Chapter 4: College Impact on Students

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Defining “College Impact”

- Effect of institutional **structures** + **processes** on **student outcomes** (employment, social mobility, academic achievement, belonging, social integration, etc.)
- Perpetual cycle: student **choices** and **behaviors** can **reinforce** or **negate** institutional effects (student leadership, activism, support, etc.)
- **Period Effects:** national or global incidents that impact college students on a broad scale (COVID-19 pandemic, wars)
- Cycle of formal and informal structures, institutions, society, and students

SOCIAL STRUCTURES STUDENT OUTCOMES

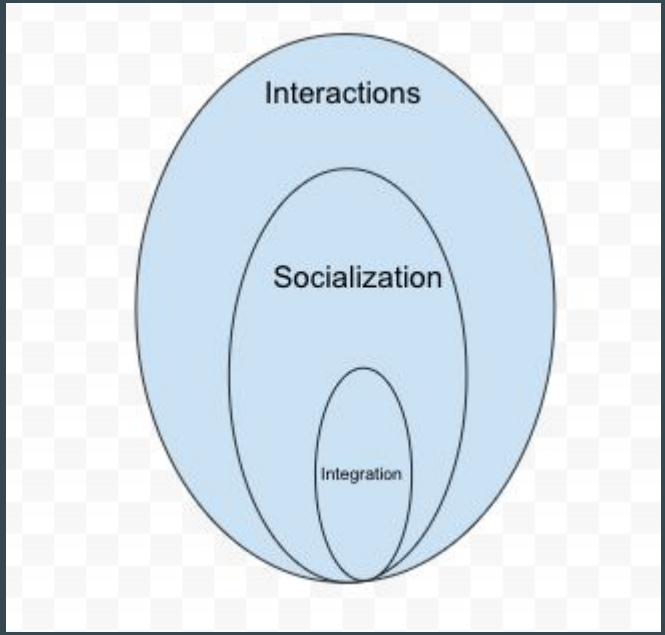
-Hurtado 2007

-SOCIAL STRUCTURES in HE: "Structures of academic and social life on campus that enable persistent patterns of behavior and interactions within higher education institutions" (Klemencic, 2021, p. 1)

FORMAL ACADEMIC CONTEXT	Established rules and policies, departments, concentrations, institutional missions, public messages/statements, explicit norms and values
INFORMAL ACADEMIC CONTEXT	"Hidden curriculum," i.e., implicit rules and norms: whether a student attends office hours, advocates for themselves in the classroom, understands how to access resources, etc.
FORMAL SOCIAL CONTEXT	Formal social structures such as institutional size, student organizations or residences (clubs, houses, teams etc.)
INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTEXT	Personal/informal friendship and peer groups

“Integration and Socialization”

- **Socialization**: the processes through which students gain knowledge, attitudes, and values within their campus communities
- Campus communities have norms, expectations, values → students recognize these norms → students (may) engage in socialization to achieve/embody these norms and values
- Socialization is often **purposeful** and **intentional**; can include language, knowledge, and skills.
- **Integration**: the processes through which a student assimilates into university culture/internalizes university values.
- **What prevents integration?** Isolation/lack of social or academic acceptance
- **What influences integration?** Institutional size, selectivity, racial/ethnic composition (Hurtado 2007)



SENSE OF BELONGING

"Students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group or others on campus" (Strayhorn, 2013, p. 3)

Belonging and integration can arise in smaller campus communities, organizations, and environments

MARGINALITY

The sense/feeling of not "fitting in"
Often occurs during transitional periods (moving to college, starting a new job)
Immigrants, BIPOC, members of LGBTQ+ community may also experience more perpetual feelings of marginality in white, cis spaces

MATTERING

"Refers to our belief, whether right or wrong, that we matter to someone else" (Schlossberg, 1989, p. 9)

Attention

one is noticed

Importance

one is cared about

Ego Extension

others will cheer/sympathize with one's successes and failures

Appreciation

one is appreciated

Dependence

one is needed

Retention Model (Tinto 1975)

Integration (not simply interaction) with academic and social structures influences student retention rate.

