Students
- MSI institutions → HSI-specific designation of MSI
- Literature also is thin in areas of attitudes, motivations, and experiences within HSI institutions

Research Objectives

- Begin to develop an understanding by investigating how the experiences affect the attitudes of first-generation students transitioning into college.
- Applying the mix-method research data collected into a framework that begins a deeper conversation and a fluid way of understanding this facet of the student experience.

Highlights from the Literature Review

- Renn & Reason (2013): First-generation students, accounting for ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status have a deeper impact on issues of credit completion, less involved, or seek resources.
- Clark (2005): To help students transition into college successful, they need to “develop social networks and gain desired skills” (p. 304).
- McCarron & Inkelas (2006): Parental involvement translates into positive engagement and encouragement for first-generation students.

Cont.

- Wiggins (2011): First-generation students have highest attrition, therefore “experiences *during* and *before*” enrollment matters, and resources help with this (p.1, italics in original).
- Harper & Quaye (2015): Student engagement in many facets positively impacts and equitable educational experiences that helps with retention, persistence, and degree attainment. (specific engagement for areas within this research).

Methods

- Mix-methods
 - Survey: 5 topics including motivation, guidance, challenges, support, and skills gained through a FYS course.
 - Quantitative: 5 questions using typical Likert scale
 - Qualitative: 5 open-ended questions for commentary
- Analysis:
 - Focus primarily on the qualitative results using Reductionist method that included reviewing initial data, identifying variations and regularities, checking for congruence, and developing themes and subthemes
 - For themes: comprehensiveness, congruence, relevance, and uniqueness
- From the participants, we utilized a small sample of 110 total (aiming for representative of institution).

Additional Data Collected

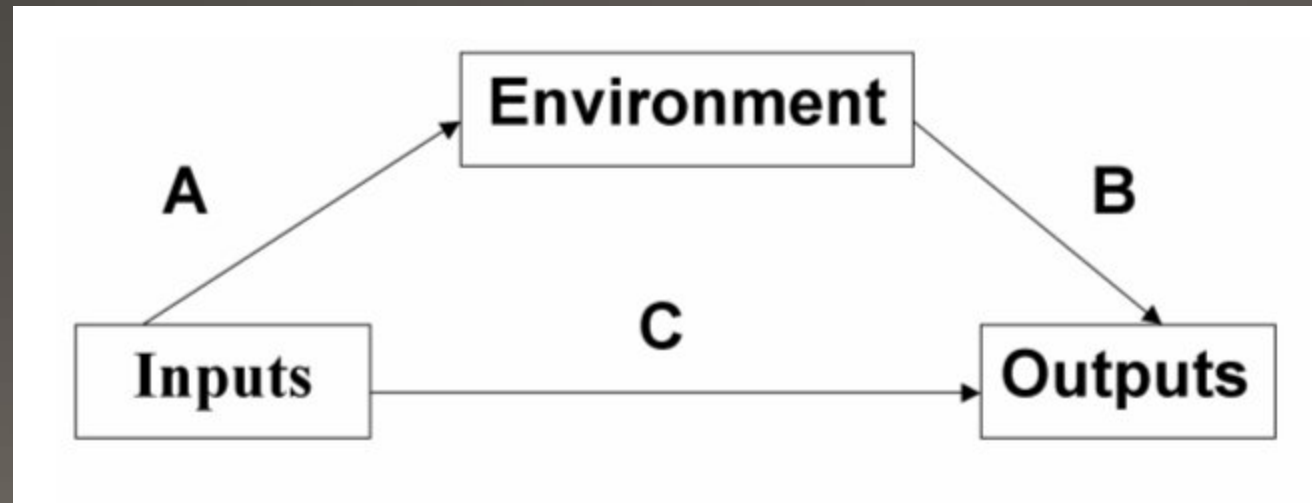
- Research collected data on the following:
 - Class status
 - Ethnicity
 - Sex identity
 - Home state
 - Major(s)
 - Athletic designation
 - Extracurricular/ Co-curricular activities

Survey Tool Questions

1. How motivated were you to attend college (in high school)?
 1. How supportive was your parents/family?
 2. How supportive were influences outside of your family?
2. How much guidance or help in applying to college?
3. How challenging was the process in applying to college?
 1. How well do you think you transitioned in your first year?
4. How much institutional support did you receive after being admitted to the university?
5. How well did your FYS course prepare you for college studies?

