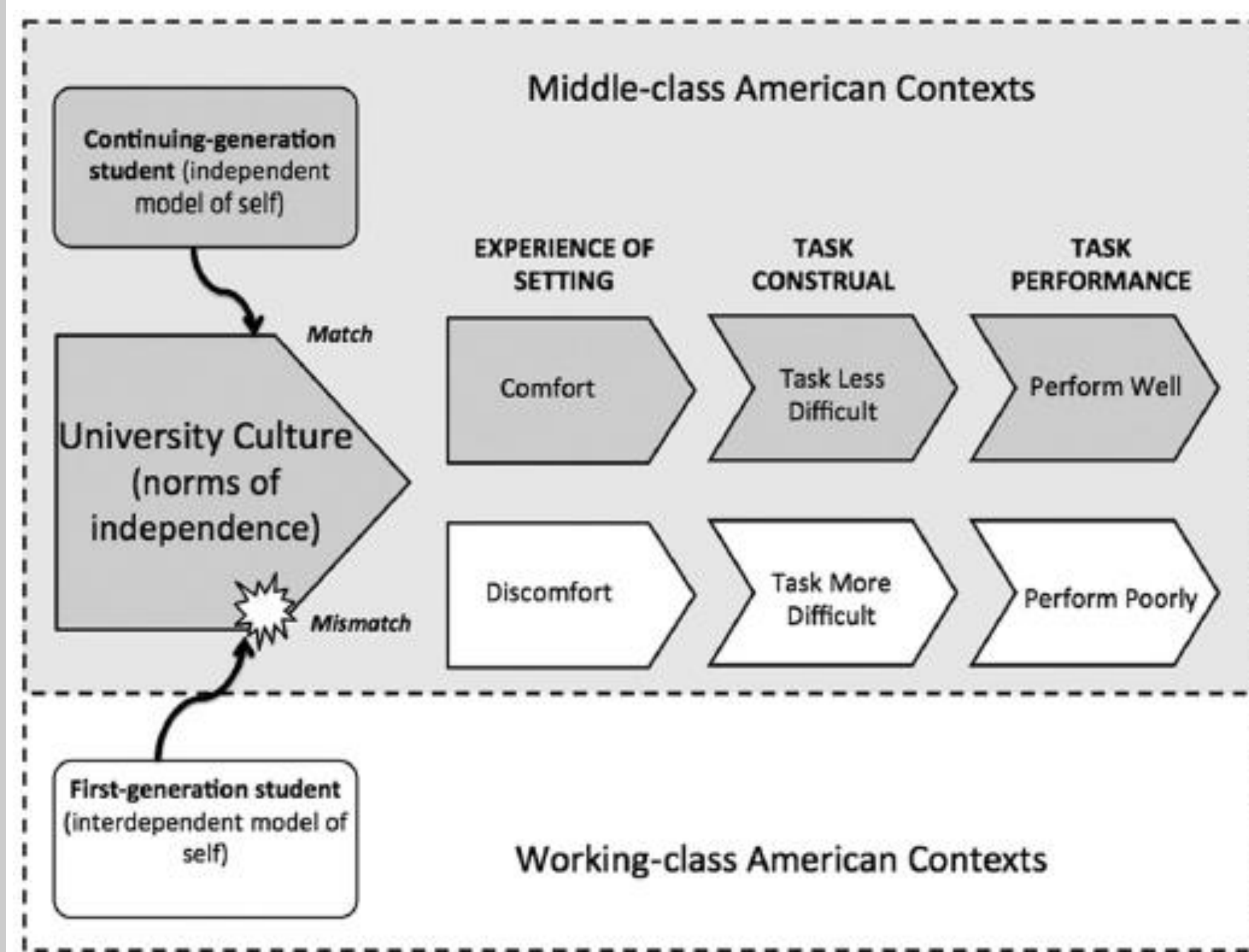


Background

Cultural Mismatch Theory

Argues that 1st gen college students may academically underperform due to a “cultural mismatch” between their sense of self and the norms endorsed by American universities (Stephens et al., 2012).



Research Questions

- 1) Is there a cultural mismatch for transfer students at Elmhurst University? (H₁ & H₂)
- 2) If so, are there academic or psychological consequences? (H₃)

Predictions

H₁: Interdependent Motives:

Transfer Students > Traditional Students

H₂: Independent Motives:

Transfer Students < Traditional Students

H₃: Academic & Psychological Outcomes

Transfer Students < Traditional Students

Method & Results

Participants

- 468 Elmhurst College undergrads (76.9% females, $M_{age} = 21.19$, $SD = 3.89$)
 - 146 Transfer Students (50% first-gen, 37.7% students of color)
 - 322 Traditional Students (46.3% first-gen, 40.1% students of color)

