

Sophomore Slump and Thriving: Factors of Emotional Well-Being
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Executive Summary

In the fall of 2019, the Sociology/Anthropology 371 course conducted research on sophomore thriving at St. Olaf College. We sent an anonymous online survey to all 764 sophomores and received 248 responses (32.5%). Our sample reflects many demographics of the student body, and it matches the “rule of thumb” for a 30% sample of a population of 1,000 or less.

Prior studies are somewhat limited because little research has been done in terms of university sophomore students and their ability to thrive in multiple aspects of life. However, prior literature explores the importance of students’ mental health and coping skills on their ability to thrive as they are inextricably linked to one another. Previous studies have found that obtaining a positive perspective on life is a valuable coping strategy that is linked to higher levels of emotional well-being and overall thriving. From our review of scholarly literature, we identified three main research questions for our study:

- 1) What are the main psycho-emotional factors that are indicative of thriving at St. Olaf College?
- 2) How does emotional well-being affect thriving?
- 3) Which groups of students experience greater and lesser support from the college?

The most important results of our research are as follows:

- Sophomores indicate the most stress from academics as compared to other potential sources. Over 85% are at least moderately affected by academic stress.
- Maintaining a positive perspective is the most productive coping strategy among sophomores.
- On average, white sophomore students indicate a much higher sense of support in relation to their racial/ethnic identity (almost 50% higher) compared to students of color.
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- Overall sophomore thriving is positively affected by a good transition from first year to sophomore year, by lower academic stress, by positive coping skills, and by perceived support from the college for their demographic identities, especially racial/ethnic identity.
- Overall thriving varies by demographics, with students of color, first generation students, and students who identify as having a disability have lower average levels of thriving than their counterparts.

Based on our research, we offer three recommendations:

1. Increase accessibility and awareness of mental health resources that are targeted towards coping with academic stress.
2. Faculty should emphasize learning outcomes in their coursework and transferable skills beyond St. Olaf in congruence with a positive perspective that can be taught and reinforced.
3. In order to increase the extent to which students of color feel supported, the college should continue the advancement and support of the Taylor Center for Equity and Inclusion, increase physical space for minority students, and expand mandatory discourse about identity support.

Background and Literature Review

College student thriving refers to a student's ability to be fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally (Schreiner 2010). Schreiner investigated what she calls the thriving quotient, otherwise conceptualized as, "engaged learning, academic determination, a positive perspective, diverse citizenship, and social connectedness" (2010). Thriving is integral to our research on how college students understand and navigate their social, emotional and academic environments. The impact of the psychological and emotional well-being and academic intrapersonal thriving of college students is the subject of a growing body of research. Scholarship focuses on a number of areas including college students' mental health and well-being, their experience with spirituality, and their overall positive perspective in everyday life. However, this body of research includes only a limited study of sophomore-specific intrapersonal thriving and emotional factors that affect well-being, which is a specific concern to us and to our institution, St. Olaf College.

Studies of intrapersonal college student thriving examine students' overall mental health and well-being, spirituality in relation to their mental health, and positive perspective. Mental health and thriving are important for college students because they are inextricably linked to one another. Deannah Byrd (2011) conceptualizes the importance of studying and understanding the impacts that mental health has on college students' lives, especially with the increase of mental health as a prevalent issue on campuses.

For the purpose of our research, the concept of mental health is drawn from theorist and professor Corey Keyes, further conceptualized as "subjective well-being: individuals' evaluations of how good they feel about and how well they see themselves functioning in life" (Keyes et al. 2012).

While focusing on college students' mental health, it is pertinent to explore emotional thriving and flourishing. According to research by Keyes (2012), students who were flourishing (free of mental disorders) were less likely than their peers who were considered moderate or languishing to report suicidal behavior, as determined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). Those who were considered languishing were more likely to have academic impairment at school due to their mental disorders than their flourishing peers (Keyes et al. 2012). Additionally, according to study by Byrd et al. (2012), individual-level characteristics associated with greater mental health include coping abilities, confidence in communication skills, strong spiritual identity, academic self-confidence, heterosexual orientation, intergroup awareness, social engagement, and institutional satisfaction, all of which were positively correlated with greater mental health.

Other studies of college students' mental health focus on students' low levels of mental health, also categorized as poor, lacking or inverse mental health. College students have reported high levels of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and other issues related to mental disorders during their time in college. The students' respective campuses could not deal with the intensity of the mental health problems and eventually sent the students for outpatient psychopharmacological evaluation (Kirsch et al. 2015). A study by Keyes et al. (2015) found that 10.8% of students reported academic impairment that they attributed to their mental and emotional health. Individual-level characteristics associated with poor mental health include suicidal tendencies, many work/life responsibilities, negative perceptions of the campus climate and limited faculty interaction. These were all inversely related to mental health. Individual-level factors are stronger contributors to mental health outcomes than institutional level factors, yet institutional level factors are still pertinent in our research as they still affect students' mental

health. (Byrd et al. 2012). Additionally, a study by Walton et al. (2012) examined the impact of a social-belonging intervention and found that there was a reduced number of visits to doctors recorded during the three years of observation, with an improvement in African-Americans' self-reported well-being and subjective happiness.

Spirituality, or lack thereof, impacts college students' lives and emotional wellbeing. For the purpose of our research, spirituality may include a) relationship with God or with one's understanding of a higher spiritual being or power, b) religious practices, or c) a sense of satisfaction with life or purpose in life, or d) things that a student might consider to be a spiritual practice. This definition is rooted in understandings of spirituality in relation to thriving presented by Seppelt and Schreiner (2012). Prior scholarship has linked spirituality with mental health among college students, finding that a strong sense of spiritual identity is positively correlated with mental health (Byrd et al 2012). The purpose of spirituality, according to the literature, is to improve an individual's well-being by providing a sense of satisfaction in life or inspire a purposeful life (Phillips and Kemppainen 2015).

Looking at spirituality as a bridge between emotional, academic and social wellbeing is one way to frame thriving. Having faith, which may provide a potential for reframing events, was found to correlate with overall thriving. Thriving students tended to reframe negative events, viewing problems as temporary setbacks. They actively resisted negativity and persisted through difficulty by taking initiative and investing effort. Participants often spoke of their faith in God as the primary driver of persistence in the face of adversity. This perspective was reinforced by faculty in the classroom, by peers in formal and informal settings, and by family members (Derrico et al. 2015). Research on honors students found that their levels of social connectedness and spirituality are not only significantly lower than their other "Thriving Quotient" scores but also are lower than the levels reported by non-honors students. Honors students who rely on their spirituality as a source of meaning and strength are more likely to thrive (Cuevas et al. 2017).

Growing research examines the importance of students' positive outlook on their short- and long-term future goals. For the purpose of our research, we include positive perspective as conceptualized by Laurie Schreiner (2012) as a key aspect of thriving. Schreiner categorizes positive perspective as "optimistic, open, flexible thinking, proactive and problem-focused coping strategies leading to more positive emotions, satisfaction, ability to set and pursue goals, and success" (Schreiner 2012).

Optimism can be taught to students in order to enhance thriving. Interventions that targeted social belonging sparked a positive perspective for African American students and their sense of belonging at their respective universities. An increase in positive perspective is associated with a triple-increase of African Americans being amongst the top 25% of their class (Walton et al. 2012). Coping abilities associated with positive perspective were proactive and problem-focused rather than reactive and avoidant. Thriving students who exhibit positive perspectives have a greater ability to develop long-term plans and goals, to envision a specific positive future, and to take the steps necessary to achieve their goals. Students who view the world more optimistically tend to do better in terms of thriving and having a positive outlook in various aspects of life (Schriener 2010).

Our research seeks to identify and bridge some of the gaps in research, including a lack of sophomore-specific research, a lack of diverse universities and perspectives represented, and a lack of clarity within definitions and responses.

While the studies discussed above are extremely informative, they do not provide a lens on how mental health and well-being, spirituality, and positive perspective affect sophomore students specifically. While this is a significant gap in prior research, these studies still provide findings relevant to our research on college students and can therefore guide some of our decisions regarding how to approach our research at St. Olaf College.

Our research on psycho-emotional and intrapersonal sophomore thriving relates to the research discussed above as it addresses gaps in the literature and specifically examines sophomore college students. Therefore, our main research questions are the following:

- 1) What are the main psycho-emotional factors that are indicative of thriving at St. Olaf College?
- 2) How does emotional well-being affect thriving?
- 3) Which groups of students tend to experience greater or lesser support from the college?

