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Scrutinizing Sophomore Slump:
An Exploration of Student Behaviors and Institutional Conditions

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

by

Megan Elisa Fox

2014
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Scrutinizing Sophomore Slump:
An Exploration of Student Behaviors and Institutional Conditions

by

Megan Elisa Fox

Doctorate of Education

University of California, Los Angeles 2014

Professor Jane Pizzolato, Chair

This research studied sophomore challenges and issues related to “slump,” at a large four-year, urban public university in California. The study investigated sophomore slump in three main areas: (1) academic success, (2) engagement, and (3) satisfaction. The study used survey research methods to quantitatively compare differences in experience between first, second and third year students at this site. I paid special attention to the experiences of students related to sophomore slump, using Kuh’s (2007) constructs of student behaviors and institutional conditions to guide my inquiry and identify trends, patterns, and insights surrounding the sophomore slump phenomenon. To further explore differences in experience between sophomores and other class years, certain key demographic variables were used to tease out potential differences that the literature claims impact student experience. Those variables were sex, racial group, major, and first generation status.
The sample included 226 respondents representing currently enrolled first, second and third year students attending the institution who completed the survey issued in the Spring quarter of 2014. The survey included questions taken verbatim from three previously established instruments: the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Chemers et al., 2001); the Engaged Learning Index (Schreiner & Louis, 2008); and the Adult Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). Data were analyzed using inferential statistics to compare mean scores on each of the measures between class years, looking for indicators of slump as well as differences by group. Findings showed no indication of slump on any of the measures, but instead, upward trends on multiple measures. However, findings also indicated significant differences between the experiences of student groups by race, especially for Asian Pacific Islanders when compared to White/Caucasian students and students in other racial groups.

Keywords: sophomores slump, engagement, satisfaction, academic success, college student development
The dissertation of Megan Elisa Fox is approved.

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DEDICATION PAGE

To my mother, Cindy. You have done and continue to do more for the whole pack of us Foxes than you will ever know. All of my success is because of what you taught me, how you raised me, and what you sacrificed for me, for all of us. You are the reason I am an educator, the glue for our crazy family, the reason we all come home, and you keep us all from slumping. I am so proud to be your daughter. Thank you Mom. I love you.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
Statement of the Problem

Undergraduate students experience many challenges and changes in their first two years of college. To support their development and encourage both student engagement and retention, campuses nationwide maintain First Year Experience (FYE) programs. These FYE programs focus on supporting first year students through targeted programs, resources, and initiatives (Griffin & Romm, 2008). Research consistently demonstrates that FYE programs have strong positive influences on student development, engagement, and retention across the first year (Barefoot, Gardner, Cutright, Morris, Schroeder, Schwartz, Siegel, Swing, 2005; Gardner, Barefoot, & Swing, 2001; Gardner, Barefoot, & Swing, 2002 Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2007). However, institutions rarely extend these programs beyond the first year and into the sophomore year of college.

The relative absence of sophomore-year programming is notable given that the sophomore year has come to be referred to as the “lost year,” “the invisible year,” or “the forgotten year” as sophomores experience what is commonly called “sophomore slump” (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). Sophomore slump is most often described as the feelings of dissatisfaction, confusion, and frustration that sophomore students experience with their academics and personal development, and their struggles to engage with their institution (Furr & Gannaway, 1982; Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Hunter, Tobolowsky, Gardner, Evenbeck, Pattengale, Schaller, Schriener, 2009; Lemons & Richmond, 1987). One potential contributing factor is that sophomore students have vastly different experiences regarding the ease with which they can interact with their peers. Some institutions have specific policies requiring students to live on campus for both the first and second years of college, while others require only the first year. Living further from campus, or apart from the peer networks they established in their first
year, many sophomores struggle with resulting feelings of isolation and disconnectedness (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Hunter et al., 2009; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000).

Research shows that a large portion of sophomore students report academic struggles, decreased motivation, and lowered feelings of satisfaction with their peer relationships and with the institution (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Hunter et al., 2009; Juillerat, 2000; Schaller, 2005). These struggles were more frequent and larger in the sophomore year than in other class years. For students who are also feeling isolated from their peers and feeling doubts about their academic competence, the necessity of deciding a major during their second year of college can cause students to further slump. Given that student commitment to their major is positively correlated with their GPA (Graunke & Woosley, 2005), if sophomores feel doubt about their major, this doubt may negatively impact their GPA, causing deeper slumping.

Although existing studies provide evidence of sophomore slump, the institutions in these studies are small, private, and/or religiously affiliated colleges and universities. At highly selective, large, public, research universities, the concentration of high-achieving students could potentially exacerbate the slumping of sophomores because the population itself is so much larger, the individual attention is lessened, and the scale of the university may be additionally intimidating or alienating (Ennis-McMilan, Ammirati, Tetley, & Thacker, 2011). For students still figuring out their place on campus, these factors may pose additional challenges.

Despite the lack of research on sophomores at diverse types of institutions, hundreds of universities are now piloting programs that target presumed sophomore needs. The National Resource Center for First-Year Experience and Students in Transition surveys such programs, but these surveys only account for whether colleges are instituting sophomore programs, and if so, what type of programs they offer (Keup, Gahagan, & Goodwin, 2010). Whether and why the
programs are effective remains unclear. Given the lack of data showing specific changes and challenges for sophomore students in relation to G.P.A., engagement, and/or retention at a large public university, it seems backwards to pilot sophomore programs before conducting research detailing the specific issues sophomores face and their prevalence across institutional types. Through my dissertation I sought to compare sophomores to students of other class years in terms of G.P.A., engagement, and satisfaction among college students at one highly selective, large, public, research university.

Dissertation Scope

The primary goal of this dissertation is to determine what sophomore students at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), a highly selective, large, public research institution, are experiencing with respect to components of sophomore slump (e.g., GPA, satisfaction), and then to explore differences between sophomores and students in other class years. I used the concepts of “student behavior” and “institutional conditions” as presented and defined by Kuh (2007) to operationalize and examine the sophomore slump phenomenon. Kuh defined student behavior as the actions students take with their time, energy, and relationships, both with peers and faculty, and institutional conditions as the resources, structures, programs, practices and policies put in place by the institution. In my study I examined academic success, engagement, and satisfaction in ways that capture both student behavior and institutional conditions that may comprise or contribute to sophomore slump.

My dissertation used survey methods to explore sophomore slump at UCLA. Data were collected using surveys administered online to currently enrolled first, second, and third year undergraduates who lived on and off campus at UCLA. I investigated sophomore slump in three
main areas: (1) academic success, (2) engagement, and (3) satisfaction. My three specific research questions were:

1. According to the survey data, are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ academic success, and that of other class years?
2. According to the survey data, are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ engagement, and that of other class years?
3. According to the survey data, are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ satisfaction, and that of other class years?

As this study sought to describe UCLA sophomore challenges and issues related to “slump,” I paid special attention to the experiences of students related to sophomore slump, using Kuh’s (2007) constructs of student behaviors and institutional conditions to guide my inquiry and identify trends, patterns, and insights surrounding the sophomore slump phenomenon.

**Significance of the Study**

Through my research, I explored not only what sophomore students were experiencing and to what extent, but also how their experiences compared with the experiences of students in other class years. This research approach allowed for description of sophomore experiences that were considered components of slump, and identification of differences in student experiences of sophomore slump by subpopulations, such as first-generation students and students in various major types, and for students from a wide variety of backgrounds, including race, gender, and socio-economic status.

This study added to the growing body of literature and theory on sophomore development by providing specific insight into sophomore experiences at an institution type that has not been
studied previously. These insights in development help expand knowledge about what sophomores are experiencing as they develop personally, both in their definition of purpose and establishing their identities, and specifically in how they engage with their institutions and academics. This study also allowed for valuable comparisons of student development not only by various sub-populations of sophomores, but between sophomores and other class years. Inclusion of this site and population in the literature helps strengthen the generalizability of findings to other populations, and sheds light on the relationships that may exist between slumping, students’ behaviors and identities, and students’ academics.

The findings of this study will be shared with Residential Life (RL) and with the First Year Experience (FYE) Office, departments currently charged with the implementation of UCLAs FYE programs and initiatives. These two student affairs offices will then be able to directly apply my finding to future programs, initiatives, and goals. Additionally, my data analysis will offer RL specific guidance for developing programs that can target sophomore issues and better support sophomore academic success, engagement and satisfaction. This data will be useful for the UCLA RL communities, but also for other campus residential communities as well. It will be directly beneficial for RL in serving their students and for the FYE office as they look to expand programs and services offered to target sophomores as well as first year and transfer students.
CHAPTER II

INVESTIGATING THEORY AND RESEARCH ON SOPHOMORE SLUMP

Introduction

Higher education’s focus on the first year of college is now “a three-decades-old movement that on many campuses has become known as the ‘freshman’ or ‘first-year experience’” (Barefoot et al., 2005, p. 4). The purpose of these activities and services is to “make certain that their [the college’s] students do not get lost in the shuffle or struggle needlessly” (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 113). Extensive research documents the need for and benefits of these programs and services for first-year students (Barefoot, 2000; Barefoot et al., 2005; Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), and meta-analysis findings reveal that “with rare exceptions they [first year experience programs] produce uniformly consistent evidence of positive and statistically significant advantages to students” (Pascarella & Terenzini, p. 400).

A key part of this research is the exploration of the factors, both on the part of the student and the institution, that most strongly impact student persistence and success (Barefoot et al., 2005; Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In their first year of college, students begin to establish their connections to and engagement with their institution, and this sets the stage of the rest of their college experience. Research has firmly established that engagement with the institution is one of the key predictors of student persistence and success (Astin, 1999; Braxton, 2000; Kuh et al., 2007; Kuh 2009; Tinto, 2007), and that first year experience programs positively influence engagement (Barefoot, 2000, 2002).

Despite these advantages of FYE programs, retention continues to be an issue for colleges and universities, and the sophomore year appears to be a key time in which students make decisions about persisting. Data from the national Noel-Levitz (2013) report on sophomore
students highlighted key challenges regarding retaining students through and beyond the sophomore year, with 23.7% of non-persisters leaving their institution during their sophomore year or not returning for a junior year (Noel-Levitz, 2013; Panfil, 2012).

A burgeoning body of research explores the specific challenges, needs, and trends tied to persistence for second-year students, and highlights a common experience of frustration and decline during the sophomore year (Hunter et al., 2009; Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Schaller, 2005; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). The sophomore year is consistently cited as the time when students experience the most dissatisfaction with their college experience, and are more likely than their peers in other class years to report challenges to their academic and personal development (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Hunter et al., 2009; Schaller, 2007; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). Although some of these challenges are continuations from the first-year of college, the literature characterizes the sophomore experience as a time of significant decrease in institutional support, specific developmental difficulties, and heightened academic pressures and expectations (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Hunter et al., 2009; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007; Wilder, 1993). These second year struggles are commonly referred to as “sophomore slump” (Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Schaller, 2005; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000; Wilder, 1993).