Students develop their own experiences/associations before college, but engaging with certain structures can weaken or strengthen their preexisting opinions and proclivities.

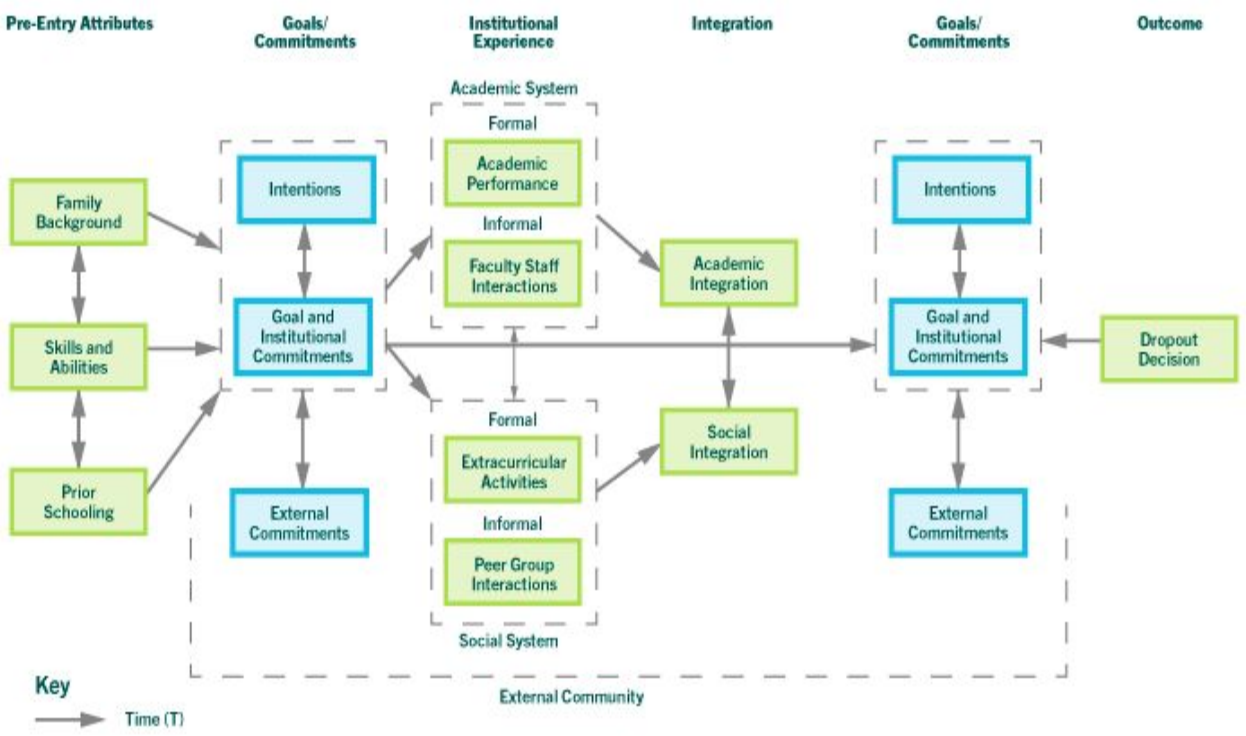
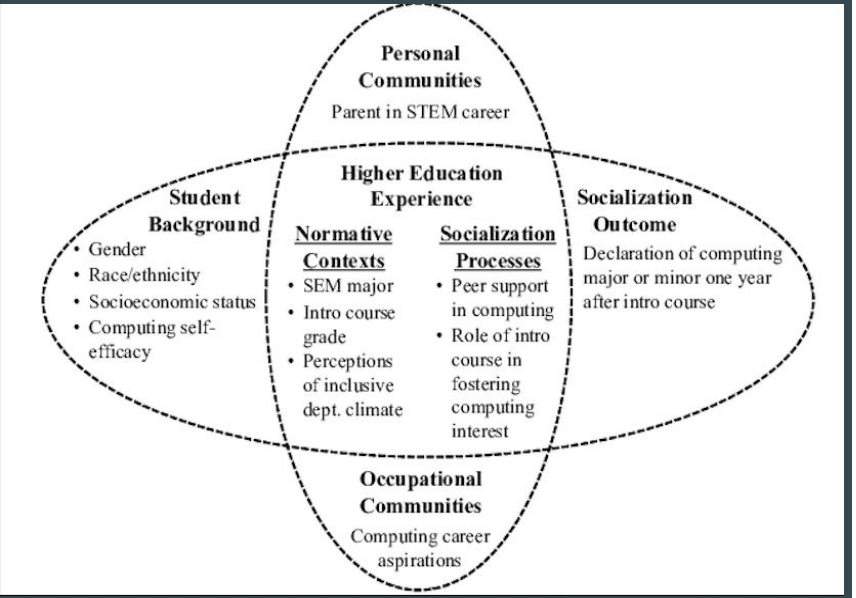
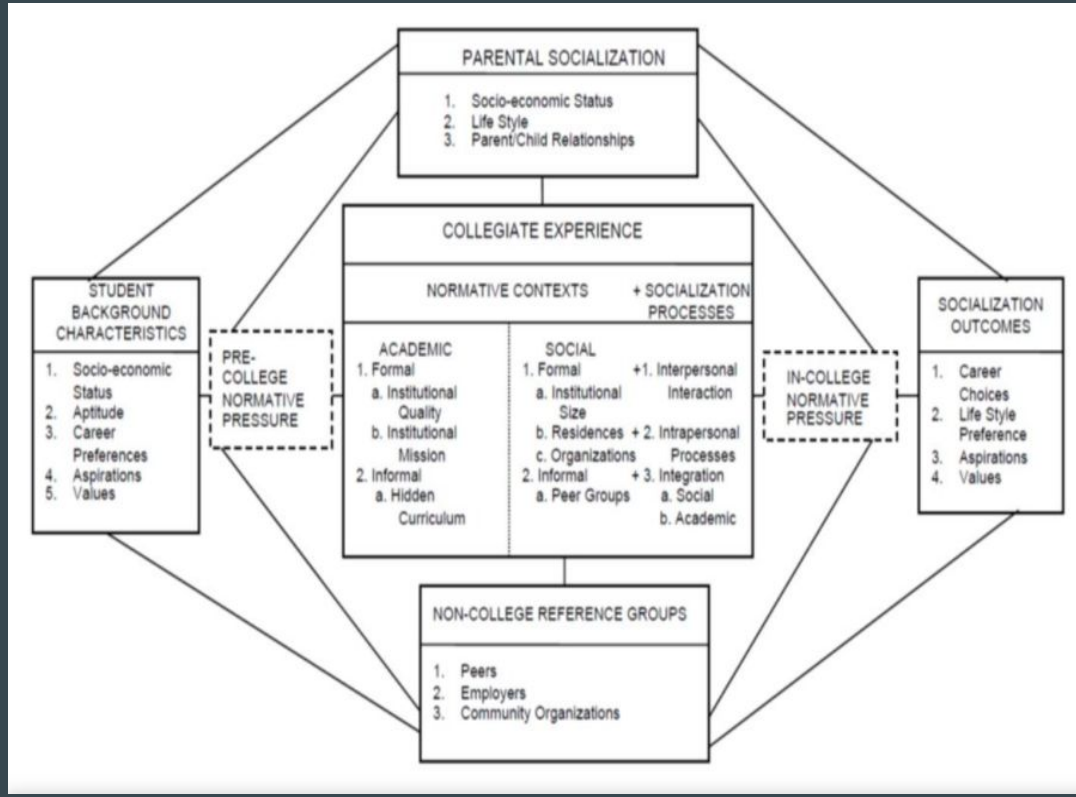