Research Methods

Our research took place during the Fall semester of 2019 at St. Olaf College, a small Lutheran-affiliated liberal arts institution of the Midwestern United States with a student population of approximately 3,000. We were prompted to conduct this research by the Sophomore Research Committee at St. Olaf College, created by St. Olaf Vice President Hassel Morrison and led by Joshua Lee, Assistant Dean of Students. Our research was also sponsored by the Sociology and Anthropology Department at St. Olaf as part of our course, Foundations of Social Science Research. Our study examined sophomore well-being and emotional thriving at St. Olaf College and was part of a larger study. The larger quantitative study further examined aspects of sophomore thriving and students' overall success as college sophomores - emotionally, academically and socially. In order to collect data on college sophomores, we conducted student focus groups and developed and designed an online survey to understand what aspects of emotional and intrapersonal well-being are pertinent to sophomore students' thriving. Current sophomores (expected to graduate in 2022) were asked to participate in our survey via email sent November 7, 2019, and were given a week to complete it. In order to prompt students to participate, we created an incentive: those who completed the survey could enter a raffle for 20 randomly-selected students to win a \$20 gift card to the St. Olaf Bookstore or Amazon (winner's choice).

Focus groups

In order to design our research on sophomore intrapersonal thriving and emotional well-being, we reached out to current sophomores and juniors to participate in a focus group. We incentivized participation by offering food and a drawing for a five dollar gift card to the St. Olaf Bookstore. Our focus group included five students. Three sophomores and two juniors reflected on their sophomore experience in relation to aspects of sophomore intrapersonal thriving, such as mental health, emotional well-being, spirituality, and coping mechanisms at St. Olaf. Participants' main concerns and stressors included financial issues, balancing academic and social life, and concerns about the future. Based on these common themes and on our review of literature, we designed a survey that asked questions about students' perceptions and experiences of their sophomore year in relation to their emotional well-being.

Variables

Our survey was designed to analyze aspects of stress, coping, and spirituality among sophomores. The *dependent variable* of our research was *sophomore thriving* and our *independent variables* were aspects of *emotional well-being* and *demographics*. Our analysis examined various levels of psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being to further understand what thriving looks like in the context of sophomores at St. Olaf. Our survey questions and response categories are included in Appendix A.

One of our first questions asked respondents about their *transition from first year to sophomore year* in a matrix that asked about different aspects of academic, social, physical and psycho-emotional transition. These variables were ordinal as we asked respondents to rate their experiences. We then summed the responses to this question to create an index of transition, furthermore, a summary score of the variables in relation to the transition from first year to sophomore year. We used this summary score to see the variation of student response to aid our research in understanding students' satisfaction of transitions from their first to second year of college at St. Olaf.

Secondly, we asked about *how sophomores respond to stress and what resources they use to cope with it*. This was highlighted in literature from Byrd et al (2012) that emphasized that strong coping mechanisms and the ability to cope are correlated with better mental health. In order to understand what aspects of life create stress among students, we created a matrix of items that asked about stress related to choosing a major or vocation/career, finding a purpose in life, and political or social issues. The resources we asked about for coping with stress included talking to family/friends, seeking out professional help, doing things to distract themselves and engaging in alcohol or other drugs.

Another survey question measured *students' satisfaction with mental health resources* at St. Olaf. Byrd et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of individual factors such as having a positive outlook on life, coping strategies, etc. in terms of their influence on satisfaction with resources utilized for mental health. Even so, institutional-level factors such as Boe House, The Wellness Center, meeting with faith leaders, etc. are important for student mental health and how satisfied students are with the resources being provided. The mental health resources we asked about included the Wellness Center, Boe House, faith leader(s), friends and Residence Life student staff. We created a scale of satisfaction, with response categories ranging from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5).

In addition, we asked about *the extent to which St. Olaf supports students in various aspects of their identity*. Walton et al (2011) found that minority students achieve higher levels of well-being and happiness when there are programs designed to integrate them into their respective institutions. In congruence with this research, we asked about perceptions of racial and ethnic identity support by St. Olaf and also included gender identity, ability/disability identity and political identity. We created a scale of support ranging from not at all supported (1) to support to a very large extent (5). This was integral to our understanding of what aspects of one's identity students feel the most or least supported.

Lastly, we asked sophomores to rate how *spiritual* they viewed themselves as being, ranging from extremely spiritual (5) to not at all spiritual (1). Cuevas et al. (2017) explained that students who viewed themselves as highly spiritual are more likely to thrive in school. Additionally, Byrd et al. (2012) found that positive mental health is strongly correlated with spirituality. It was

important to examine if spirituality played a large role in emotional well-being and interpersonal thriving at St. Olaf, as it was significant in prior research.

Validity and Reliability

Validity indicates the congruence between a construct that researchers want to measure: such as sophomore thriving, and the actual measurement. We sought to achieve both face validity and content validity. Face validity, as conceptualized by Neuman (2012), refers to a consensus of those in the scientific community that the concept being measured fits with actual measurement, such as the wording of a survey question. We achieved this by consulting with other researchers in our community, including classmates and our professor, and by consulting prior literature. Additionally, content validity further examines whether researchers are exhaustive in measuring all of the aspects that they included in a concept (Neuman 2012). In order to achieve content validity, we clearly defined emotional thriving by utilizing prior research and literature as well as our focus groups. We conceptualized and clearly defined all aspects of sophomore emotional thriving based on prior literature on students thriving and by asking many questions on emotional well-being such as questions about mental health, levels and indicators of stress, coping skills and support.

Reliability refers to the dependability and consistency, of a measure so that if we were to do the same research or use the same methods under similar circumstances, it would yield similar results. Neuman (2012) states that reliability is when researchers receive the same results under the same stable conditions, multiple times. We ensured reliability by clearly conceptualizing all constructs that we wanted to measure and by using high levels of measurement. We made sure each question only measured one construct. Additionally, we used language that was accessible to those taking the survey, avoiding jargon and sociological terms that are not used in general conversation. We made sure that all response categories were mutually exclusive so that they did not overlap, and that they were exhaustive so that every possible response was accounted for. Lastly, we pre-tested our survey with our fellow researchers.

Sampling and Sample

St. Olaf has a student population of approximately 3,000 students. Our target population was drawn from a list from the Registrar's office of all current full-time sophomore students of the class of 2022. Thus, our research excludes first-years, juniors, seniors. With our target population in mind, we then reached out to the total sophomore population of 764 and received a response rate above 30% (248).

For our research, respondents voluntarily participated in the survey which they had access to for a week using their school-affiliated email. Additionally, our research team and other researchers tabled for a few days outside the campus cafeteria, using signs and candy to remind sophomores of the survey. In addition, we sent out emails to the class of 2022 and other organization's email aliases.

We wanted to follow Neuman's principles of getting a sufficient sample size. We aimed to attain a sample that is at least 30% of the total target population (which would be at least 230/764 sophomores) in order to ensure representative accuracy to the population (Neuman 2012). The survey was sent out to the total sophomore population. Out of the 764 sophomores, 248 completed the survey, making our response rate 32.5% which ensured representative accuracy as presented by Neuman (2012).

We asked our respondents to identify their race and ethnicity. In our sample, 2.4% (6) students identified as African American, 7.3% (18) identified as Asian American, 6.5% (16) identified as Latinx/Hispanic, 0.4% (1) identified as Middle-Eastern, 58.1% (144) identified as White, and 6.5% (16) identified as Bi/multi-racial. For statistical analysis purposes, we grouped race/ethnicity together into those who identified as white students and those who identified as students of color. In doing so, we found that 28.4% (57) identified as students of color, including bi-/multi-racial while 71.6% (144) identified themselves as white students.

In regards to gender demographics, 58.5% (145) of students identified as female, 21.4% (53) identified as male, 0.4% (1) identified as transgender male, 0.4% (1) identified as gender queer, 0.8% (2) identified as unsure, and 0.4% (1) identified as non-binary. Similarly, in order to run bivariate analysis of sophomore thriving, we grouped gender into a binary variable of only males and females. We needed to do so because the very small numbers in some categories in some categories such as transgender, unsure, non-binary or others would preclude us from conducting inferential analysis. Of the 203 respondents who reported their gender, 73.2% (145) of sophomores identified as female and 26.8% (53) of students identified as male.

