

INTRODUCTION:

Research demonstrates that university sophomore students report significantly lower satisfaction with their university experience than freshmen students; a “sophomore slump” (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969) that lessens during junior and senior years. The current study examined factors related to university satisfaction and the changes in satisfaction between freshmen and sophomore years.

METHOD:

One thousand, one hundred and fifty-three undergraduate students completed an online survey that included demographic questions and items related to university satisfaction, loneliness, and extraversion. Global scores of “University Satisfaction” ($\alpha=.85$) and “Social Capital” (real or perceived resources available through a social network; $\alpha=.77$) were calculated from the mean of construct-specific Likert-type questions. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 57 ($M=22.2$, $SD=5.6$), two-thirds of the sample (66%) were female, and the large majority (88%) classified themselves as Hispanic. Participants were recruited on a voluntary basis through a mass e-mail invitation.

CONCLUSION:

Our results demonstrate the general finding of a “sophomore slump” related to ratings of university satisfaction and social capital. Our data extends this concept to a college body largely comprised of Hispanic students. Additionally, we present preliminary evidence that this sophomore slump may be moderated by self-ratings of introversion-extroversion; extraversion may be a protective factor against the issues that negatively impact students’ university experience during their sophomore year.

RESULTS:

Freshmen scored significantly higher in University Satisfaction than sophomores, with a mean of 3.81 ($SD=.74$) and 3.56 ($SD=.85$), respectively, on a 5-point scale. A Mann-Whitney U test showed this “sophomore slump” to be statistically significant ($z = -3.09$, $p = .002$). University Satisfaction was not correlated with age ($r(886) = .04$, $p>.05$), but was negatively associated with loneliness ($r(944) = -.16$, $p<.001$) and positively associated with extraversion ($r(941) = .11$, $p<.001$). Extraversion was not correlated with loneliness ($r(942) = .02$, $p>.05$). To examine whether extraversion moderated the sophomore slump, separate Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted between freshman and sophomore university satisfaction scores, first with individuals who identified themselves as extraverted and then with individuals who considered themselves introverted. A statistically significant difference between freshman and sophomore university satisfaction scores was demonstrated for those students who were introverted ($z = -2.78$, $p = .006$), but this “sophomore slump” was not present with extraverts ($z = -.44$, $p > .05$). Our data also demonstrated significantly lower sophomore social capital compared to Freshmen ($z = -2.93$, $p = .003$).