My own study analyzed survey data collected from over 300 undergraduate students at a highly selective, large, urban public research university in California. I sought to document the experiences of the sophomore population, and compare them to the experiences of students of other class years. Research on the sophomore experience at this type of institution is nonexistent.
across the literature, despite national push for universities to create sophomore programs to address presumed sophomore slump.

In order to understand the problem and describe its significance, this literature review begins with a discussion of the literature on retention, persistence, and FYE (First Year Experience) Programs that target both. Next, literature on the causes and results of sophomore slump will be presented, spanning from engagement and satisfaction, to institutional conditions, to sophomore development. An exploration of site-specific studies that sought to expand upon research conducted on sophomore slump and the experiential data they revealed follows. This section of the literature leads into a discussion of academic struggles as the core facet of sophomore slump. This overview bridges into a discussion of how college students, and specifically sophomores, develop and issues of retention related to sophomore success. Finally, I turn to the interventions and programs currently being studied and implemented for sophomores, and the documented need for further exploration of this phenomenon to aid that development.

**Supporting our Students: Lessons From the First-Year**

In the first year of college, research documents a need to create “clear pathways to show students what to expect and what success looks and feels like” and to “help students bring meaning to their educational experiences and help acculturate them to the institution” (Kuh et al., 2007, p. 79). Clarifying expectations and ways to successfully fit in academically and socially are keys to retaining students (Tinto, 1993). According to Tinto, college students enter university with a variety of intentions, goals, and commitments. In order to successfully transition into college and persist there, Tinto claimed that students needed to integrate academically and socially. Academically they must meet the minimum GPA and fit into the academic
environment. Socially students need to feel a sense of belonging with their peers and with the institution. Integration both academically and socially then serves as a continuing socializing force that helps students learn the culture and goals of the institution, which in turn supports student persistence. Fostering integration and engagement to aid in students’ personal, academic, and social development are the foundation of how and why First Year Experience programs are developed and maintained.

To achieve this, programs and initiatives have been adopted by nearly 95 percent of America’s four-year colleges and universities (Barefoot, 2002). The prevalence of these programs on a national scale underscores their positive impact on student success, retention, and persistence. These programs are built around research-based objectives to enhance first year students’ academic and social integration by increasing student-to-student and faculty-to-student interaction, boosting student involvement on campus, linking curriculum and co-curriculum, and increasing the academic expectations and engagement levels for students, including those who are less academically prepared for college (Barefoot, 2000).

**Academic integration and FYE.** Student-faculty connections are consistently documented as being just as important influences on student success (Barefoot, 2000; Kuh et al., 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). These connections can be formal or informal and happen in or out of the classroom, but in all cases they “are positively correlated with student learning and development” (Kuh et al., p. 54). Students who interact more frequently with faculty are more likely to seek support, clarification, and resources from faculty to enhance their learning and achievement in classes. Beyond their benefits to classroom learning, positive student interactions with faculty offer professional and academic support that can help students feel connected to the
institutions and more likely to be academically successful (Reason, Terenzini, & Dombingo, 2006). FYE programs that provide small class size seminars and opportunities for students to meet with and learn from a range of faculty members help first year students begin to academically integrate.

The institution can either encourage or discourage feelings of connection through its’ policies, programs, and structures, which represent institutional conditions. They impact and are coupled with the students’ own behaviors, such as their peer involvement and where they spend their time (Kuh et al., 2007; Kuh, 2009; McCormick, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2013). Together, these impact the levels of student engagement—students’ quality of effort and involvement in productive learning activities (Kuh, 2009). Institutional efforts to support student connection to and involvement in campus life increased students’ involvement and led to more positive learning and development outcomes (Barefoot, 2000). Put simply, colleges and universities can influence student engagement by adapting or changing “resources, educational policies, programs and practices, and structural features” to positively influence student behavior (Kuh et al., p. 11). FYE programs are important then because they build on and highlight existing institutional structures and programs that aim to support student integration.

Although support for the first year is vital, most students attend college for four to six years, and these targeted programs and services abruptly end after the first year. Adding to this problem is the fact that “perhaps two-thirds of the gains students make in knowledge and cognitive skill development occur in the first two years of college” (Reason, et al., 2006, p. 149). Given that such developmental challenges extend beyond the first year, it is fair to assume that students are not “suddenly successful in their second year” (Hunter et al., 2009, p. 15). Since the sophomore year is typically when students finish their general education requirements, declare a
major, and begin major relevant coursework, it is likely that the need for academic integration programming is higher in the sophomore year than the first year. Studies on second-year students across the last fifty years support this view, yet much is still unknown about the sophomore experience and even less is offered to support the second year of college (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Hunter et al., 2009, 2009; Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000; Wilder, 1993).

**Social integration and FYE.** Empirical evidence affirms that “the student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (Astin, 1993, p. 398). Students rely heavily on their peer groups not only for emotional support and socialization, but also for help clarifying and reaffirming identity, and building connections to the institution (Astin, 1993; Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2004). Peer groups such as clubs or organizations provide smaller communities and connections to the institution, and often help students reflect on their own experiences while normalizing whatever feelings they are working through or challenges they are facing. Research has found that the quality and frequency of peer interactions were positively associated with persistence both in the first year of college and beyond (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). FYE programs promote student involvement and peer relationships through a variety of programs and activities that are both directly facilitated by FYE Programs, and by connecting first year students to student organizations and services across the institution. Peer connections begin to develop in the first year of college, and their importance and development continues well beyond the freshman year. Despite the continued importance of peer relationships, the abrupt end of first year programming means that students are left to force their own peer relationships with fewer opportunities to
receive any guidance in finding supportive peer groups (Hunter et al., 2009; Schaller, 2005; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007).

The Slump Revealed: Evidence and Causes

Discussions of sophomore challenges date back to 1938 when Marguerite Woodworth described sophomores at Lawrence University as “usually given singularly little help” and she observed that “it looks as though often they muddled along” (p. 1). While her piece was more opinion based on her observations rather than empirical evidence, Woodworth called attention to the fact that at least at her campus, “the Sophomore is without any particular help from the college officers, who feel that he is now oriented and that they must devote their energies to orienting the incoming class” (p. 89).

Freedman (1956) also wrote about the second-year experience in his study of the “major events and adjustments characteristic of each of the important stages of a college career” (p. 1) at Vassar College. Freedman interpreted evidence of sophomore slump in his data as “inertia or disorganization” for students in their second term. He also noted that sophomores’ academic work was found to be highly demanding of their time and effort but that student culture seemed to blunt or soften their drive, causing some to feel they should “relax and take things easier” (p. 22). Both Freedman and Woodworth suggested that sophomore slump resulted from student struggles within the institution, and was largely tied to sophomores’ overall feelings of dissatisfaction.

Feldman and Newcomb (1969) characterized sophomore struggles as a result of “overall dissatisfaction with the college as an institution and [the students’] experiences in it” (p. 92). They conducted a meta-analysis of data from studies of four institutions: Fairfield University
This meta-analysis showed that sophomores at each institution consistently reported feeling less satisfied than the other student classes. For sophomore students attending Amherst in 1960, 77.4% of the 238 member class reported that they had “felt out of place” at Amherst that year. Students attending Harvard in 1967 were asked, “How satisfied are you with your year at Harvard?” and only 16.7% of sophomores reported they were “very satisfied” compared to 28.2% of freshman and 29.8% of juniors. Summarizing their findings, Feldman and Newcomb reported that sophomores “felt both neglected and stifled by their institution” and that sophomores were the “most likely to be dissatisfied with the college and their experiences there” (p. 92).

In an attempt to make sense of reported negative trends in satisfaction and success among sophomore year students, Richmond and Lemons (1985) supported the notion that sophomores are students who merit more attention, but they also claimed that studying sophomore slump was difficult for two reasons; “(a) there seems to be no one problem that can be identified and (b) it seems unwise to lump all the problems of individual students together” (p. 176). They characterized the components of the slump as including doubts about career choices, dissatisfaction with personal relationships, and heightened awareness of and concerns about the financial implications of a college education.

Based on these studies, sophomore slump is characterized as a unique confluence of challenges for second year students that result in dissatisfaction and frustration for sophomores. The main areas of dissatisfaction are around academics, both with sophomores’ ability to be successful and to define an academic path, connection to and engagement with the institution and finally, their perceptions around lack of institutional support. Sophomores also experience
frustrations around changing relationships with peers and decreased motivation and satisfaction. Most notably, these studies all reinforced that sophomore struggles range widely and that more research is needed to further hone in on their experiences and the role of the institution in these experiences.

**Slump Contributors: Institutional Conditions**

As more and more colleges discussed sophomore slump, attention turned to the role of the institution in contributing to or counteracting the slump. A four-year study conducted by Baur (1965) showed that undergraduates struggled to create personal interactions with faculty. Further, he asserted that close peer relationships were only achieved for students once they reached the upper division years. Baur observed that sophomores faced issues of boredom and apathy as well as evidence of a “sophomore slump,” however those were the only prevalent issues he reported and he posited that students also experienced a “senior slump”. Baur’s study spoke to sophomore’s academic engagement and was among the first to identify connections to faculty as key to their success, and to emphasize that student development issues are not isolated to just the first year of college.

Expanding on this, Morgan and Davis (1981) found that college staff widely reported that sophomore students felt alone on campus. The authors posited that sophomores’ feelings of rejection by the institution was due to their needs being overlooked or neglected compared to the support and attention being paid to first-year students. Echoing Lemons and Richmond (1985,1987), Morgan and Davis asserted that in becoming sophomores, students lost their identity within the institution and that sophomores needed to be treated as a special group with specific needs.
Flanagan’s (1991) research on retention programming at small colleges in the Midwest provided support for why sophomores might feel overlooked or neglected. Flanagan found that all of the schools in his study overlooked the sophomore population in their efforts to increase retention. Consequently sophomores at these schools faced a year when they “find they cannot obtain the courses, housing, financial aid, or type of academic advising and institutional attention they may have received as freshmen” (p. 5). In thinking about persistence and student retention, thought shifted to existing works on how to support these efforts by understanding and fostering student development in the sophomore year.

**Sophomore Development: Early Theories**

As questions about how to combat sophomore slump gained speed, the literature began to draw connections between the issues sophomores were facing, and established knowledge about how college students develop. Richmond and Lemons (1985) stressed the importance of faculty and staff being aware of and alert for indicators of students struggling, and recommend various strategies to assist them. They suggested that institutions should implement formal programs that targeted opportunities for individual attention, citing campuses like the University of Texas and the College of William and Mary as examples. Specifically, Lemons and Richmond (1987) asserted that use of student development theories were necessary “to understand and explain the slump” (p. 15) for researchers and practitioners alike at all colleges and universities. Using Chickering’s (1969a) theory of student identity development, they identified four specific vectors from the model that they felt were tied to sophomore slump: achieving competence, developing autonomy, establishing identity and developing purpose.
Each of these vectors deals with specific aspects of individual identity development that are important to student success. The four vectors are also separate from the other vectors that connect more strongly to engagement as they center on students’ relationships with others. These connections to college student development theory underscored Lemon and Richmond’s (1987) strong assertion that sophomore slump is a real issue, and that “further identification and definition of sophomore slump must come through some form of experimental verification” (p. 18). The authors not only called attention to the sophomore slump phenomenon, but also asked student affairs professionals to develop support programs, provide individual counseling, and increase mentorship opportunities.