For sexual identity, 0.8% (2) identified as asexual, 11.3% (28) identified as bisexual, 2.4% (6) as gay/lesbian, 57.7% (143) as heterosexual, 2.0% (5) as queer, 1.2% (3) as questioning, and 1.6% (4) identified as pansexual. Again for statistical analysis purposes, we had sexual identity as a binary and 25.1% (48) identified as LGBTQIA and 74.9% (143) identified as heterosexual.

Lastly, respondents had the chance to mark which religion they were affiliated with, and 24.2% (60) identified as having no religion, 11.7% (29) identified as Christian: Specified Lutheran, 28.2% (70) as Christian: Not Lutheran or did not specify, 0.4% (1) as Buddhist, 0.8% (2) as Hindu, 1.2% (3) as Islam, 0.4% (1) as Pagan, and 2.0% (5) identified as questioning or unsure.

Ethics

As we prepared to conduct our research, our team completed ethics training with a course from the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program. Within CITI, all researchers completed the “General Social and Behavioural Investigations” unit, which enabled us to prepare our research with ethical principles. We assessed potential risks from participation in the survey, such as respecting the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of all participants and their demographic data. Our project had approval from St. Olaf College’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).

We were transparent in providing information to the participants about the purpose and use of the survey. informed consent is integral to our research as it allows participants to make informed decisions about their participation in research. In order for us to obtain informed consent from respondents, we described the purpose and procedure of our research, guaranteed anonymity and included contact information of the professor who oversaw our research and that they were allowed to drop out of the survey at any time with no penalty and lastly, that they could see our research results (Neuman 2012). By beginning the survey, the respondents gave their informed consent to participate in the survey.

Because our research topic pertains to emotional well-being and thriving, we were aware of the possibility of “threatening questions,” or sensitive questions that may make a respondent anxious about answering (Neuman 2012) and cause emotional discomfort. If respondents found any question potentially threatening, they were given the option to opt-out of answering. We

aimed to remedy any ethical issues or distress by taking necessary precautions to eradicate any foreseeable concerns. In our focus groups, while we could ensure that we (the researchers and moderators) would maintain confidentiality, we could not guarantee that other participants would be equally committed to maintaining confidentiality. We addressed this ethical issue by stating very clearly what our guidelines were for the group within confidentiality, what was shared inside our group would not be shared outside of it, and also clearly stated that we could not guarantee confidentiality from the focus group members.

Another ethical issue was within our survey. Our survey questions about mental health and emotional well-being could potentially invoke feelings of discomfort, anxiety, or embarrassment. We dealt with these potentially threatening survey questions by ensuring that our wording normalized mental health issues, were not intrusive and that we gave context to what was being asked (Neuman 2012). Additionally, we took steps to reduce discomfort by ensuring anonymity.

Results and Discussion

Univariate Analysis

This section describes our univariate data. We first examined overall sophomore thriving and then focused on the transition from first-year-to- sophomore year, sources of stress, students' responses, and strategies and resources used for coping with stress. Additionally, we looked at sophomores' levels of satisfaction with the resources and strategies they use when coping with stress, their sense of St. Olaf's support for their identity, and their reported levels of spirituality.

Sophomore Thriving

We identified 15 items to use as measures of overall sophomore thriving. They included five dimensions, with three items in each dimension, as shown in Table 1. Respondents tended to cluster in the top two categories (more than half scored 4 or 5) for all of the positively worded items except *Tend to go beyond assignment requirements*, and they tended to cluster in the bottom two categories (more than half scored 1 or 2) for negatively worded items (*Regularly procrastinate on school work* and *Respond to stress by giving up or walking away*). However, as the table shows, some respondents scored low on the positive items and high on the negative items.

Table 1. Percentage Results for Dimensions of Sophomore Thriving

Dimension of Sophomore Thriving (all included in Sophomore Thriving Index)	Highest 5	4	3	2	Lowest 1
Engaged Learning					
Apply skills from class to other areas of life (A)	30.0%	49.8%	16.1%	4.1%	0.0%
Think about course learning even when not in class or studying (A)	34.6%	48.8%	11.5%	5.1%	0.0%
Participate actively in class (A)	25.8%	50.7%	13.8%	8.8%	0.9%
Academic Determination					
Grades are a top priority (A)	54.9%	33.5%	4.2%	6.5%	0.9%
Tend to go beyond assignment requirements (A)	9.7%	26.9%	31.5%	24.1%	7.9%
*Regularly procrastinate on school work (A)	12.1%	16.4%	18.2%	34.6%	18.7%
Positive Perspective					
Feel hopeful about future after graduation (A)	41.0%	39.7%	9.8%	7.3%	2.1%
*Respond to stress by giving up or walking away (E)	2.4%	7.7%	16.3%	35.6%	38.0%
Maintain positive perspective (E)	12.6%	23.7%	36.2%	21.7%	5.8%
Diverse Citizenship					
Have friendships across racial/ethnic identity (S)	28.1%	22.7%	31.0%	6.6%	11.6%
Have friendships across political identity (S)	35.1%	34.3%	19.4%	7.0%	4.1%
Desire to contribute to the world motivates co-curricular involvement (I)	23.4%	31.1%	24.7%	14.9%	6.0%
Social Connectedness					
Respondent and friends listen to each other (E)	38.8%	44.9%	13.9%	2.0%	0.4%
Believe St. Olaf friendships will last beyond graduation (E)	25.8%	32.4%	30.3%	9.0%	2.5%
Feel valued by St. Olaf College (A)	26.8%	37.2%	19.9%	12.1%	3.9%

*Reverse-coded items (worded negatively; coded in opposite direction from most items)

All items were measured on 5-points scales: A = strongly agree to strongly disagree; E = very large extent to not at all; I = extremely important to not at all important; S = very similar to very dissimilar

We created a *Thriving Index* which combines the 15 items in Table 1. A higher score indicates higher thriving. The mean score of the *Thriving Index* was 53.23 (SD=6.09). There are fewer respondents included in the index because if a respondent did not answer an item in the index, they were excluded from having an index score. This was done because skipping an item would automatically lower their score on the index. Scores on the index are normally distributed, as shown in Figure 1.

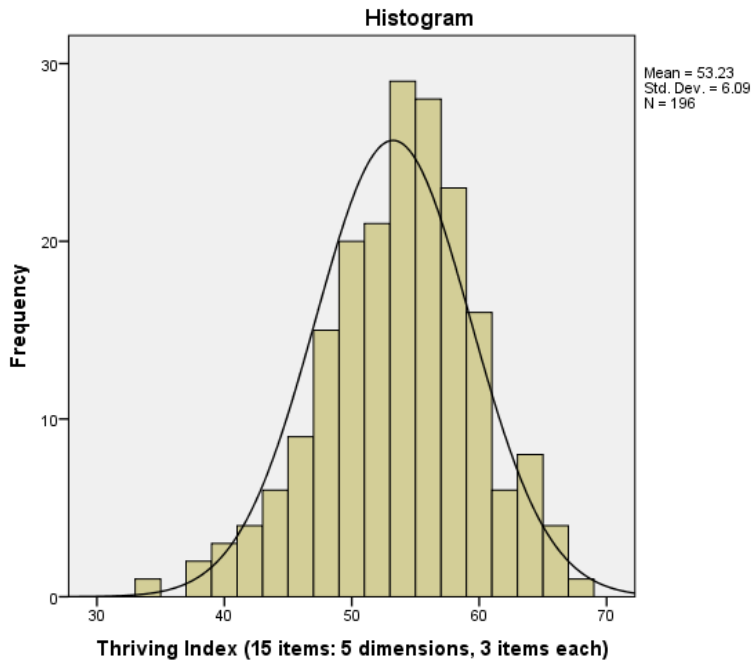


Figure 1. Sophomore Thriving Index

How have sophomores’ academic, social, physical, psycho-emotional transition been from first year to sophomore year?

We conducted a univariate statistical analysis of how sophomore reports of their transition from first year to sophomore year. We asked about multiple aspects of this transition, including academic, social, physical, and psycho-emotional transitions. For each aspect shown below in Table 2, more than half of the respondents indicated that the transition was at least “good”. The sole aspect that almost one of four respondents (23.5%) rated as poor or very poor was the psycho-emotional transition. Table 2 provides additional information on aspects of transition from first year to sophomore year.