Figure 2: Tinto's Institutional Departure Model (Aljohani (2016)

Undergraduate Socialization Model (Weidman 1989)

"Undergraduate socialization" refers to the processes through which "students in the university community acquire the knowledge, language, skills, and attitudes valued by the community" (Klemencic, 2021, p. 3).





Readjusting “social toolkits” in the face of COVID-19

- “Social toolkits” are “skills, habits, rituals, and views that enable individuals to navigate various situations and scenarios” (Swindler, 1986, p. 273)
- Toolkits inform **strategies of action**, i.e., how different individuals or institutions approach situations and aspirations
- “Lawn Games, Anyone?” (Redden, 2020) and “Big Time (Virtual) Rush: Students reflect on community aspects, downfall of Greek life as hybrid recruitment begins” (Xiong, 2020) both feature institutions and students readjusting their **social toolkits** and **strategies of action** post COVID-19

Student Lifestyle Choices

- **Taking care of oneself**
  - Transition to adulthood (nutritious foods, laundry, running errands, cleaning, organizing personal schedules, etc.)
- **Building relationships**
  - FOMO + socialization
  - Friendships with those similar to you
- **Constructing a unique self**
  - Creation and comparison of identities through social media
- **Balancing work and play**
  - Social learning and friendships vs. academic demands

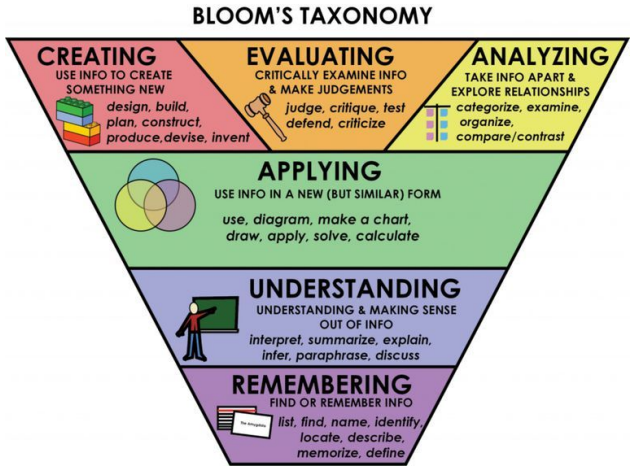
Measures of Student Learning

Indirect Measures:

- Achievement
  - Graduation rates, times to degrees, employment and graduate salaries
- Propensity to learn
  - Student engagement
  - Student approach to learning
- Learning environment
  - Student satisfaction and engagement surveys

Direct Measures:

- Learning outcomes:



- Examples: Collegiate Learning Assessment, GRE

Academically Adrift, Arum and Roska, 2011

- More students enter college "**academically adrift**"
  - **Definition:** *poorly prepared* for academic life and have attitudes, values, and behaviors *at odds with* academic commitment
- Students and HEIs have shifted their **focus away from academics**
  - Students spend fewer hours studying
  - Faculty devote little energy to teaching
  - Administrators direct resources to non-academic areas
  - GPAs and degree completion have not changed though
- "**The art of college management**" - success is achieved by controlling college, not through hard work

Academically Adrift, Student Discussions

Overarching Questions:

1. Beyond broad generalizations, *who* is actually academically adrift?
2. Thinking about the indirect and direct measures of learning, are Arum and Roska's metrics of evaluation sufficient? What else should they have considered beyond reduced hours studying and GPAs?
3. How important are courses and academic learning to the purpose of college?
4. What are the underlying mechanisms, pre-college, that have poorly prepared students for college?
5. How are Arum and Roska's claims supported, or questioned, by Harvard experiences?

Academically Adrift, Student Discussions

Major Themes:

- Overly critical view of students
  - Other factors involved: part-time jobs, priorities, etc.
- Purpose of college + non-academic learning
  - Professional development
  - Moral and personal development
- Harvard applications:
  - Faculty/student relationships - Q guide evaluations
  - Teaching practice - credentials, impact on students, pitted against research priorities
  - Performative transactions for grades, grade inflation

Student Mental Health in College

"College Students: Mental Health Problems and Treatment Considerations," 2020

- College as a unique site of stress: adult-like responsibilities, academic load, pressures of relationships and socialization, professional considerations and pursuit, work and family responsibilities
- Prevalence of mental health problems and disorders among college students
  - Anxiety disorders (11.9%), depression (7-9%), eating disorders (9.5%)
- Mental health treatment rates are extremely low (due to fear of personal stigma, lack of time, perceiving treatment as nonessential, etc.)
- Unaddressed increase in demand for counseling and specialized services
- How can colleges mitigate this and help students navigate stress factors? What are the implications of Arum and Roska's exhortations on student mental health?

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