Framework

- Astin's I-E-O Model was utilized for this research
 - I (inputs): Questions 1 & 2 (motivation and guidance)
 - E (environment) Questions 3 & 4 (challenges and support)
 - O (outcomes) Question 5 (outputs)



Institutional Data

- 1,700 undergraduate/ 1,094 graduate students
- 51% female, 49% male; 80% female graduate population
- 40% white; 38% Hispanic; 10% African American; 5% Asian American; 7% Other or not-reporting

- State, liberal arts university
- MSI with HSI designation (oldest in Colorado)
- Serves high population of first-generation, underrepresented populations.

Findings from the Sample Data

- Total Sample Population Size: 110 students

<i>Population by Sex</i>		
<u>Population</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>%</u>
Female	56	50.9
Male	54	49.1
Total (N=110)		

<i>Population by Ethnicity</i>		
<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
White	40	36.3
African American	20	18.1
Hispanic	22	20.0
Asian American	8	7.2
Native American	10	9.0
*Multi-Ethnic Identity	35	31.8
Total (N=110)		

<i>Population by Sex and Ethnicity</i>		
<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
White, Female	25	22.7
White, Male	20	18.1
African American, Female	10	9.0
African American, Male	15	13.6
Hispanic, Female	14	12.7
Hispanic, Male	8	7.2
Asian American, Female	4	3.6
Asian American, Male	4	3.6
Native American, Female	3	2.7
Native American, Male	7	6.3
Multi-Ethnic, Female	22	20.0
Multi-Ethnic, Male	13	11.8
Total (N=110)		

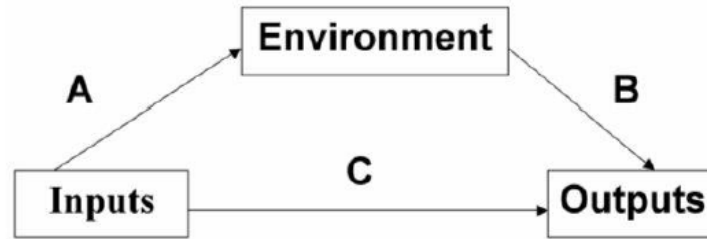
<i>Population by Student-Athletes</i>		
<u>Population</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>%</u>
Female	12	30.0
Male	28	70.0
Total (N=40)		

<i>Population by Academic Area</i>		
<u>Population</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
Social Sciences	71	64.5
Natural Sciences/STEM	29	26.3
Humanities	10	9.1
Fine Arts	0	0
Other/Not-Declared	0	0
Total (N=110)		

<i>Population by In-State/Out-of-State</i>		
<u>Population</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
In-State	76	69.0
Out-of-State	34	30.9
Total (N=110)		

Applying Astin's Framework and Major Themes in Results

Figure 1 Astin's I-E-O Model



Inputs		Environment		Outputs	
Motivators	Parents Better Life Success Professional	Challenges	Transition Financial Personal	Freshman Seminar	Time Management Study Skills Personal Growth
Personal	New Places New People Sports Friends Personal Growth	Support	Professors Friends Coaches Advisors		
Guidance	Self-Research Parents Counselors				

Major Results

- Attitudes is important for all institutions, especially for first-generation and underrepresented gorups.
- Institutions need to build strong support systems
- First year is critical (retention, persistence, and attainment)
- Create a culture of inclusion and diversity appreciation

Looking Forward

- Opportunity for longitudinal research
- Better inclusion and diversity appreciation
- Augment different areas under MSI's
- Generational studies

Questions and Comments?