Table 2. Percentages of Academic, Social, Physical and Psycho-emotional Transition from First Year to Sophomore Year

	Very Poor	Poor	Neutral	Good	Very Good
Academic transition	2.8%	7.3%	14.5%	41.1%	20.2%
Social transition	3.3%	9.4%	13.2%	43.4%	30.7%
Physical transition	5.2%	9.4%	27.3%	37.3%	20.8%
Psycho-emotional transition	7.5%	16.0%	25.9%	34.4%	16.0%

How has sophomores' overall transition been from first year to sophomore year?

We created an index that summarizes the four aspects of transition into a single summary score, representing the total number of the types of transitions from first-year to sophomore year of each respondent, scoring the responses for each item on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good) (see Figure 2). The summary score ranged from 4 to 20 with an index midpoint of 14.64. Additionally, there was a relatively large standard deviation of 3.368 which tells us that the distance between the average and the rest of the data is fairly spread out. This means that, on average, the survey participants had mostly good or very good transitions from first-year to sophomore year, although a small portion scored quite low.

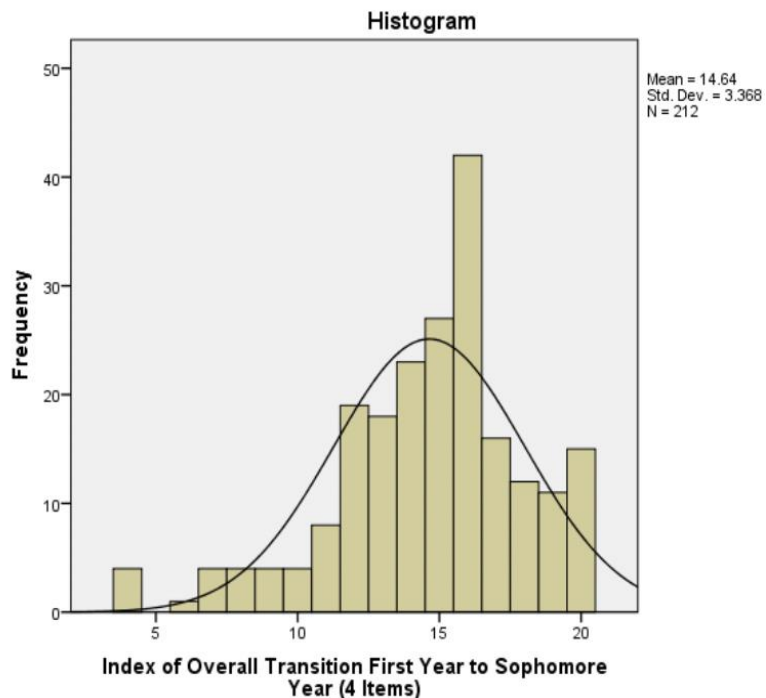


Figure 2. Index of Overall Transition from First Year to Sophomore Year

How affected have sophomores been in these areas of stress: academics, finances, relationships, choosing major, finding purpose, and political or social issues?

Next, we analyzed the frequencies of sophomore responses to stress sources in their lives. More than 50% of students indicated they feel stress in academics, rating from “moderately affected” to “extremely affected”. A large percentage of almost 60% of respondents said politics had no effect or a slight effect as an area of stress. Additionally, relationships and major/vocation were moderate stress sources. Table 3 includes additional information on stress sources. Many students also responded that they were affected by stress outside of these categories from extracurriculars and paid jobs. One respondent said, “co-curriculars have caused me stress because a lot of times leadership in student government can cause stress and it is an unpaid job so there are minimal resources for how to help change that.”

Table 3. Stress Sources and Levels for Sophomore Students

	Not at all affected	Slightly affected	Moderately affected	Very affected	Extremely affected
Stress Area: Academic	2.8%	11.8%	27.4%	32.5%	25.5%
Stress Area: Financial	23.1%	22.6%	23.1%	17.9%	13.2%
Stress Area: Relationships	11.3%	19.8%	27.4%	22.2%	19.3%
Stress Area: Major/Vocation	28.1%	18.6%	27.6%	14.8%	11.0%
Stress Area: Finding a Purpose	20.0%	17.6%	22.9%	21.4%	18.1%
Stress Area: Politics	27.9%	32.2%	23.1%	11.5%	5.3%

How have sophomore students’ overall stress levels been?

We created an index that summarizes the six areas of stress shown in Table 3 into a single summary score. As shown in Figure 3, the summary score ranged from 6 to 30, with a mean of score 17.54. Additionally, the standard deviation of 5.065 indicates a large spread of responses. The number of respondents that were moderately affected and above for each area was very large, indicating a greater problem of stress.

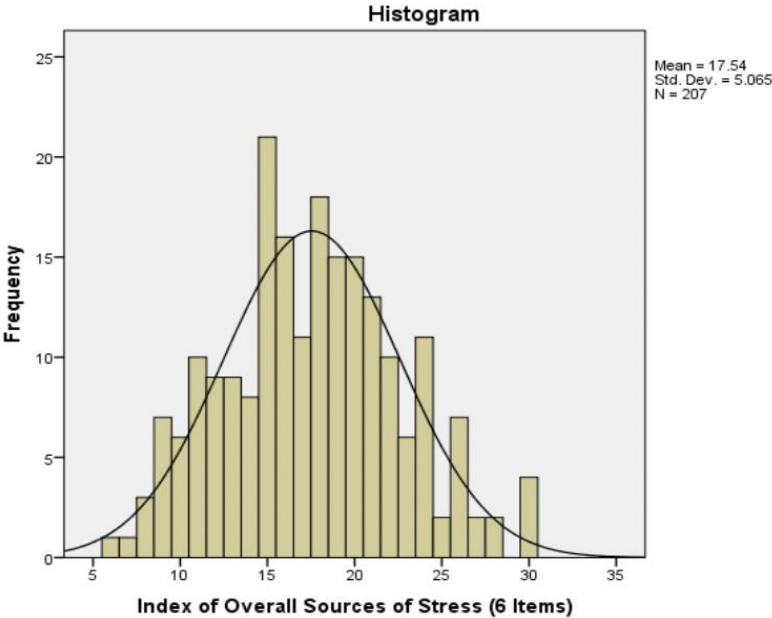


Figure 3. Index of Overall Sources and Levels of Stress for Sophomore Students

What resources and strategies have sophomores used when facing stress?

We ran statistical analysis from sophomores who responded to questions about which resources and strategies they had used when experiencing stress in the first 10 weeks of fall semester. As shown in Table 4, the first five resources and strategies are positive and the last three are negative or at least potentially negative. Regarding the positive resources and strategies, 55% of sophomores had not used St. Olaf community resources, such as Boe House, faith leaders, etc. at all in the first 10 weeks of fall semester and a large percentage had not used professional help at all (81.8%). In contrast, over 60% indicated they had used friends and family outside of St. Olaf from a large to a very large extent. Over 90% of respondents

reported having used a positive outlook to at least some extent. Regarding the negative strategies respondents had used in the first 10 weeks of the semester, two-thirds reported not using alcohol or drugs at all to cope with stress, and 38% reported not giving up or walking away. However, over 50% reported using distractions to cope with stress to at least a large extent (combining the top three response categories). This strategy may be useful in providing a break from a stressful situation if not over-used but if used extensively may seriously reduce the time and energy for dealing with stress in a more direct way. Table 4 below provides further percentages on sophomores' usage of resources and strategies for coping with stress.

Table 4. Positive Resources and Strategies Used by Sophomores

	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent
I use St. Olaf Community Resources (Wellness Center, Boe House, pastors, RAs, advisors, professors)	55.0%	15.3%	12.4%	11.0%	6.2%
I talk to friends at St. Olaf	4.8%	14.9%	17.8%	31.3%	31.3%
I talk to family and/or friends outside of St. Olaf	9.6%	8.6%	18.7%	28.2%	34.9%
I seek professional help outside St. Olaf (counselor, therapist, etc.)	81.8%	4.3%	4.3%	6.2%	3.3%
I keep a positive perspective	5.8%	21.7%	36.2%	23.7%	12.6%
I use alcohol or other drugs	66.8%	16.8%	11.1%	3.8%	1.4%
I do things to distract myself (such as watching TV, sleeping, shopping)	8.1%	15.8%	24.4%	25.4%	26.3%
I give up on the situation or walk away from it	38.0%	35.6%	16.3%	7.7%	2.4%

Overall, to what extent have sophomores been using the positive strategies and resources listed above for coping with stress?