As the literature and research on the sophomore slump continued to grow, the need for specific data about the sophomore experience also grew. Data about the slump from the student perspective were rare and were needed to determine what the causes were, how prevalent it was and how it was characterized at various campuses and with various populations. In 1998, the Penn State Pulse, a Student Affairs newsletter on research and assessment at Penn State, published results from a survey study of their sophomore class. Over 76% of their sophomores contributed to the study and they described their sophomore year as “a dead zone,” “being caught between directions” and feeling “kind of invisible”. While sophomores reported feeling boredom and frustration, and the opinion was well represented at Penn State, this study only identified that feelings characteristic of sophomore slump existed in some form at this site, but failed to explore potential causes or more in depth exploration of how students experienced the slump.

The body of literature discussed thus far presents little empirical evidence regarding the degree and nature of sophomore slump. Yet it demonstrates consistently that sophomores at many institutions feel discontented and are struggling. Data are missing from this literature
documenting the factors that contribute to sophomore slump, how prevalent these factors are, and the differences between sophomore experiences at various types of institutions and for certain student populations. To attempt to answer these questions and to provide some missing data, pivotal studies were conducted in quick succession at a number of sites over the next few years.

**Scrutinizing Second-Years: Site Specific Sophomore Slump Studies**

The first study to look at sophomores’ lived experiences and developmental changes at a specific school was conducted by Schaller (2005). Schaller interviewed traditional-age sophomores at a mid-size, private Catholic university in the Midwest, and asked students to describe their experiences in their second-year. The study found that sophomores moved through specific stages in their development, which were identified as random exploration, focused exploration, tentative choices, and commitment. Student participants chose to focus the most on three specific aspects of their experience and these issues were “how they viewed themselves, their relationships, and their academic experiences and decisions” (p. 18), which were considered significant.

Schaller (2005) claimed that though some students spent more time in certain stages than others, the majority of sophomore students were identified as being in the focused exploration or tentative choices stages. Almost every sophomore who participated in this study mentioned “facing periods of crisis, with exploration of themselves, relationships and the future at the center of their lives” (p. 19). This study was among the first to identify specific developmental patterns for sophomores and has since been cited widely when thinking about sophomore needs. Recommendations for supporting sophomores centered on encouraging them to take
responsibility for their own learning process, designing structured environments to help them explore themselves and their larger communities, and helping engage them in self-reflection. This study provided useful insights into common experiences of sophomores and tied them to developmental stages. It also set the stage for researchers to explore the needs and experiences of sophomores at different institution types and across larger populations to add to understanding of the broader sophomore experience.

Gansemer-Topf and Stern (2007)’s qualitative research on sophomore and junior students built directly on Schaller’s (2005) study. Findings were congruent with other studies (Flanagan, 1991; Furr & Gannaway, 1982; Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Schaller, 2005, 2007), as students felt they struggled most with: finding their purpose, and developing identity within their academic life, social relationships, and extracurricular activities. Unique to this study were the findings that emerged from juniors reflecting on their second-year experience. A small percentage shared that they felt their second college year was more stable for them. Other unique findings were that many students felt the hardest part of their sophomore year was the changing expectations surrounding them and that they often felt they had to do things on their own. Despite this feeling, many also shared that through all the challenges of the second year, it was worth it, describing it as “painful but beneficial” (Gansemer-Topf & Stern, p. 44). Collectively these findings suggest that the developmental tasks of the sophomore year combine to form a complex set of challenges for students that are not only unique and multifaceted, but also often completely overwhelming when paired with their other academic challenges.

The Core of the Slump: Academics
Research on sophomore slump consistently demonstrated the large role that academic challenges in sophomore slump. It also became clear that larger data collection and further definition and exploration of what those academic struggles looked like were needed. Graunke and Woosley (2005) found that choice of major was a significant predictor of sophomore academic success, as were faculty interactions. Gardner’s (2000; 2001a; 2004) body of research suggested that sophomores’ engagement and learning was significantly different from students at the other class levels. Specifically, sophomores were less engaged in their academic work, and focused more on socializing. This lack of commitment to academic endeavors or engagement in organizations and activities was characterized as “drifting.”

Juillerat’s (2000) findings further unpacked the dissatisfaction sophomores described experiencing. She found that sophomores did report greater levels of dissatisfaction in some areas, and that sophomores with lower expectations and decreased satisfaction were the group at-risk for “slumping out” of school. This group reported the lowest satisfaction for areas such as enjoying being a student, feeling a sense of pride about their campus, and course content in their major. These studies reinforced existing work showing that sophomores face issues of engagement and retention (Gansemper-Topf & Stern, 2007; Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Schaller, 2005). Juillerat’s data also revealed additional challenges for sophomores that had not been previously documented. Among the new findings were that sophomores placed a high level of importance on their interactions with advisors, registration class scheduling processes, faculty feedback, and their interactions with faculty. This was significant as sophomores’ decreased satisfaction with these areas may predict greater academic difficulty and contribute directly to the sophomore slump in areas tied to both the students’ own academic behaviors and the conditions at the institution.
Sophomore Struggles in Development

There is a complex convergence of issues that surface in the second year that include student struggles with their own individual and academic identity, and their engagement with the institution, and the impact their college environment has on both of these facets. These issues require further study and are some of the special factors that contribute to the sophomore slump.

There are two student development theories that are the most useful for analyzing and thinking about sophomore development and slump issues. They are Chickering’s (1969a) theory of identity development, which outlines seven areas of student identity development that students explore and move through during their time in college. The second is the theory of student involvement put forth by Astin (1999), which details the specific connections between students’ engagement with their institution and their success.

Chickering’s (1969a) theory of identity development is the first and most foundational. Revised with Reisser (1969b) this psychosocial theory proposed that there are seven vectors of development that contribute to the formation of identity - the core developmental issue that students grapple with in their college years (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). The term vectors of development was used because each of the seven vectors has “direction and magnitude,” despite the direction being non-linear or more of a “spiral” (Chickering, 1969a, p. 8). This meant that students were seen to experience each vector at different rates and times and could spend time working through just one vector or many at a time. It was also noted that exploration of each of the vectors was not finite or sequential and that students often revisit or grow further in areas previously explored.
This theory also includes not only identity formation, but emotional, interpersonal, intellectual and ethical aspects of a student’s identity development as well. The vectors were found to build on one another and lead to greater stability and complexity of a students’ identity formation. The seven vectors are: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy towards interdependence, developing mature relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering, 1969b). In keeping with the assertion that college students revisit and experience growth in and overlap of many of these areas at once, college sophomores are arguably still managing most, if not all of these vectors.

According to many researchers, sophomores face more acute challenges to their sense of identity in a few specific vectors, namely developing purpose, developing competence, managing emotions and moving through autonomy towards interdependence (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Richmond & Lemons, 1985; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000). These challenges are thought to arise for second-year students for a variety of reasons but primary among them is that most students declare a major in their second year. Choosing a major can force students to decide not only their intended path or purpose for their remaining college years, but can add additional pressures as they attempt to reconcile what they think their purpose will be beyond college with their current interests or academic focus. At the same time, sophomores must also negotiate their identity against the expectations of friends, family and the institution itself. Many of these factors exist beyond the immediate college environment but they are still prominent factors in sophomore struggles. Choosing a major can also call into question a students’ competence as they may feel frustrated with their academic success in their major, which also relates to their ability to manage their emotions. All of these feelings and frustrations
can keep students and sophomores specifically, feeling stuck and unable to develop positive interdependence at the institution and with their peers.

Research affirms that many components of a college student’s environment not only influence, but play a direct role in their development through these vectors (Evans et al., 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Among these environmental influences are two factors that Chickering (1969b) found to be key: student friendships and communities, and student development programs and services. He asserted that meaningful peer relationships and involvement in varied student communities where students share interests, encouraged development across all of the seven development vectors. For example, students who feel connected to their major may pursue additional involvements related to that major. A simple example is a satisfied student majoring in dance. This student may then pursue opportunities in a student dance club which could help them develop feelings of competence, assert their identity as a dancer, provide purpose and mature peer relationships, and broaden their support network. Each of these tied specifically to multiple areas of student identity development as detailed by Chickering. Student participation in clubs, communities, and organizations, both formal and informal, tied directly to the theory of student involvement put forth by Astin (1999).

Astin’s (1999) involvement theory stressed the importance of student involvement in their development and defined involvement as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518). For Astin, involvement meant investment in a specific activity or object, and he noted that each student devotes different levels of energy and time to different things and each may be unique from their peers. The key to this theory is that not only do students learn and develop as a result of this involvement, but that the amount of development or learning associated is “directly proportional to the quality and
quantity of student involvement in that activity” (p. 519). The focus is on what students do and how they spend their time, and how this relates to not only their individual motivation, but to overall retention. Astin found that college students who are more involved are less likely to drop out than their less involved peers.

Involvement is important for college students generally, but especially for sophomores. As sophomores face challenges to their identity and purpose, they may seek ways to affirm who they are, what they are passionate about, or people who share similar struggles and interests. An ideal outlet for student frustration is outside involvements, which simultaneously offer connections to other interests and passions. This leads many sophomores to dedicate more attention and time to extra-curricular activities (Evans et al., 1998; Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000). A study conducted at a large public university in the Midwest focused on gathering data about students’ use of time over a typical week, and found that “sophomores exceeded their classmates in time spent pursuing social activities, leisure, and physical fitness” (Gardner, 2000, p. 67). Sophomores may be dedicating so much time to extracurricular activities that they may be simultaneously pulling away from their academics. Consequently, while involvement in college overall is linked to positive outcomes for students, for sophomores, this may be another area of complexity if involvement impacts available time for academic engagement negatively.

Further, peer satisfaction has been found to be strongly linked to satisfaction overall and peer groups change drastically in the second year (Hunter et al., 2009; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000). Relating back to Chickering’s (1969b) vector for developing mature relationships and Astin’s (1999) discussion of involvement, it is well known by researchers and practitioners alike that the experiences and interests of students are strongly influenced by their peers. Additionally
the cultivation of peer relationships plays a vital role in not only how sophomores develop personally and intellectually, but also how sophomores are being integrated into their college environment. Since peer relationships have such a strong impact on student connections to and integration with their institution, it is not surprising that students who are struggling with peer connections also struggle in other areas. Interestingly, Kohlberg and Kramer (1969) claimed that sophomore students actually regressed in their development, causing a slide backwards in both moral and personal development that was then attributed to their academic struggles. This slide backward could also be linked to or exacerbated by their peer interactions and how integrated sophomores do or do not feel.