Using the data on resources and strategies used for stress, we compiled all of the positive items listed in Table 4 into one index, with results shown in Figure 4. This summary score on our "Index of Overall Strategies Used for Coping with Stress" ranged from 5 to 25, with a mean score of 14.00. The standard deviation was 3.407, indicating that two-thirds of respondents scored between about 11 and 17, clustered mainly in the middle of the distribution.

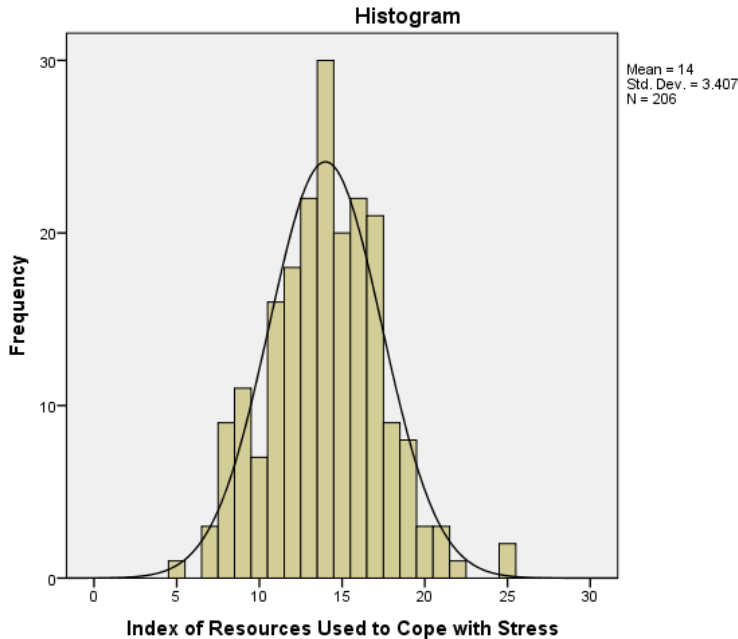


Figure 4. Index of Overall Strategies Used for Coping with Stress

How satisfied have sophomores been with Wellness center, Boe House, faith leaders, friends, residence assistant and or student staff, in terms of supporting their mental health?

We evaluated how satisfied sophomores were with campus resources for supporting their mental health as shown in Table 5. The highest percentage was 63.2% as respondents feeling very satisfied with faith leaders. Considering only the respondents who had used these resources in the first 10 weeks of the fall semester, and combining the responses for Somewhat satisfied and Very satisfied, the highest satisfaction was with friends at 85%, followed by faith leaders at 79.0%, Residence Life at 70.5%, the Wellness Center at 69.2%, and Boe House at 60%. However, few respondents indicated having used faith leaders (19), the Wellness Center (26), and Boe House (55).

Table 5. Satisfaction with resources used to cope with stress

	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied
Satisfaction: Wellness Center (n*=26)	0.0%	7.7%	23.1%	34.6%	34.6%
Satisfaction: Boe House (n=55)	18.2%	14.5%	7.3%	32.7%	27.3%
Satisfaction: Faith Leaders (n=19)	0.0%	0.0%	21.1%	15.8%	63.2%
Satisfaction: Friends (n=179)	1.1%	1.7%	12.3%	45.3%	39.7%
Satisfaction: Residence Life (n=144)	4.5%	11.4%	13.6%	36.4%	34.1%

**"n" refers to the number of students who answered the question in terms of satisfaction rather than "Not Applicable" or no answer. Where the number is small it indicates that few respondents had used those strategies within the first 10 weeks of fall semester.

How supported do sophomores feel by St. Olaf in relation to their identity?

In addition, we analyzed the frequencies of sophomores' perceptions that St. Olaf supports their multiple identities, as shown in Table 6. Combining the top two response categories of To a large extent and To a very large extent, the highest percentage of 77.8% indicated that St. Olaf supports their sexual identity, followed by gender identity (77.3%), and ability/disability status (72.8%). Overall, responses on about half of the various identities indicate that sophomores feel like St. Olaf has supported them. Although many students felt supported in their identity to at least a moderate extent, 16.7% feel supported only to a small extent or not at all regarding their religious/faith identity, followed by 15.5% regarding their racial or ethnic identity. This is an important finding and an undesirable outcome in our research.

Table 6. Frequency of perceptions of support from St. Olaf in aspects of identity

	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent
Support for Racial/Ethnic Identity	4.6%	10.9%	14.9%	22.4%	47.1%
Support for Gender Identity	1.7%	4.7%	16.3%	28.5%	48.8%
Support for Sexual Identity	1.9%	3.7%	16.7%	25.9%	51.9%
Support for Religious/Faith Identity	1.8%	14.9%	22.6%	25.6%	35.1%
Support for Able/disabled identity	3.6%	6.4%	17.1%	20.7%	52.1%
Support for Political Identity	3.4%	10.1%	20.8%	25.8%	39.9%

We created an index of perceived St. Olaf support for identities shown in Figure 5. The summary scores ranged from 6 to 30 and the mean was 25.32. The standard deviation was 4.717, indicating a wide spread of scores varying from the mean. Overall, sophomore respondents tended to perceive that St. Olaf supports their multiple identities..

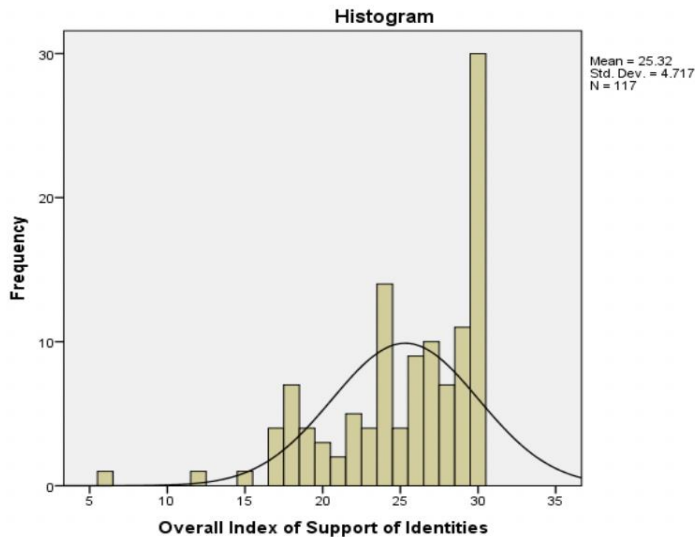


Figure 5. Index of Perceived Support from St. Olaf College in One's Identity

How spiritually sophomores identify themselves?

Lastly, we analyzed the data on how spiritually sophomores identify themselves. As shown in Table 7, over half (53%) of sophomore respondents indicated either being not spiritual at all or being only slightly spiritual and only 20.8% indicated being very or extremely spiritual.

Table 7. Levels of Spirituality

	Not at all spiritual	Slightly spiritual	Moderately spiritual	Very spiritual	Extremely spiritual
Spirituality	28.7%	24.3%	26.25%	13.4%	7.4%

Bivariate Analysis

This section of our analysis examines relationships between our variables in the context of emotional well-being and overall sophomore thriving. We first examined relationships between transitions from first-year to sophomore year and overall sophomore thriving. Next, we analyzed the relationships between stress areas and overall sophomore thriving, coping strategies and overall sophomore thriving, and the level of satisfaction with on-campus resources and overall sophomore thriving. Lastly, we analyzed the relationship between the support for various areas of identities and overall sophomore thriving, before evaluating demographic variables and perceived identity support. Although we found statistically significant relationships within our analysis, we cannot assume causality between variables, as our research is cross-sectional.

How have sophomores' academic, social, physical, psycho-emotional transitions from first-year to sophomore year affected their overall thriving?

We tested the relationship between the Index of Overall Transition from First Year to Sophomore Year (the summary score of the four areas of transition) and the Index of Overall Sophomore Thriving, using Pearson's r . The potential range for a correlation coefficient is between -1.0 (strong negative) and 1.0 (strong positive). We found a statistically significant moderate to strong positive correlation ($\rho = 0.486$, $p = 0.000$) between overall first-year to sophomore year transition and overall sophomore thriving, indicating that sophomores who had better transitions were more likely to be thriving. Since the p -value is less than 0.05, we can say that we are 95% confident that this relationship is not due to chance and we can generalize from these results to St. Olaf sophomores overall.