It is the combination of all of these factors, impacts and theories that affirm researchers’ findings that sophomores are facing unique and serious challenges integrating into the academic and social systems of their colleges (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Hunter et al., 2009; Richmond & Lemons, 1985; Schaller, 2005; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007; Wilder, 1993). Still, one of the largest challenges that sophomores are facing deals with the core purpose of their attendance at college and the most basic part of any students life: their academics.

**Putting it Together: Starting Up Sophomore-Year Programs?**

As interest in sophomore student development spread, so too did the development of targeted sophomore interventions and programs mirroring offerings for first-year students (Flanagan, 1991; Gardner, 2000; Hunter et al., 2009; Schaller, 2005, 2007; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). These programs vary in scope and focus but all of them address at least one of the three components of sophomore slump: academic struggles, feelings of dissatisfaction with or lack of
connection to the university, and peer connections. Most campuses now offer programs or resources that address multiple facets of sophomore slump but some address only a single area. In 2005, the National Resource Center for First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (NRCFYEST) conducted a survey to document the number of sophomore-year programs and initiatives in existence in the U.S. They conducted a follow up survey in 2008. In 2005, 382 institutions responded and each reported offering at least one targeted sophomore program on their campus. In 2008, hundreds more colleges reported offering sophomore-year programs, and so a selective study of those services began. NRCFYEST selected 315 out of the thousands of programs reported to study their goals, outcomes, assessment practices and institutional differences. Implications for future sophomore-year initiatives were also discussed.

The NRCFYEST study found that private colleges and universities offered more extensive services that addressed student satisfaction, retention, and engagement. These types of institutions were also more likely to partner with existing campus resources and to offer newsletters and print resources to students. Their programs also often fell into a category of long standing programs defined as programs that had existed for more than 6 years on their campus. Long standing programs tended to combine resources that addressed student academic needs, personal development and career development. Recommendations were identified to encourage colleges to better assess their programs, incorporate more career planning and to continue to expand on events targeting class specific needs. Other recommendations specified the need for structured exploration of student academic interests and facilitating relationship building with faculty. Each recommendation is in line with the research conducted and described here on sophomore experiences and the sophomore slump specifically (Gansem-Topp & Stern, 2007; Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Juillerat, 2000; Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Schaller, 2005;
Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000). However, the need for more research on sophomores in different college settings, representing various student demographics and across larger second-year populations remains.

**Dissertation Focus & Significance**

My survey research study examined the sophomore experience at a large, public university in the Western United States – The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). While sampling of sophomores at a site like mine has been conducted, no studies to date have combined analysis of survey data of sophomores with data from students from other class years. My study is also the first to explore institutional conditions and student behaviors specifically, which are consistently cited as areas that contribute to the sophomore slump, but which are still lacking empirical evidence and research. Additionally, my study allows for specific, evidence based recommendations to be used in the development of sophomore specific programs and initiatives at UCLA as a result of the findings.

My dissertation helps to further explore institutional conditions and student behaviors related to sophomore slump by looking at the population of residential and non-residential sophomore students at UCLA which totals close to six thousand sophomores. I focused on student behaviors and institutional conditions, using survey data to explore the specific aspects of student experience related to sophomore slump, their prevalence and potential causes, and comparisons among freshman, sophomores and juniors attending at UCLA. The following are the research questions I used to guide my inquiries.

**Research Questions**
I conducted my dissertation by quantitatively examining the extent of sophomore slump in three main areas: (1) academic success, (2) engagement, and (3) satisfaction. Through survey research I investigated three specific research questions:

1. According to the survey data are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ academic success, and that of other class years?
2. According to the survey data are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ engagement, and that of other class years?
3. According to the survey data are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ satisfaction, and that of other class years?

The following chapter will outline the design of this study and the methods used to address the research questions above.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The primary goal of this study was to determine the extent and nature of sophomore slumping variables at UCLA. My dissertation investigated three specific research questions:

1. According to the survey data, are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ academic success, and that of other class years?
2. According to the survey data, are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ engagement, and that of other class years?
3. According to the survey data, are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ satisfaction, and that of other class years?

Using Kuh’s (2007) constructs of student behavior and institutional conditions to operationalize students’ experiences of sophomore slump. I investigated academics, both in terms of engagement and self-efficacy, satisfaction, and involvement components of possible slump. According to Kuh, student behaviors are varied but encompass “the time and effort students put into their studies, interaction with faculty, and peer involvement” (p. 11). Kuh defined institutional conditions as “resources, educational policies, programs and practices, and structural features” (p. 11). Each of these definitions helped in developing the framework to understand the separate factors that influence students’ experiences of sophomore slump. Separating out the experiences that are affected by student behaviors versus the institution, allowed for further exploration of each, as well as a better understanding of how they are interrelated, and ultimately the sophomore slump phenomenon as it exists at this institution.
This study used a web-based survey administered to current undergraduate students at UCLA during the spring quarter of 2014. This study sought to explore and describe UCLA sophomore challenges and issues related to “slump” by exploring academic success, engagement and satisfaction. The survey instrument used in this study was a compilation of preexisting survey measures from the 2007 Sophomore Experience Survey created and administered by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (Hunter et al., 2009). The survey integrated three pre-existing measures: The Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001); the Engaged Learning Index (Schreiner & Louis, 2008); the Adult Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). Measures for satisfaction and involvement were also included. All of these measures have been shown to have acceptable reliability and validity with college student populations.

**Research Site, Recruitment and Sampling**

This section describes the research site and both the recruitment process and sample for this study. The site for this study was the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), a large, public, highly selective research university. UCLA enrolls close to 30,000 undergraduate students annually (UCLA, 2012), 27,000 of whom are domestic while close to 3,000 are international. The reported racial and ethnic breakdown of the undergraduate student population at UCLA is as follows in Table 1.
Table 1

UCLA Student Demographics by Race/ Ethnicity for Total Undergraduate and On-Campus

Undergraduate Populations Compared to Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Total for Population</th>
<th>Total for Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstated, unknown, other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students identified as multiracial</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student population at UCLA is diverse and closer to national student enrollment demographics for race and ethnicity and therefore allows for better generalizations to the national sophomore population as a whole. While not perfect, these representations are valuable for a study that seeks to add to knowledge not only about one school site, but the sophomore slump phenomenon as a whole. Also of note is the fact that 94% of first year students live on campus and close to 4,000 students or 71% of sophomores, elect to return to live on campus for a second year. The on-campus sophomore population is approximately 22% of the total returning student population (UCLA enrollment demographics Fall 2012).

Also important to this study are UCLA’s retention and graduation rates. The overall graduation rate at UCLA for full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates is 94% within five or six years of enrolling according to UCLA’s report on undergraduate success.
and progress (UCLA Office of Analysis and Information Management, 2013). The reported retention rate of first year students who return their second year is 96% (UCLA Office of Analysis and Information Management, 2013). Although both of these rates are high, they do not mean that students are not experiencing a slump; it is possible that slump presents or exists differently for UCLA students than students at previously studied institutions.

**Sampling**

As this study sought to explore the differences between sophomores and other class years related to academic success, engagement and satisfaction, a large sample of undergraduate first years, sophomores and juniors were recruited. For the purposes of this study, sophomore is defined as students in their second year of full-time college attendance, regardless of course credits or units obtained. The terms *sophomore* and *second-year* will be used interchangeably throughout. Freshmen were defined as students entering their first year of college, who were non-transfers, again regardless of course credits or units obtained. Juniors were defined as students entering their third year of college, again, regardless of course credits obtained and who had not transferred to UCLA.

Recruitment took place between April 2014 and June 2014. To ensure that a broad range of students were informed of the study and invited to participate, I recruited widely and in different ways. I began by working with Residential Life to seek access to recruit participants for the study. Flyers advertising the study with a quick response (QR) code link were printed and posted in all on-campus housing residential facilities in public places. The survey link was also sent out via email to residents of the on-campus housing community and was shared via social
media such as Facebook. The on-campus housing community at UCLA houses over 10,000 undergraduate students.

To reach students who lived in off-campus housing, off-campus housing residential areas were visited and flyers were posted in those communities. Flyers were also posted around campus in public bulletin boards located in academic buildings, the campus store and central student Union, the student activities center, the gym and cafeterias, as these are areas that see high levels of student traffic. The survey was also sent directly to academic advisors across campus who worked with undergraduate students to reach students from a variety of majors and who may commute to campus or spend less time in the buildings listed above. Those advisors were asked to email the survey to the students they worked with via their email listservs to protect student identities and anonymity. A total of 8 advisors across 6 departments confirmed that they would send the survey along to students they advised. These departments were in both STEM and non-STEM fields. The total number of students included in those listservs was approximately 3,800.

The only ethical issues related to this study dealt with identifying students. As all of the information collected through the survey was anonymous and email addresses were listed only if participants chose enter them to be eligible for gift card incentives, there was no way to identify the students that participated. All contact with the students selected to receive the gift card incentives was related only to how to collect the gift card and when the gift cards were picked up, only email addressed were used to identify student. No other contact was made and email addresses were removed from all data files before analysis. This ensured the confidentiality of the students and maintained the integrity of the study.
Participant confidentiality was maintained by housing all data collection on Survey Monkey, a secured site that requires a password to log in. Additional security settings were enabled in Survey Monkey that shut off the recording of the IP address of participants. The only personal identifier that was asked in the survey was for voluntary submission of email addresses to be used for incentive purposes only. Survey Monkey also uses multiple levels of security, including firewall and intrusion prevention technology, to ensure that data remained private and secure. Data remained in the secured Survey Monkey site until downloaded, and once downloaded, data files were only stored on private computers that were password protected. Access to the data file was limited to the primary researcher until all identifying information had been removed from the data file. Backup copies of the original data files were saved using Dropbox, a password protected storage site and on a private external hard drive that is only accessible to the researcher. Data files had participant emails removed in all versions so respondents were identified only according to their response numbers in each data file. Once those identifiers were removed, the only persons with access to the data file were the primary researcher and principal contact for the research study.

Ultimately, 331 consented to participate in the study, and 226 were included in the data analysis \((n = 226)\), as they met selection criteria and answered both the demographic questions in Section A and questions from the five sub measures. To meet the selection criteria for this study, respondents needed to be currently enrolled students in their first, second, or third year of attendance at the institution. Respondents who identified as transfer students were also not included in the sample. In terms of class year, 77 first years (34.1%), 75 sophomores (33.2%), and 74 juniors (32.7%) were in the sample. Eighty-one percent of respondents were female while
only 19% were male. Thirty percent of participants reported first generation college student status.

As the focus of this study was to explore the differences in experience between sophomores and other class years, certain key demographic variables were used to tease out potential differences that the literature claims impact student experience. Those variables were sex, racial group, major, and first generation status. Table 2 presents the demographic data for the sample for those key demographics by class year.