We then looked within the index to determine which area of transition has the strongest correlation with sophomore thriving. As shown below in Table 8, the Spearman's ρ correlation coefficient for academic transition and overall sophomore thriving is the highest of all of the areas of transition at 0.416 ($p = 0.000$). This means that academic transition from first year to sophomore year has a moderate positive and statistically significant correlation to overall sophomore thriving. Furthermore, if St. Olaf College wants to increase sophomore thriving, it will help to increase support for students' academic transition from their first-year to their sophomore year. However, it is also important to point out that all of the areas of transition have statistically significant relationships to overall sophomore thriving, and therefore, support for students in all areas of transition from their first-year to their sophomore year should be emphasized.

Table 8. Results of Spearman's rho for Area of Transition from First Year to Sophomore Year and the Index of Overall Sophomore Thriving

Area of Transition	Correlation Coefficient	Significance
Academic Transition	0.416	0.000*
Social Transition	0.316	0.000*
Psycho-Emotional Transition	0.315	0.000*
Physical Transition	0.274	0.000*

* p-value is ≤ 0.05 , therefore results are statistically significant

How have various areas of sophomore stress affected sophomores' overall thriving?

We used Pearson's r to test the relationship between the Index of Overall Sources of Stress (the summary score of the four areas six areas of stress) and the Index of Overall Sophomore Thriving. We found a statistically significant moderate negative correlation ($\rho = -0.351$, $p=0.000$) between overall stress scores and overall sophomore thriving. Students who are more stressed in various areas tend to experience lower levels of thriving. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can say that we are 95% confident that this relationship is not due to chance and we can generalize from these results to St. Olaf sophomores overall.

We then looked within the stress index to determine which specific areas of stress have a strong relationship with sophomore thriving. As shown below in Table 9, the Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was stronger for the following stress sources: academics, finances, choosing a major or vocation/career, and finding a purpose in life, all with p-values lower than 0.05, meaning they were all statistically significant. The stress area with the strongest negative correlation was academics, meaning that academic stress is the biggest negative factor affecting sophomore thriving among these stress areas. Stress from family, friends, and/or relationships did not have as strong a relationship, meaning they do not have as strong of an inverse relationship with overall sophomore thriving as the other four do, and stress from political and social issues was not statistically significant. The fact that most of these results are significant means that almost all of them hinder sophomore thriving. If St. Olaf College wants to promote sophomore thriving, it must acknowledge the various areas of stress that hinder a sophomores' ability to thrive.

Table 9. Results of Spearman's rho for Areas of Sophomore Stress and the Index of Overall Sophomore Thriving

Stress Area	Correlation Coefficient	Significance
Academics	-0.288	0.000*
Finances (individual and/or family)	-0.237	0.001*
Family, friends, and/or relationships	-0.175	0.014*
Choosing a major or vocation/career	-0.220	0.002*
Finding purpose in life	-0.230	0.001*
Political or social issues	-0.110	0.128

* p-value is ≤ 0.05 , therefore results are statistically significant

How do sophomore students' strategies for coping with stress affect their overall thriving?

We used Pearson's r to test the relationship between the Index of Overall Resources and Strategies Used for Coping with Stress (the summary score of the eight coping resources and strategies, with the three negative coping strategies coded reversely) and the Index of Overall Sophomore Thriving. We found a statistically significant moderate to strong positive correlation ($\rho = 0.554$, $p = 0.000$) between overall coping ability and overall sophomore thriving. Students who have higher overall coping scores tend to experience higher rates of thriving. Since the p -value is less than 0.05, we can say that we are 95% confident that this relationship is not due to chance and we can generalize from these results to St. Olaf sophomores overall.

We then looked within the coping index to determine which specific coping strategies have the strongest relationship with sophomore thriving. As shown below in Table 10, the Spearman's ρ correlation coefficient for keeping a positive perspective and overall sophomore thriving is the highest of all the areas of coping at 0.604 (p -value = 0.000). This suggests that keeping a positive perspective in response to stress has a positive impact on overall sophomore thriving. This is important to know, as St. Olaf College can try to improve sophomore thriving by emphasizing to the sophomore population the importance of maintaining a positive perspective. As discussed in our literature review, it is possible to teach positive perspective, especially in academic settings, through emphasizing the relevance and transferable skills that academic experiences offer.

Table 10. Results of Spearman's rho for Coping Strategies and the Index of Overall Sophomore Thriving

Responding to Stress: Coping Resources and Strategies	Correlation Coefficient	Significance
I use resources provided by the St. Olaf community (such as Wellness Center, Boe House, pastors, RAs, advisors, or professors)	-0.086	0.230
I talk to friends at St. Olaf.	0.369	0.000*
I talk to family and/or friends outside St. Olaf.	0.332	0.000*
I seek professional help outside the St. Olaf community (such as a counselor or therapist).	0.034	0.634
I use alcohol or other drugs. (reverse-coded)	0.105	0.144
I do things to distract myself (such as watching TV, sleeping, or shopping). (reverse-coded)	0.134	0.061
I give up on the situation or walk away from it. (reverse-coded)	0.344	0.000*
I keep a positive perspective.	<u>0.604</u>	0.000*

* $p \leq 0.05$

How have sophomores' satisfaction with on-campus resources for coping strategies affected their overall thriving?

We used Spearman's ρ to examine the relationship between student satisfaction with various St. Olaf resources and the Index of Overall Sophomore Thriving. This satisfaction index was only based on sophomores who had used these resources in the first 10 weeks of the fall semester. As shown below in Table 11, the Spearman's ρ correlation coefficient was only significant for the Wellness Center, Boe House, and friends, with positive moderate correlations ($p = 0.05$). These results suggest that the more satisfied students are with the Wellness Center,

Boe House, and friends, the more likely they are to be thriving. At the same time, many students acknowledged that the resources are very scarce. One respondent mentioned, “Boe House is super understaffed... therapy is too expensive”.

Table 11. Results of Spearman’s rho for Satisfaction with On-Campus Resources and the Index for Overall Sophomore Thriving

Satisfaction with Resources	Correlation Coefficient	Significance
Wellness Center	<u>0.495</u>	0.019*
Boe House	<u>0.402</u>	0.003*
Faith Leaders	0.038	0.889
Friends	<u>0.400</u>	0.000*
Residence Life Staff	0.284	0.076

* $p \leq 0.05$

How do sophomores’ perceptions of St. Olaf’s support for their identities affect their overall thriving?

We used Pearson’s r to test the relationship between the Index of Overall Support for Identities (the six areas of identity) and the Index of Overall Sophomore Thriving. We found a statistically significant small to moderate positive correlation ($\rho = 0.270$, $p = 0.005$) between overall St. Olaf support of identities and overall sophomore thriving, which we can generalize to St. Olaf sophomores overall. Students who have stronger perceptions of St. Olaf’s support for their identities tend to experience higher rates of thriving.

We then looked within the Index of Overall Support of Identities to determine which specific areas of identity support have the strongest relationship with sophomore thriving. As shown below in Table 12, the Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient for St. Olaf support for racial/ethnic identity and overall sophomore thriving is the highest at 0.357 (p -value = 0.000). This suggests that feeling supported by St. Olaf college in relation to one’s racial/ethnic identity has a small to moderate positive correlation with overall sophomore thriving.

It is important to note that five of these six areas of identity support have p -values of less than 0.05, meaning that they are statistically significant. This means that they affect sophomore thriving beyond our sample. If St. Olaf College wants to promote sophomore thriving, it must address the need for supporting various areas of identity and doing so in ways that sophomores perceive as supportive.

Table 12. Results of Spearman’s rho for Support for Identities and the Index of Overall Sophomore Thriving

Areas of Identity	Correlation Coefficient	Significance
Racial/ethnic identity	<u>0.357</u>	0.000*
Gender identity	0.227	0.004*
Sexual identity	0.249	0.002*
Religious/faith identity	0.186	0.021*
Ability/disability identity	0.261	0.003*
Political identity	0.151	0.054

* $p \leq 0.05$

Does race/ethnicity affect perceptions of St. Olaf support for racial/ethnic identity among sophomores?