Table 2
Demographic overview of student sample by class year and in comparison to population at site institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>(n = 77)</td>
<td>(n = 75)</td>
<td>(n = 74)</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>(n = 76)</td>
<td>(n = 74)</td>
<td>(n = 71)</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>(n = 74)</td>
<td>(n = 73)</td>
<td>(n = 74)</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non STEM</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Gen</td>
<td>(n = 76)</td>
<td>(n = 75)</td>
<td>(n = 74)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

All data were collected using a web-based survey on the Survey Monkey platform. The survey was open for participants to complete in late April of 2014 through June of 2014, during
the spring quarter of the 2013-14 academic year. The survey was administered in the spring quarter to ensure that first year students had more than one academic quarter of college experiences to reflect and report on. No other selection criteria or filtering was applied, allowing for all interested freshmen, sophomore and junior students attending UCLA to be represented.

To attempt to increase response rates, a five-dollar gift card to the UCLA store was offered for the first 100 participants as an incentive to complete the survey. This information was publicized in all recruitment emails that were sent to advisors and posted on all flyers. In May of the same spring quarter, 50 survey respondents were contacted and notified that they would receive gift cards. They were encouraged to share the survey with other eligible students to attempt to increase response rates. Students were contacted using the email addresses they had voluntarily provided and no other identifying information was asked of them or recorded about them at the time the gift card was picked up.

**Survey Instrument**

This section details the survey instrument that was used for this study. The first page of the web-based survey included information about the study purpose and the informed consent statement. This information sheet and description page was modeled after the University of California Los Angeles Study Information Sheet used for the 2014 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey. Participants were specifically informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw their consent and discontinue participation at any time. It was also noted that participants could refuse to answer any questions that they did not want to answer and still remain in the study. This information sheet and description page also asked participants for their permission to access the email address listed
(by voluntary inclusion) to contact them to pick up the gift card incentive should they be selected to receive one.

The survey that followed the information page consisted of that were a combination of questions taken verbatim from three previously established instruments: the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Chemers et al., 2001); the Engaged Learning Index (Schreiner & Louis, 2008); and the Adult Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991). The six major sections of the survey were labeled A-F.

Section A of the survey instrument asked demographic questions of participants including their class year, housing status (on or off campus), gender, and race, as well as many other demographic questions. These questions were again modeled after the demographic questions asked in the 2014 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey. Section A was used to determine respondent eligibility. Only students who completed demographic questions from Section A and were first, second or third year students were included for analysis. Section A was used to compare student groups and characteristics as described above in the sampling section.

Section B of the survey instrument included the Engaged Learning Index and C included the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale. Section D included questions about satisfaction and Section E asked questions about involvement. Section F included the Adult Hope Trait scale. All sections were integral to the study and were directly relevant to the research questions, as detailed in Table 3.
Table 3
*Research Questions and Corresponding Survey Sections*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Corresponding Survey Sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. According to the survey data are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ academic success, and that of other class years?</td>
<td>Section C, Academic Self-Efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. According to the survey data are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ engagement, and that of other class years?</td>
<td>Section B, Engaged Learning Index Section E, Involvement Section F, the Adult Hope Trait Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. According to the survey data are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ satisfaction, and that of other class years?</td>
<td>Section D, Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Measures**

This study used three previously established instruments (Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, Engaged Learning Index, and the Adult Trait Hope Scale) to measure the same constructs with this college student sample and similar reliability and validity were expected for this study. In addition, two sub measures were used to explore satisfaction and involvement, both of which has also been used in the 2007 Sophomore Experience Survey and have been shown to be reliable and valid. These measures have also been used specifically in other research conducted previously on sophomore slump (Hunter et al., 2009; Juillerat, 2000; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). The Cronbach’s alpha levels for all five of the measures discussed above are presented in Table 4. Then the following sub sections will detail each of the sub measures used in this study.
### Table 4
*Internal Consistency of Scales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Scale</th>
<th>α for sample</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning Index</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Scale</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The **Academic Self-Efficacy Scale**. Included in section C of my survey instrument, the Academic Self-Efficacy scale was used to address academic achievement and students’ beliefs in their ability to be academically successful. The scale consists of eight internally consistent items ($\alpha = 0.91$) that measure students’ confidence to perform optimally on academic tasks. Predictive validity studies have connected students scores to their cumulative GPA and persistence (Chemers et al., 2001; Hunter et al., 2009). The questions use a 7-point Likert scale, with 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = agree somewhat, 4 = undecided, 3 = somewhat disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. Responses for all eight questions were averaged to calculate a total score for Academic Self-Efficacy for each participant.

The **Engaged Learning Index**. Included in section B of this survey instrument, the Engaged Learning Index (Schreiner & Louis, 2008) measured students’ academic engagement and consists of 15 items ($\alpha = 0.87$). The items measure meaningful processing, focused attention, and active participation in learning. The measure uses a 5-point scale with 5 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree. Students’ responses for all fifteen questions were averaged to calculate a total score for Engaged Learning for each participant.
**Involvement.** Included in section E of this survey instrument, these 8 items ($\alpha = .80$) were used to measure student’s social engagement and assessed students’ level of participation in 8 types of student involvement, ranging from campus organizations and events, leadership, peer mentoring, service-learning opportunities, and learning communities. The questions use a 5-point scale using 0 as not at all involved and 5 as very involved. Student responses for all eight questions were averaged to calculate a total score for Involvement for each participant.

**The Adult Trait Hope Scale.** Included in section F of this survey instrument, the Adult Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) is a cognitive model of hope. The scale defines hope as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)" (Snyder et al., p. 287). This is an eight-item measure ($\alpha = .87$), with four of the items that make up the agency subscale and the other four the pathway subscale. Each item is answered using a 4-point Likert-type scale using 1 as definitely false to 4 as definitely true. The original AHS used 12-items which included four filler items. These four items were omitted for the 2007 Sophomore Experience Survey and so were also omitted in this survey instrument as well. Student responses for all eight questions were averaged to calculate a total score for Hope for each participant.

**Satisfaction.** Included in section D of this survey instrument, these 5 items ($\alpha = .66$) assess students overall satisfaction with their college experience, the amount they were learning and the advising they received. It also asks about their satisfaction with their peers and their interactions with faculty (Hunter et al., 2009). The questions use a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from $5 = $very satisfied to $1 = $very dissatisfied. Students’ responses for all five questions were
averaged to calculate a total score for Satisfaction. This was the only measure of the five that had an alpha for the sample that was lower. Reliability was still at an acceptable level and other studies have reported alphas in the range that were yielded for this study.

**Data Analysis Plan**

A number of steps were taken prior to analysis to prepare the data. The process of monitoring the survey responses, screening, and cleaning the data set is detailed in the section below. The process of data transformations, including reverse scoring and computing of total and subscale scores, is also described.

I monitored participants’ responses on Survey Monkey throughout the data collection period to check for any irregular activity, such as multiple attempts by the same person or ineligible participants, survey administration errors, and response rates. Next, a codebook was prepared that included labels for each of the variables and values for each of the possible responses to each survey question analyzed in this study (Pallant, 2013).

Once the survey was closed and the data file downloaded from the secure Survey Monkey site, data were searched and checked for duplicate responses, incomplete responses and ineligible participants. Ineligible participants were all participants who were not currently enrolled undergraduate first, second, and third year students were excluded; all such respondents were excluded from the analyses. Then the data were checked for extreme values, missing values, and errors. The only errors found in data were typos for how students entered their own ages and GPA. To ensure the best possible number of cases to be included, respondents were only included in the sample if they completed both the demographic questions in section A and any part of the five additional measures. In other words, the sample size for each analysis
reflected the total number of participants in the sample who completed both the demographic questions and the questions associated with the measures used in the analysis.

**Demographic Group Variables**

In order to compare subgroups of participants based on demographic variables, I constructed 3 demographic group variables; race, major and parental education/generation status. Each variable represents a demographic group of interest in this study. The decision to focus on race, major and first-generation status as key demographic variables for this study is supported by previous studies and literature, as described below.

**Race.** In regards to race, many studies have cited important differences in the experiences of students from different racial backgrounds, including studies focused on sophomore slump (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Hunter et al., 2009; López, 2003; Reyes, 2012; Schaller, 2007; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). Students from different racial backgrounds can have widely different experiences on a campus that can impact their engagement, satisfaction and academic success, all of which are components key to this study and to the exploration of sophomore slump. Additionally, national trends for enrollment indicate that some traditionally under-represented minority groups have now far surpassed their non-minority counterparts in enrollment. Asian American and Pacific Islander (referred to here as API) students in particular have increased their enrollment since 1976 over 560% yet white students continue to represent a strong majority for national enrollments (Renn & Reason, 2013). It is important to note that for this study, students who identified as belonging to API groups were heavily represented in the sample. This over-representation may have a significant impact on the scores reported for
students academic success, engagement and satisfaction as API students have been found to outscore their other student counterparts in these areas.

To account for this over-representation and to attempt to separate out the experiences of different students by racial groupings, the sample was analyzed separating API students, students who identified as White/Caucasian, and students from all other racial backgrounds. These groupings are also in line with the main three racial demographic groupings represented at the site. For analysis, race was collapsed into three groups: Group 1- White/Caucasian, Group 2-API, Group 3- All other backgrounds. Students who did not report their racial background were dropped from analysis.

Academic major. Student major has also been explored as a student demographic that may impact students’ engagement, academic success and satisfaction. It has been suggested that studies of sophomore slump conducted at liberal art’s institutions may not accurately account for the experiences of students attending other institution types or students not majoring in the humanities (Juillerat, 2000; Schaller, 2005, 2007; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). The representation of students in STEM fields at this large, public, four-year research institution addresses these areas recommended for further inquiry. The over-representation of students in the STEM fields is also consistent with the reported enrollment of students in STEM and non-STEM majors at the site.

The second variable that was re-coded was for student major. Responses for major were recoded into two groups; Group 1- STEM and Group 2- Non STEM. This coding also accounted for students who were double majors. Students who were double majors in both a STEM and non-STEM major were included in analysis with the STEM majors, as listed above. Students
who were double majors in both a STEM and Non-STEM area were included in the STEM category. Analyses were run including these students in both the STEM and Non STEM and no statistically significant differences were found when included in either group. Respondents who reported that their majors were undecided or other, were dropped from analysis.

**Parental education/generation status.** Finally, students who are considered to be first generation, or students for whom neither parent (or guardian) possess a four-year degree (Renn & Reason, 2013), have also been studied and this characteristic has been found to have significant impact on their educational experiences. It has been found that first generation students have a harder time transitioning to college and that their engagement and academic success are also often different that students whose parents or guardians have attended college (American College Personnel Association, 2004; Evans et al., 2010; Renn & Reason, 2013). These concerns around engagement and academic success for first generations students are directly relevant to this study and the further study of sophomore slump.

While the survey for this study asked questions about first generation status as well as parents educational level, only first generation status was used for analysis under the assumption and definition that students whose parents had no post-secondary education were also first generation. Those responses were collapsed into two groups; Group 1- First Generation and Group 2- Not First Generation.

**Description of Group Comparisons**

The following section will detail analyses that were run to investigate the research questions for this study. The analyses conducted first compared the mean scores of the student
participants by class year on GPA and on each of the five measures used in the survey instrument: the Academic Self-Efficacy scale, the Engaged Learning Index, Involvement, the Adult Trait Hope Scale and Satisfaction. To further explore if there were specific differences in the experiences of subgroups of students by class year, a series of ANOVAs were run, and then all statistically significant main effects were investigated further using Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons. Descriptions of these analyses follow.

**Class Year Differences.** As the focus of this study was to explore what differences between sophomores and students in other class years existed, a series of one-way between group ANOVAs (analysis of variance) were conducted to compare mean scores between class years on G.P.A. and on each of the five measures. Participants were divided into three groups according to their class year (Group 1: Freshman; Group 2: Sophomore; Group 3: Junior) for all of these analyses.

**Differences by Race.** To further investigate what differences between sophomores and other class years and race, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to compare mean scores by class year and race for each of the five measures. Participants were divided into three groups according to their class year (Group 1: Freshman; Group 2: Sophomore; Group 3: Junior) and three groups according to their race (Group 1: White/Caucasian; Group 2: API; Group 3: All other racial backgrounds) for each of the analyses run.

**Differences by Major.** To further investigate class year differences when the student major was included, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to compare mean scores
by class year and major for each of the five measures. Participants were divided into three groups according to their class year (Group 1: Freshman; Group 2: Sophomore; Group 3: Junior) and two groups according to their major (Group 1: STEM; Group 2: Non-STEM) for each of the analyses run.

**Differences by First Generation Status.** To further investigate class year differences when first-generation status was included, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to compare mean scores by class year and first-generation status for each of the five measures. Participants were divided into three groups according to their class year (Group 1: Freshman; Group 2: Sophomore; Group 3: Junior) and two groups according to their first-generation status (Group 1: First Generation; Group 2: Not First Generation) for all analyses.

Table 5 summarizes the number, mean score, and standard deviation for class year on each of the five measures included in this study and will be discussed in the next chapter on findings.
Table 5

Summary of Number, Means, Standard Deviation, and Scale for Sample by Measure and Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Self- Efficacy</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3.58 (.77)</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.71 (.78)</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3.76 (.63)</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Learning</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4.40 (.74)</td>
<td>1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>4.41 (.65)</td>
<td>1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>4.50 (.61)</td>
<td>1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.14 (.79)</td>
<td>0-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1.14 (.67)</td>
<td>0-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1.48 (.77)</td>
<td>0-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Hope Scale</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.90 (.45)</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.05 (.45)</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.04 (.39)</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3.62 (.60)</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3.72 (.72)</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.65 (.60)</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

Using pre-existing measures from other studies conducted on sophomores, this study sought to examine the experiences of \( N = 226 \) college students at a large, urban, public, competitive four-year institution. This study sought to explore and describe UCLA sophomore challenges and issues related to “slump” by exploring academic success, engagement and satisfaction. Data were analyzed using a inferential statistics to compare sophomores to first years and juniors in terms of academic success, engagement, and satisfaction. Data were also analyzed to see if there were class year differences for specific sub groups within the sample (i.e., race, major, first-generation status).

Results of the study did not provide evidence of sophomore slump, nor did the results show that sophomores had significant differences in their college experience when compared to first year and third year students. Findings showed that students at UCLA were satisfied and maintained high levels of academic achievement. In fact, instead of finding indications of slump or downward trends, students maintained levels of academic success, engagement and satisfaction across class years. However, the findings also revealed that some demographic group differences did exist in this sample. The results of these analyses will be presented in the sections that follow and will begin with a description of the class year comparisons for students’ academic success, and conclude with a description of any significant demographic group differences by race, major and first-generation status.

Findings for Academic Success
To address RQ1 (According to the survey data are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ academic success, and that of other class years?), academic success for students’ was explored using two measures. GPA represented students achieved academic success, while the total scores on the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (ASE) approximated students’ belief in their ability to be academically successful. Means and standard deviations for both measures by class year are presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for GPA and Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) by Class Year and for Significant Subgroup Comparisons for ASE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>GPA Mean (SD)</th>
<th>ASE Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>3.29 (.47)</td>
<td>3.58 (.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>3.36 (.38)</td>
<td>3.70 (.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>3.34 (.36)</td>
<td>3.76 (.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.00 (.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.66 (.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other Backgrounds</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.48 (.71)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Year*Race</th>
<th>White (SD)</th>
<th>API (SD)</th>
<th>All Other Backgrounds (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>3.88 (.48)</td>
<td>3.61 (.70)</td>
<td>3.43 (.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>4.21 (.51)</td>
<td>3.62 (.80)</td>
<td>3.40 (.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>3.95 (.50)</td>
<td>3.73 (.74)</td>
<td>3.66 (.33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted comparing GPA by class year ($n = 219$). Results showed that there were not significant differences in GPA by class year ($F (2, 216) = .61, p < .54$). Similarly, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing ASE scores by class year ($n = 208$). These results also showed that there were not significant differences in total ASE scores by class year ($F (2, 205) = 1.09, p < .34$).
Next, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the total Academic Self-Efficacy score, which compared the mean academic self-efficacy scores by participants’ race and class year \((n = 203)\). The interaction effect between race and class year was not statistically significant, \((F (4, 194) = .63, p = .64)\). There was a statistically significant main effect at the \(p < .01\) level for race, \((F (4, 194) = 6.77, p = .001)\); however the effect size was medium \((\eta^2 = .06)\). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that there were statistically significant differences between mean academic self-efficacy scores for white students \((M = 4.00, SD = .50)\) and API students \((M = 3.66, SD = .74)\) and between white students \((M = 4.00, SD = .50)\) and students from all other backgrounds \((M = 3.48, SD = .71)\). There was no statistically significant difference in mean ASE scores by participants’ class year.

Next, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the total Academic Self-Efficacy score, which compared the mean academic self-efficacy scores by major and class year \((n = 203)\). The interaction effect between race and class year was not statistically significant, \((F (2, 197) = .38, p = .68)\). There was no statistically significant main effect at the \(p < .01\) level for major or class year.

Finally, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the total Academic Self-Efficacy score, which compared the mean academic self-efficacy scores by first-generation status and class year \((n = 208)\). The interaction effect between first-generation status and class year was not statistically significant, \((F (2, 201) = .60, p = .55)\). There was no statistically significant main effect at the \(p < .01\) level for first-generation status or class year.

**Findings for Engagement**
To explore RQ2 (According to the survey data are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ engagement, and that of other class years?) three variables were used to examine students’ engagement, which was defined as both their academic and social engagement. Total scores for the Engaged Learning (EL) Index and the Adult Trait Hope Scale were used to examine academic engagement, while total scores for Involvement were used to explore social engagement. Means and standard deviations for Engaged Learning, Hope and Involvement by class year are presented in Table 7.

Table 7
Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Engaged Learning (EL), Hope, and Involvement (Invol.) by Class Year and for Significant Subgroup Comparisons for EL and Hope

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>EL Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Hope Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Invol. Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>4.37 (.47)</td>
<td>2.90 (.44)</td>
<td>1.14 (.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>4.41 (.65)</td>
<td>3.05 (.45)</td>
<td>1.14 (.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>4.48 (.61)</td>
<td>3.04 (.39)</td>
<td>1.49 (.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4.76 (.72)</td>
<td>3.18 (.45)</td>
<td>1.32 (.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API</td>
<td>4.34 (.83)</td>
<td>2.92 (.41)</td>
<td>1.30 (.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other Backgrounds</td>
<td>4.28 (.83)</td>
<td>2.99 (.43)</td>
<td>1.12 (.82)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EL Mean (SD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Year*Race</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>API</th>
<th>All Other Backgrounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>4.75 (.56)</td>
<td>4.40 (.86)</td>
<td>4.12 (.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>5.07 (.92)</td>
<td>4.25 (.82)</td>
<td>4.16 (.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>4.47 (.57)</td>
<td>4.40 (.83)</td>
<td>4.71 (.72)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hope Mean (SD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Year*Race</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>API</th>
<th>All Other Backgrounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>2.99 (.41)</td>
<td>2.85 (.41)</td>
<td>2.90 (.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>3.35 (.42)</td>
<td>2.96 (.47)</td>
<td>2.98 (.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>3.27 (.50)</td>
<td>2.94 (.36)</td>
<td>3.19 (.28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To explore class year differences in academic engagement, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing total Engaged Learning scores by class year ($n = 204$). Results showed that there were not statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level in those scores by class year ($F(2, 203) = .57, p < .63$). Similarly, a one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing total Hope scores by class year ($n = 192$). Again results showed no statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level in those scores by class year ($F(2, 189) = 2.54, p < .08$).

To explore social engagement scores between class years, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare total involvement by class year ($n = 190$). Results showed that there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in involvement scores between class years ($F(2, 189) = 4.44, p < .01$). Tukey post-hoc comparisons of the three groups indicate that there was a significant difference between groups for freshmen ($M = 1.14, SD = .80$) and juniors ($M = 1.49, SD = .77$), and for sophomores ($M = 1.14, SD = .67$) and juniors ($M = 1.49, SD = .77$), with juniors being more involved than both freshmen and sophomores. Effect size was small at $\eta^2 = .04$.

Next, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the total Engaged Learning Index score, which compared mean scores for engaged learning by class year and race. The participants included in this analysis were those who completed both the demographic information and the Engaged Learning Index ($n = 200$). The interaction effect between race and class year was not statistically significant, ($F(4, 191) = 2.35, p = .06$). There was a statistically significant main effect at the $p < .01$ level for race, ($F(4, 194) = 4.83, p = .009$); however the effect size was medium ($\eta^2 = .05$). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that there were significant differences in engaged learning between the mean score for white students ($M = 4.76, SD = .72$) and API students ($M = 4.34, SD = .83$) and between white students ($M = 4.76, SD = .72$) and API students ($M = 4.34, SD = .83$) and between white students ($M = 4.76, SD = .72$) and API students ($M = 4.34, SD = .83$).
4.76, $SD = .72$) and students from all other backgrounds ($M = 4.28, SD = .83$). There was no statistically significant difference in mean EL scores by participants’ class year.

Next, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the total Engaged Learning Index score to compare mean scores for engaged learning by class year and major ($n = 199$). The interaction effect between major and class year was not statistically significant, ($F (2, 193) = 1.15, p = .32$). There was a statistically significant main effect at the $p < .01$ level for major, ($F (2, 193) = 7.66, p = .001$), with Non-Stem majors being more engaged learners; however the effect size was medium ($\eta^2 = .06$). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in engaged learning by participants’ major or class year.