As mentioned above, our results show that feelings of support in relation to one’s racial/ethnic identity have a positive correlation to overall sophomore thriving, so identifying which groups feel less supported by St. Olaf in relation to their racial/ethnic identity will enable St. Olaf to better target support for those groups. We conducted an independent samples t-test to compare to the mean racial/ethnic support score of sophomore students of color (including bi-/multi-racial students) with the mean racial/ethnic support score of white students, and found a significant difference between the two groups ($p=0.009$), shown in Table 13. The mean score for students of color was considerably lower ($m=3.02$, $sd=1.260$) than the mean score for white students ($m=4.44$, $sd=0.901$). On average, white students indicated a much higher sense of support for their racial/ethnic identity (almost 50% higher) compared to students of color.

Open-ended responses also demonstrated the levels of support that students felt for their racial/ethnic identities. Several respondents noted the ways that they feel that St. Olaf is effective at creating spaces for inclusive programming: “there’s always events/programs where everybody feels welcome, and other events/programs to learn more about other cultures!” However, many students noted that there was not enough being done. One respondent said that St. Olaf should be “creating events that are not optional to talk about identity.” Another wrote that St. Olaf should “respond to discrimination and microaggressions.” To increase overall sophomore thriving, St. Olaf must acknowledge this disparity in perceptions of support for racial/ethnic identity and work to try to increase support for students of color.

Table 13: Results of Independent Samples T-Test for Race/Ethnicity and Support for Racial/Ethnic Identity

Race/Ethnicity Grouped	Mean	T-test score	Significance
Students of Color, including bi-/multi-racial	3.02	-7.310	0.009*
White Students	4.44		

* $p \leq 0.05$

How do sophomores’ levels of spirituality affect their overall thriving?

We used Spearman’s rho to test the relationship between the levels of spirituality and the Index of Overall Sophomore Thriving. As shown below in Table 14, we found a statistically significant small to moderate positive correlation ($\rho = 0.254$, $p = 0.000$) between level of spirituality and overall sophomore thriving. Students who have stronger overall levels of spirituality tend to experience higher rates of thriving. However, a common theme in our open-ended responses was frustration with the extent to which the school’s Lutheran identity is reflected in course material, and the same sentiment was shared by a student who noted, “ I’m over learning about Christianity.”

Table 14. Results of Spearman’s rho for Spirituality Rating and the Index of Overall Sophomore Thriving

	Correlation Coefficient	Significance
Spirituality Rating	0.254	0.000*

* $p \leq 0.05$

How do sophomores' demographics affect their overall sophomore thriving?

As seen below in Table 15, we conducted independent samples t-tests to determine the relationship between demographics and overall sophomore thriving. For three of the demographics, there were statistically significant differences between groups. The mean score for students of color was lower ($m = 51.44$) than the mean score for white students ($m = 53.79$) ($p = 0.022$), the mean score for first generation students was lower ($m = 50.58$) than the mean score for non-first generation students ($m = 53.80$) ($p = 0.003$), and the mean score for students with disabilities was lower ($m=50.66$) than the mean score for students without disabilities ($m=54.20$) ($p=0.002$). This means that students of color, first generation students, and students with disabilities tend to have lower thriving scores than white students, non-first generation students, and students without disabilities, respectively. There were no statistically significant differences by gender, sexual identity, or international student status.

Table 15. Demographics and Overall Thriving

Demographic Variable	Group Means	T-test score	Significance
Gender	Females: 53.26 Males: 53.77	$t(178) = -0.483$	0.630
Race/ethnicity	Students of color = 51.44 White students = 53.79	$t(181) = -.216$	0.022*
Sexual identity	LGBTQIA+ = 52.22 Hetero = 53.45	$t(173) = -1.148$	0.253
First generation	Not first gen = 53.80 First gen = 50.58	$t(184) = 2.796$	0.003*
International	Domestic = 53.25 International = 53.39	$t(183) = -.094$	0.925
Dis/ability	No disability = 54.20 Disability = 50.66	$t(168) = 2.892$	0.002*

*p-value is ≤ 0.05 , therefore results are statistically significant

Discussion

Our findings indicate that among sophomores' strategies for coping with stress, positive perspective had the greatest and most significant impact on thriving. We found that when students cope with stress by utilizing a positive perspective, they are more likely to have higher levels of overall thriving as opposed to using resources provided by St. Olaf, talking with friends at St. Olaf, talking with friends and family outside of St. Olaf, using professional help, using alcohol or drugs, using distraction or giving up. Our findings on positive perspective align with prior research noted in our review of literature and are in congruence with prior findings that individual-level factors, such as maintaining a positive perspective, are associated with greater mental health (Byrd et. al, 2012). Additionally, prior literature affirms a positive perspective as a key aspect of thriving. Students who thrive have a positive outlook on life and are optimistic about their future. With a positive perspective, students tend to be more satisfied with their lives and their college experience (Schreiner et Al. 2012).

We also found that there was no significant correlation between the use of resources provided at St. Olaf College such as the Wellness Center, Boe House, Faith leaders, etc., and overall sophomore thriving. In terms of on-campus resources used. However, higher levels of

satisfaction of the Wellness Center, Boe House, and friends all have a positive relationship to overall sophomore thriving among students who use these resources.

In terms of sophomores' identities, we found that perceived support of racial/ethnic identity had the strongest correlation with overall sophomore thriving. Those who feel more supported by St. Olaf in terms of their racial/ethnic identity have higher overall sophomore thriving scores. White students indicated a higher sense of support compared to students of color (almost 50% higher). This aligns with prior research that found that members of minority groups tend to be more uncertain about their belonging to their college, and so colleges should emphasize support and inclusion schemes to their improve overall thriving (Walton et Al. 2011). There were many comments about The Taylor Center for Equity and Inclusion being a welcoming space for students of diverse and/or marginalized identities.

When examining sophomores' transitions between first year to sophomore year, we found that academic transitions had a stronger correlation with overall sophomore thriving than social, psycho-emotional and physical transitions. Additionally, we found that the sources of stress that have the strongest inverse relationship with overall sophomore thriving are academics, finances and choosing a major or vocation/career. Our findings bridged a gap in prior literature, as we had found no research focused on sophomore transitions from their first year to their second year. Additionally, prior literature focused more on emotional well-being among students and how to attain higher levels of intrapersonal thriving, whereas our research examined intrapersonal factors that impact sophomores' overall thriving.

Lastly, when examining levels of spirituality among sophomores, we were surprised by the gap between prior literature and our research. Prior scholarship emphasized spirituality as a large aspect of emotional well-being and thriving and as a general framework for thriving (Lauren and Kemppainen 2015; Derrico et al. 2015; Cuevas et al. 2017; Byrd and McKinney 2012). Our research found that levels of spirituality were not significantly related to coping with stress or attaining higher levels of spirituality. Some students noted that the spiritual or religious aspect of St. Olaf has been very unappealing for them.

Conclusion

Our research closely examined various aspects of emotional well-being and intrapersonal thriving that affect sophomores' overall levels of thriving. We found that sophomores who transition well from first-year to sophomore year academically, socially, physically and psycho-emotionally, tend to thrive better overall. Among other stressors such as financial, choosing a vocation, or finding a life purpose, academic stress has the largest that negative effects on sophomores' overall ability to thrive. Between various coping strategies sophomores use in dealing with stress, our findings reveal that sophomores who are able to maintain a positive perspective are likely to have higher thriving scores. And lastly, our findings reveal that thriving is unequal based on sophomores' racial and ethnic identity.

A main strength of our research is that it helps to fill the gap in literature on factors which impact sophomores' overall thriving. Additionally, our findings can be generalized to St. Olaf College sophomores as we meet the threshold of having over a 30% response rate, meaning we have a reasonable understanding of what enhances sophomore thriving, and what could inhibit a sophomore's overall ability to thrive here at St. Olaf.

Our research was limited by being a cross-sectional survey. We were only able to survey sophomores at one point in time, as this was a semester research project and we were

therefore unable to see how sophomores' perception on these factors might change during their spring semester. Furthermore, our research was limited in that we conducted statistical tests using binary categories of gender, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity. Some students identify outside of these categories, and our research was unable to fully represent the identities of all students surveyed.

Recommendations

Our research provided us with main factors which are closely associated with sophomores' overall ability to thrive. From these findings we have gathered the following four recommendations to assist students thrive better in their sophomore year.

1) Increase support for racial and ethnic minorities:

A main finding in our research is that over 80% of sophomores at St. Olaf college feel supported by the college to some extent in terms of their racial/ethnic identity. This could be due to the various multi-cultural organizations and events held on campus, but more can be done to bring that percentage even higher. Based on our results, it is essential that St. Olaf College do more to provide its students of color more support for their identities. We suggest that the college increase its representation of minority racial/ethnic identities. Examples include providing more physical spaces across campus such as the Taylor Center and expanding mandatory discourse of various identities to be included in the new general education requirements.