Finally, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the total Engaged Learning Index score to compare mean scores for engaged learning by class year and first-generation status ($n = 204$). The interaction effect between first-generation status and class year was not statistically significant, ($F (2, 197) = 2.33, p = .10$). There was no statistically significant main effect at the $p < .01$ level for first-generation status or class year. In sum, there were no statistically significant differences in engaged learning by participants’ first-generation status or class year.

To further explore students’ engagement, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the Total Adult Trait Hope Scale score to compare mean scores for Hope by class year and race. The participants included in this sample were those who completed both the demographic information and the Hope measure ($n = 188$). The interaction effect between race and class year was not statistically significant, ($F (4, 179) = .91, p = .46$). There was a statistically significant main effect at the $p < .01$ level for race, ($F (4, 179) = 6.44, p = .002$); with
a medium effect size ($\eta^2 = .07$). There was also a statistically significant main effect at the $p < .01$ level for year, ($F (4, 179) = 4.54, p = .01$); however the effect size was small ($\eta^2 = .05$). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that there were statistically significant differences in hope for white students ($M = 3.18, SD = .45$) compared to API students ($M = 2.92, SD = .41$). There was no statistically significant difference in mean Hope scores by participants’ class year.

Next a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the Total Adult Trait Hope Scale score to compare mean scores for Hope by class year and major ($n = 187$). The interaction effect between major and class year was not statistically significant, ($F (2, 181) = 1.25, p = .29$). There was no statistically significant main effect at the $p < .01$ level for major or year. In sum, there were no significant differences in hope by major or class year.

Finally, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the Total Adult Trait Hope Scale score to compare mean scores for Hope by class year and first-generation status ($n = 192$). The interaction effect between first-generation status and class year was not statistically significant, ($F (2, 185) = .34, p = .71$). There was no statistically significant main effect at the $p < .01$ level for first-generation status or year. In sum, there were no significant differences in hope by first-generation status or class year.

To explore students’ social engagement, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the total Involvement scale to compare mean scores for involvement by race and class year. The participants included in this sample were those who completed both the demographic information and the Involvement measure ($n = 186$). The interaction effect between race and class year was not statistically significant, ($F (4, 177) = .68, p = .61$). There was a statistically significant main effect at the $p < .01$ level for class year, ($F (2, 193) = 3.60, p = .03$);
however the effect size was small ($\eta^2 = .04$). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in involvement by participants’ race or class year.

Next, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to using the total Involvement score to compare mean scores for involvement by major and class year ($n = 185$). The interaction effect between major and class year was not statistically significant, ($F (2, 179) = .19$, $p = .82$). There was not a statistically significant main effect for either major or class year.

Finally, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to using the total Involvement score to compare mean scores for involvement by first-generation status and class year ($n = 190$). The interaction effect between first-generation status and class year was not statistically significant, ($F (2, 183) = .03$, $p = .96$). There was not a statistically significant main effect for either first-generation status or class year. In sum, there were no significant differences in involvement by first-generation status or class year.

**Findings for Satisfaction**

To explore RQ3 (According to the survey data are there differences between UCLA sophomore students’ satisfaction, and that of other class years?), total scores from the Satisfaction measure were used as the variable to calculate students’ satisfaction. Means and standard deviations for Satisfaction by class year are presented in Table 8.
Table 8
*Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Satisfaction by Class Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Year</th>
<th>Satisfaction Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>3.63 (.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>3.72 (.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>3.65 (.60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To explore class year differences in mean satisfaction, a one-way ANOVA was conducted \((n = 202)\). Results showed that there was not a statistically significant difference at the \(p < .05\) level in satisfaction scores between class years \((F (2, 200) = .31, p < .82)\).

Next, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the total Satisfaction score to compare means scores for satisfaction by race and class year. The participants included in this sample were those who completed both the demographic information and the Satisfaction measure \((n=197)\). The interaction effect between race and class year was not statistically significant, \((F (4, 188) = .75, p = .56)\). There was not a statistically significant main effect for either race or class year.

Following this analysis, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the total Satisfaction score to compare mean scores for satisfaction by class year and major \((n = 197)\). The interaction effect between major and class year was not statistically significant, \((F (2, 191) = 1.58, p = .21)\). There was not a statistically significant main effect for either major or class year.

Finally, a two-way between groups ANOVA was conducted using the total Satisfaction score to compare mean scores for satisfaction by class year and first-generation status \((n = 202)\). The interaction effect between first-generation status and class year was not statistically significant, \((F (2, 195) = 2.08, p = .13)\). There was not a statistically significant main effect for
either first-generation status or class year. In sum, there were no significant differences in satisfaction by first-generation status or class year.

**Conclusion**

The findings from the data indicate that undergraduate students at this institution are generally academically successful, engaged and involved. Findings also indicate that their experiences improve or stay positive over time in all of the five measures used for this study. Specifically, findings indicate that the experiences of sophomore students are not significantly different when compared to other class years. The only measure that showed a significant difference by class year was involvement, which still showed an upward trend. These data therefore do not support that a sophomore slump is present at this institution, at least for this sample. There are, however, a few areas that seem to require further attention and discussion. Discussion of these findings and their implications will follow in the next chapter.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter summarizes the results of this research study and offers recommendations for future research and practice. The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate sophomore slumping at UCLA. Specifically, the goal of the study was to provide a description of trends, attitudes, and perceptions of sophomore students at UCLA as compared to first and third year students in terms of: academic success, engagement, and satisfaction. This chapter begins by presenting a discussion of the findings. The chapter concludes with discussions of the study’s limitations, areas for future research, and implications for practice.

Discussion of Findings

Although many institutions and the literature describe sophomores as slumping, there were no findings that supported a significant overall difference for sophomores when compared to their first year and third year counterparts in terms of academic success, engagement, or satisfaction for this sample. Instead, data indicated that students at UCLA are satisfied, academically successful, and academically and socially engaged, and that over time, there are upward trends for each of these areas. This upward trend was directly counter to my hypotheses and expectations regarding this population and the sophomore slump phenomenon as broadly discussed currently. While the findings indicated that there were not significant differences between the experiences of sophomores and other class years overall, there were also no statistically significant differences when looking at major or first-generation status. There were however, some statistical differences between the experiences of students when looking at sub populations based on students’ racial demographics. Though these results are counter to the
majority of current research on sophomore slump, they still offer key insights into this population of sophomores. The following sections will discuss the findings for each of the main areas explored, academic success, engagement, and satisfaction.

**Academic Success**

Two variables were used to examine students’ academic success, GPA, and total scores for the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale. Of the two, GPA was not statistically different between class years, but also very high across all respondents. This in itself was interesting as it underscored the absence of a sophomore slump in academic success for this sample and also supports the idea that if this population of high achieving students may experience slump, it is in ways not indicated by GPA. Most often, slump is associated with decline, which is most commonly measured by academic decline or a lower GPA. For the sophomore students in this study, academic achievement is still high, supporting ideas from Chapter 2 that suggest that it may be most helpful to separate out decline from the frustrations or challenges that sophomores face (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Hunter et al., 2009; Lemons & Richmond, 1987; Schaller, 2007; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007). While my participants may not be experiencing academic decline, that does not preclude the possibility of them being frustrated or feeling challenged.

Findings for Academic Self-efficacy show clearly that overall sophomores are not slumping, but are actually doing better. It may be that sophomores are peaking in their academic self-efficacy as the sophomore year is the last year before most students begin upper division courses for their majors. These scores would then indicate that by the end of the sophomore year, students have the highest belief in their own ability to succeed academically. As the scores for
juniors in ASE also match the upward trend, findings suggest that either slump is not present at all at a selective and competitive research institution like this, or perhaps slump is manifested earlier or in different ways.

According to Chickering’s (1969a) theory of student identity development, slumping sophomores would still be dealing with the following vectors: achieving competence, developing autonomy, establishing identity, and developing purpose. It may be that at an institution like UCLA, where all students are high-achievers, once students have made it to the end of their second year and declared a major or move into more difficult courses for that major, they have already made significant advances in these developmental areas. As the survey data for this study was collected at the end of the year (spring quarter), perhaps students who were still experiencing developmental challenges in these vectors were moving out of them, as indicated by the lack of slump in the data.

In terms of the experiences of sub-populations in the sample for academic self-efficacy, there were differences when considering students’ racial demographics. According to the findings, white students showed significantly higher mean scores for academic self-efficacy than both API students and students from all other racial backgrounds. This difference was interesting given the prevalence of API and white students in sample and indicates that something is going on for API students and students from other racial backgrounds that lessens their perceptions of their own abilities to succeed academically. This difference may also indicate that students at UCLA, at least for this sample, enter the institution with different levels of perceived academic self-efficacy. It is therefore interesting to consider if this difference is the result of the students’ behaviors or pre-dispositions and characteristics, or is impacted by the campus environment and institutional conditions. These differences would be interesting to investigate further as they may
shed light not only on the academic self-efficacy of students at this institution, but how it is impacted by the institution and for what student groups.

**Student Engagement**

To examine class year differences in students’ academic and social engagement, the Engaged Learning Index and Adult Trait Hope Scale were used to examine academic engagement, and scores for Involvement were used to explore social engagement. Data revealed differences in both the Engaged Learning scores and the Hope scale scores for multiple groups. Findings showed that white students showed significantly higher mean scores for Engaged Learning than both API students and students from all other racial backgrounds. Findings also showed that white students showed significantly higher mean scores on the Hope scale than API students. Given the findings that white students had higher scores for their academic self-efficacy, it may be that those perceptions of efficacy also impact students’ ability to engage in their learning. If so, lower scores for Academic Self-Efficacy for API students and students from other student racial groups may correlate to lower Engaged Learning scores, which this data show. This again, is of interest as the lower scores show that something is going on for API students and students from other racial backgrounds at this site and for this sample. It may also be that these groups of students may be having trouble engaging in their learning as a result of continued developmental challenges that they may face more acutely than other groups.

For example, if students are experiencing lower levels of academic self-efficacy, which impact their academic success, these struggles may cause additional strain on their development of purpose and competence, or impact their ability to engage in courses in general (Chickering, 1969a; Hunter et al., 2009). For students with racial identities that are not of the majority groups,
they may also face continued difficulty negotiating those identities in relation to peers and in various settings, which could in turn negatively impact their engagement and their academic self-efficacy. Each of these issues relate to documented challenge areas for sophomores including development of identity, purpose, competence, and the influences of peer relationships (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Hunter et al., 2009; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000).

As differences were significant for the API students on the Hope scale as well, it stands to reason that this aspect of the student experience is also related to specific challenges that this population is facing. The Pathway subscale of the Hope scale relates to a students’ ability to plan to meet goals, and seems most relevant to discussions of students’ development of purpose and identity in college (Snyder et al., 1991). If students become less hopeful, they may also become less engaged, and also would have lower scores for their academic self-efficacy, which this data indicate. Agency, the other sub scale of the Hope scale measures students’ ability to direct energy to their goals (Snyder et al., 1991). As students in this sample are academically successful overall, it seems that these students may have high levels of agency, which must help them in facing developmental challenges, but given the lower scores for academic self-efficacy and Engaged Learning, this population may be struggling in different ways than other groups, either developmentally. If so, it would stand to reasons that API students are experiencing different challenges in their development of identity, purpose, and competence, as reflected in the data for their scores on these multiple scales (Chickering, 1969b). Most interestingly, even if they are experiencing these challenges, it does not seem to impede their overall academic success. This is another example of and case for the separation of decline and frustration for sophomores and could be an area for further study.
For involvement, the last area explored for engagement, findings indicated that there was a significant difference in overall involvement levels between first year and junior students and between sophomore and junior students, however differences suggest an increase in involvement over the years, and not a slump. This delayed social engagement or involvement may be a result of this populations’ focus on academic achievement. For example, if students dedicate more time to their academic success, does this offset their academic engagement, accounting for higher levels of academic achievement in the first two years? It may be that at a competitive institution like UCLA, students persist in spite of lower involvement in their first two years, do better academically, and that involvement increases gradually over time. Conversely, if academic engagement is the primary focus of students attending competitive institutions like this, that involvement may provide different benefits that still function to keep students persisting and successful, despite lack of traditional involvements. Academic integration into the college environment has direct implications on students’ personal and intellectual development (Astin, 1999; Chickering, 1969b; Hunter et al., 2009; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000), and may therefore account for the high achievement and lower involvement levels that are indicated.

Trends indicating more involvement in later years could also be a result of students finding outside involvements that are related to their academic interests or majors, which would naturally occur after those majors have been solidified. It could also be that students at larger institutions have to work harder to find involvements. Larger institutions typically offer more opportunities, which could be overwhelming or intimidating for students to engage in early on or on their own. Therefore, it may take students longer to develop either the confidence to seek out involvement or to build significant peer relationships that lead to outside involvements. This is an interesting combination of potential student behaviors and institutional conditions that may
play a role in affecting not only slump, but student engagement overall (Astin, 1993; Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Kuh et al., 2007; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007).

**Satisfaction**

Satisfaction levels for this sample indicate that students overall are very satisfied. It makes sense that satisfied students would be high achievers and would show resilience despite frustrations or challenges that they may face. Students surrounded by other students who are satisfied, would seem to reinforce their intentions, goals, commitments or patterns, and create positive student behaviors and also perceptions of institutional conditions (Kuh et al., 2007; Tinto, 2007). In addition, if students see that their peers are satisfied, despite experiences of frustration or feelings related to slump, this may offset the severity of slump and again allow for students to experience those challenges separate from their academic achievement. Since peer relationships have such a strong impact on student connections to and integration with their institution, it is not surprising that students with satisfied peers may be able to achieve in spite of other challenges (Astin, 1999; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Juillerat, 2000; Tinto, 1993). For students who are experiencing frustrations and challenges, these may be viewed as positive experiences to have instead of negative ones, as they may help students continue to evolve in their development of autonomy, establishing identity and developing purpose, as argued by Chickering (1969a). Students who are forced to question or further explore these areas of their own identity will continue to grow and change. Challenges can offer important opportunities for students to learn new skills and make strides in their development, both personally and academically (Chickering, 1969b). If students were never challenged or frustrated, they would face no cognitive dissonance and fail to grow at all. Further, higher levels of satisfaction may
enable students to persist through such challenges with more success than peers who are less satisfied and may help their development overall.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

While the findings for this study did meet the research goals, there were some obvious limitations. The students represented in this sample were only the students who elected to participate and so they may not fully reflect the attitudes, perceptions and trends that are present on the UCLA campus. In addition, the distribution of the survey to students was limited by methods for sampling. The survey was passed on and shared actively, as well as passively posted, which may have caused some interested student participants to be confused either about their eligibility, the incentives, or even the purpose of the study. While the sample size for this survey research was not large, and while the results are not directly applicable to all sophomore populations, there is opportunity to offer general insights to the experiences of second year students at UCLA. Findings allow for generalizability to sophomores specifically living in OCH and off campus at this institution, and hopefully to the larger sophomore population at UCLA.

Other areas of discussion are the prevalence of API students in the sample as well as students from STEM majors. Potentially this could have positively impacted the data as research has shown that API students tend to outperform their student counterparts in academic success but is interesting given the statistical significance in their scores and those of white students. The academic success levels of STEM majors may also be of note as those fields often entail more structured academic pathways, which may help students stay academically successful. It is also important to acknowledge the level of engagement and academic proficiency of the sample. Students who are struggling academically or disengaged may have been less likely to complete a
survey, where as students who are academically successful and engaged may have been more likely, thereby influencing the sample of students and the evidence of slump.

Further, the timing of the survey may have impacted the types of responses that students gave. The survey was administered in the spring quarter of the 2013-14 academic year. It is possible that distribution of the survey and recruitment that occurred earlier in the year may have yielded either better responses or different results. Many students do better academically in the spring quarter and it is possible that those who experienced a slump, if in fact they did at all, experienced it in the beginning of the year.

There were issues of generalizability in this study. The data analyzed came from a very specific population. UCLA is a large, highly selective, public research institution on the west coast in an urban setting. While the UCLA student demographics do include some good levels of variance, they are not representative of national demographics and are very different from other campus populations where sophomore slump has been studied previously. This difference was an area of strength for my project, as it provided a different data set and level of insight into second year research as a whole. However, the study is still only representative of one campus population and further limited by the sample of students who participated in the survey. The survey itself could be replicated and administered at other sites. However, many campuses struggle to implement data collection and assessment methods as they are not only costly, but time consuming.

Administrating a specific student survey at UCLA was ideal for many reasons beyond its accessibility and can be considered in conjunction with other data collected at multiple institutions. Specifically this data allowed for a richer understanding of sophomore issues at UCLA. These insights will be especially valuable for the Office of Residential Life. My survey
research is also unique as it encompasses the experiences of freshman, sophomores and juniors living on and off campus. No other survey research conducted on sophomores has included these two samples along with samples of freshmen and juniors. However, given these limitations, this study still contributes to the knowledge about sophomore slump.

In addition, data for this study was cross-sectional, so does not allow for an examination of development over time, for sophomores or the other class years. It may be beneficial for future studies to focus on longitudinal sophomore development to tease out specific areas where sophomores are both slumping and succeeding. Further, as this sample had a very high GPA with little variance, it may be useful for future studies to intentionally sample students with varying levels of success to study specific contributors to slump. The sample was also not equal in terms of gender representation. There were few males who completed the survey and while comparisons of scores by gender did not yield significant differences, a larger sample of male students may have yielded different results. It may be that male students were less inclined to participate in this study, but future studies should seek to include more male students. There may be issues related to slump that impact male students differently which only further research could reveal.

Finally it is possible that the efforts and attention that both the Office of Residential Life and the First Year Experience Office show for student development and engagement through programming and positive development of community, may have had a positive impact on student respondents and either dulled or changed the experiences of slump for students.

While the findings of this study did not support that there were any significant differences between the experiences of sophomores when compared to either their first and third year counterparts, there are many findings that emerged which may be relevant for future study. First,
the findings of this study suggest that further inquiry is needed into the causes for the significantly lower scores on ASE, Hope and EL scores for API students and students of other racial backgrounds when compared to their white student counterparts. There also needs to be more exploration of the changes in involvement for all class years that is indicated in the data. The data is counter to other findings that suggest that involvement declines over time. In addition, continued research should be continued on a variety of college campuses to continue to gather diverse data on what sophomore slump looks like with various student populations, academic settings, and institutional types. Sophomore slump should also be studied in specific residential settings to better understand those effects and to continue to unpack the factors and indicators of slump.

Implications for Practice

While broad implications for the sophomore population beyond UCLA are hard to draw with confidence from this study, specific implications for the population of students who do attend this great institution, seem clear. Students who attend large, public, competitive research universities have different needs when it comes to their academic success and personal development. While there is no evidence of sophomore slump through analysis of differences in class year experiences by academic success, engagement and satisfaction, there does need to be further exploration of the experiences of students at campuses like this one and specifically to look at the experiences of API and students from other racial backgrounds. It seems apparent from the findings of this study, that while students are achieving academic success, they still face challenges. Student affairs departments and academic departments must work together to reach out to students who may be struggling and to normalize those struggles. Specific listings of
resources, programs, events and supporting documents should be distributed to sophomore students through not only academic advisors and student affairs staff, but through faculty. As faculty connections continue to be cited as key factors for academic success and engagement with the institution, faculty should be trained on how to recognize students who are struggling and what resources to offer or refer students to.

Further, the continued development of opportunities for peers to act as mentors and resources to other students, struggling or not, will continue to bolster engagement and connect students to the institution. Finally, simple surveys and questionnaires should be distributed to students my all of the faculty and staff mentioned above to better assess student needs in an ongoing fashion. This will assist with gap analysis and needs assessment for current students but will also directly impact students feelings of agency and mattering at the institution, while providing specific data on student needs. There should be specific investigation by Residential Life into the experiences of the students living in on-campus housing to help further clarify what needs sophomores have and to investigate if the programs and services offered by RL impact the sophomore experience and how. While the data do not show evidence of a sophomore slump, support of students into their sophomore year should be a focus of RL as national research still supports the evidence that sophomores benefit from targeted programs to foster academic success and clarification of degree path. It is my ultimate hope and recommendation for practice to see a sophomore year experience program developed at UCLA that is grounded in site-specific research, like mine, and that combines that research with specific goals for sophomore engagement, development and retention. As the results of this study indicated differences in experience by class year and racial demographics, further research should continue to explore the experiences of API students, as well as the experiences of other sub-populations to ensure that
needs of the sophomore class are not overgeneralized. Future research should also focus more exploration of the levels of Hope that students bring to their institutions, and how those levels are impacted by the institutional conditions and the students’ own identities.

**Conclusion**

As findings from this dissertation assert, sophomore slump may not exist at this institution in the ways it has been characterized and studied in the past. This, however, does not mean that slump does not exist or that additional research may not reveal specific needs for the sophomore population at UCLA that are related to previously studied slump factors. While the measures in this study sought to quantitatively determine the experience of sophomores to find if a slump existed, there were many other measures of student experience that were not explored and still need to be further investigated to strengthen our research and our practice. Despite the absence of findings for sophomore slump at UCLA as presented in this study, it may be beneficial for slump research to continue to de-couple not only factors, but measures for student experiences. The findings from this study imply that while students may experience frustrations and challenges, they are able to maintain high levels of academic success, which suggests that achievement and frustration should be further separated and explored in sophomore slump research. In addition, there is a need for continued research on the population of students who attend UCLA, as their trends and attitudes were often different and counter to other research, not only for slump but for other measures as well. While there is no doubt that no student experience can or will be struggle free, it is the hope of this researcher that this and future research can help students through those struggles in meaningful ways.
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