2) Assist sophomores in developing a positive perspective to cope with stress:

Sophomores have struggled to balance commitments in co-curricular activities and on-campus employment, with a good performance academically. The college could instruct sophomore advisors to have specific conversations about time management skills. It could also encourage faculty to regularly highlight the learning outcomes of their course and to emphasize the transferable skills students gain through the course. These changes may increase confidence and contribute to a positive perspective in coping with stress in their vocation.

3) Increase access to mental health resources:

Our research on the use of mental health resources on campus found problems. Resources such as the Boe House rated very poorly in terms of usage, which may be due to the fact that it is hard to book an appointment there. No one would want to wait a week, sometimes even a month, for a time slot for issues they are dealing with right then and there. Our suggestion is to hire more staff to increase access to appointments.

4) Support a better academic transition from first-year to sophomore year: Academic transition had a huge impact on sophomore thriving overall but has also been the cause of major stress while at St. Olaf. Sophomores reported feeling overwhelmed with the academic workload and with trying to balance that with other activities in their lives. It's essential that that transition from first-year to sophomore year goes as smoothly as possible in order to support thriving overall. Our recommendation is to create workshops for spring-semester first year students to prepare and encourage rising sophomores for higher-level courses, with the workshops potentially led by current sophomores that year. This would help first years see the benefits of having a smooth academic transition because they would be learning from a person who was recently in their situation.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions and Response Categories

50	<p>HEADING: Intrapersonal/Emot..T (Comment Box)</p> <p>Your Emotional and Spiritual Well-being</p>	0						
51	<p>Transition (Scale Series)</p> <p>How would you describe your <u>transition from your first year to your sophomore year</u>?</p>	248	1	2	3	4	5	
			Academic	50	102	36	18	6
			Social	65	92	28	20	7
			Physical	44	79	58	20	11
			Psycho-emotional	34	73	55	34	16
			<p>Key:</p> <p>1 - <i>Very good</i></p> <p>2 - <i>Good</i></p> <p>3 - <i>Neutral</i></p> <p>4 - <i>Poor</i></p> <p>5 - <i>Very poor</i></p>					
52	<p>Stress sources (Scale Series)</p> <p>So far this semester, have you been <u>negatively affected by stress</u> in the following areas of your life?</p>	248	1	2	3	4	5	
			Academics	54	69	58	25	6
			Finances (individual and/or family)	28	38	49	48	49
			Family, friends, and/or relationships	41	47	58	42	24
			Choosing a major or vocation/career	23	31	58	39	59
			Finding purpose in life	38	45	48	37	42
			Political or social issues	11	24	48	67	58
			<p>Key:</p> <p>1 - <i>Extremely affected</i></p> <p>2 - <i>Very affected</i></p> <p>3 - <i>Moderately affected</i></p> <p>4 - <i>Slightly affected</i></p> <p>5 - <i>Not at all affected</i></p>					
53	<p>Stress coping (Scale Series)</p> <p><u>When facing stress</u> at St. Olaf this semester, to what extent do you tend to respond in these ways?</p>	248	1	2	3	4	5	
			I use resources provided by the St. Olaf community (such as Wellness Center, Boe House, pastors, RAs, advisors, or professors)	13	23	26	32	115
			I talk to friends at St. Olaf.	65	65	37	31	10
			I talk to family and/or friends outside St. Olaf.	73	59	39	18	20
			I seek professional help outside the St. Olaf community (such as a counselor or therapist).	7	13	9	9	171
			I use alcohol or other drugs.	3	8	23	35	139
			I do things to distract myself (such as watching TV, sleeping, or shopping).	55	53	51	33	17
			I give up on the situation or walk away from it.	5	16	34	74	79
			I keep a positive perspective.	26	49	75	45	12
			<p>Key:</p> <p>1 - <i>To a very large extent</i></p> <p>2 - <i>To a large extent</i></p> <p>3 - <i>To a moderate extent</i></p> <p>4 - <i>To a small extent</i></p> <p>5 - <i>Not at all</i></p>					
54	<p>Follow up: Other stress & coping (Short Answer)</p> <p>Are there other areas of life that have stressed you this semester (such as paid work, co-curriculars, other activities, etc.), or are there other ways that you deal with stress? If so, please explain.</p>	248	View Responses					

55	MH resource satisfaction (Scale Series) If you have used these resources to support your mental health this semester, how satisfied have you been?	248	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4</th> <th>5</th> <th>6</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Wellness Center</td> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> <td>6</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>182</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Boe House</td> <td>15</td> <td>18</td> <td>4</td> <td>8</td> <td>10</td> <td>153</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Faith leader(s)</td> <td>12</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>187</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Friends</td> <td>71</td> <td>81</td> <td>22</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>29</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Residence Life student staff</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> <td>2</td> <td>163</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Key: 1 - Very satisfied 2 - Somewhat satisfied 3 - Neutral 4 - Somewhat dissatisfied 5 - Very dissatisfied 6 - Not applicable (I have not used this resource for my mental health this semester.)</p>		1	2	3	4	5	6	Wellness Center	9	9	6	2	0	182	Boe House	15	18	4	8	10	153	Faith leader(s)	12	3	4	0	0	187	Friends	71	81	22	3	2	29	Residence Life student staff	15	16	6	5	2	163
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56	Follow up for MH resource satisfaction (Short Answer) Are there other resources you have used this semester to support your mental health (such as advisors, professors, Resident Area Coordinator, class dean, etc.)? If so, how satisfied have you been with them?	248	View Responses
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57	St. Olaf: ID support (Scale Series) To what extent do you feel that St. Olaf College supports you in these aspects of your identity?	248	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4</th> <th>5</th> <th>6</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Your racial/ethnic identity</td> <td>82</td> <td>39</td> <td>26</td> <td>19</td> <td>8</td> <td>36</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Your gender identity</td> <td>84</td> <td>49</td> <td>28</td> <td>8</td> <td>3</td> <td>37</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Your sexual identity</td> <td>84</td> <td>42</td> <td>27</td> <td>6</td> <td>3</td> <td>47</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Your religious/faith identity</td> <td>59</td> <td>43</td> <td>38</td> <td>25</td> <td>3</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Your ability/disability identity</td> <td>73</td> <td>29</td> <td>24</td> <td>9</td> <td>5</td> <td>70</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Your political identity</td> <td>71</td> <td>46</td> <td>37</td> <td>18</td> <td>6</td> <td>32</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Key: 1 - To a very large extent 2 - To a large extent 3 - To a moderate extent 4 - To a small extent 5 - Not at all 6 - Not applicable</p>		1	2	3	4	5	6	Your racial/ethnic identity	82	39	26	19	8	36	Your gender identity	84	49	28	8	3	37	Your sexual identity	84	42	27	6	3	47	Your religious/faith identity	59	43	38	25	3	41	Your ability/disability identity	73	29	24	9	5	70	Your political identity	71	46	37	18	6	32
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58	St. Olaf does well (Short Answer) What is one thing St. Olaf does well in terms of supporting your identity(ies)?	248	View Responses										
59	St. Olaf wish (Short Answer) What is one thing you wish St. Olaf would do (or would do better) to support your identity(ies)?	248	View Responses										
60	Spirituality rating (Multiple Choice) For the purposes of this survey, spirituality may include a) relationship with God or with one's understanding of a higher spiritual being or power, b) religious practices, or c) practices that provide a sense of satisfaction with life or purpose in life and that you consider spiritual. Using this definition, how spiritual are you?	202	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Extremely spiritual</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very spiritual</td> <td>27</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderately spiritual</td> <td>53</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Slightly spiritual</td> <td>49</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not at all spiritual (If this is your answer, please SKIP to question ...)</td> <td>58</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Extremely spiritual	15	Very spiritual	27	Moderately spiritual	53	Slightly spiritual	49	Not at all spiritual (If this is your answer, please SKIP to question ...)	58
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61	Relig affiliation (Short Answer) What is your religious affiliation? (If none, please write "none.")	248	View Responses										
62	Spiritual activities (Short Answer) If you spend time on spirituality, what sorts of things do you do? For example, this could include attending religious services, meditating, having a routine that gives you purpose, volunteering, or anything else that you consider to be spiritual.	248	View Responses										