Procedure

- Elmhurst University Student Experience Online Survey

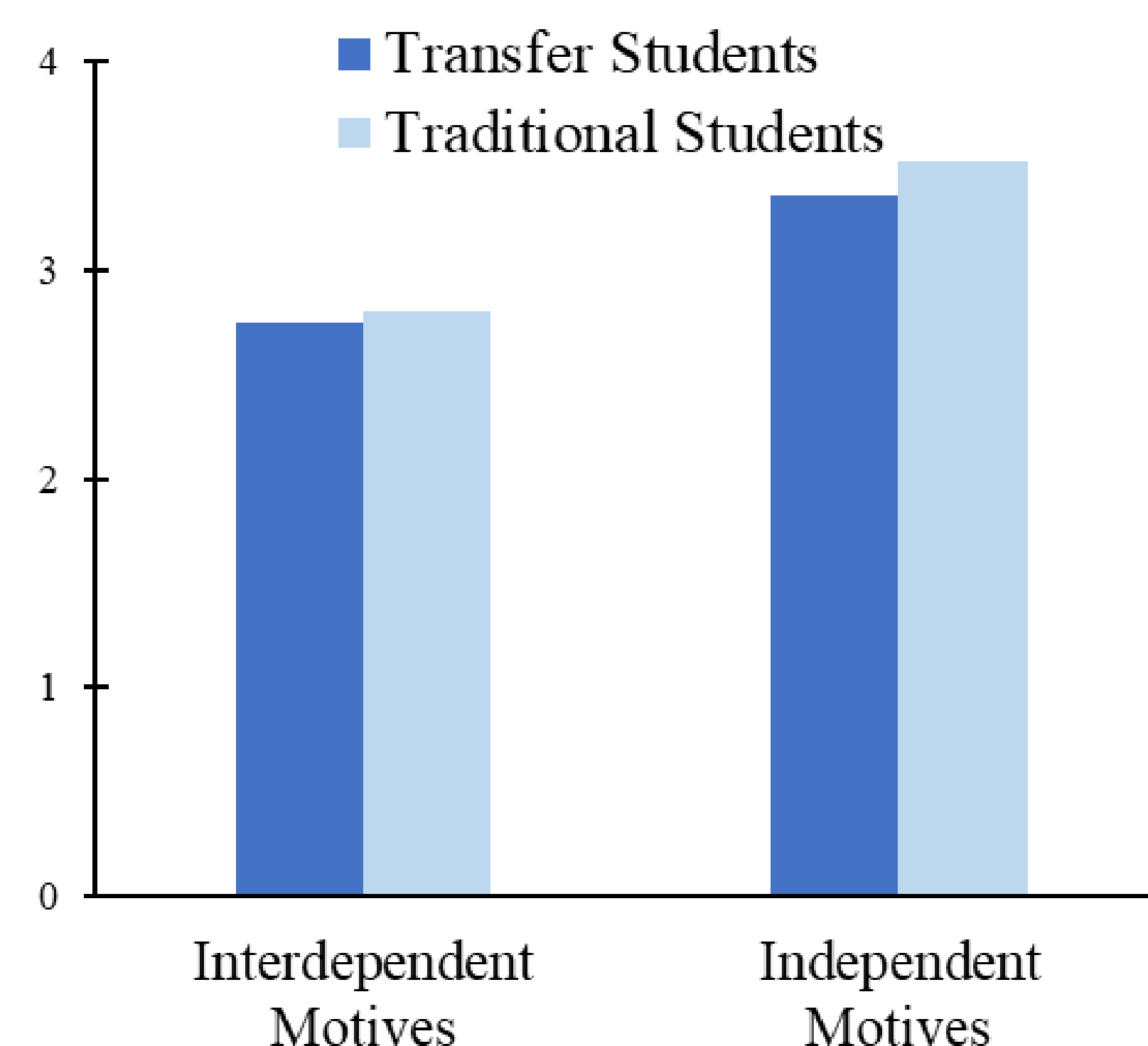


Measures

- **Motives for Attending College** (Stephens et al., 2012)
 - 6 items assessed Interdependent Motives (e.g., bring honor to my family)
 - 6 items assess Independent Motives (e.g., become an independent thinker)
- **Academic Outcome**
 - Academic Persistence (“In last year, have you seriously considered leaving the college?”)
- **Psychological Outcomes** (short, reliable versions of scales)
 - Sense of Belonging to the university
 - Life Satisfaction
 - Self-Concept Clarity
 - Self-Esteem
 - Loneliness

Results

Cultural Mismatch? **X**



Academic Consequences? **X**

In the last year have you considered leaving Elmhurst University?

Transfer Students	18.5% Yes
Traditional Students	32.7% Yes

Psychological Consequences?

As predicted, Transfer Students reported a lower sense of belonging to the university than Traditional Students ($p = .03$). **✓**

Contrary to predictions, Transfer Students and Traditional Students did not differ on any of the other psychological outcomes. **X**

Results

Did a Cultural Mismatch Occur? **No.**

Relative to Traditional Students, Transfer students did not report more interdependent motives (H₁), nor did they report lower independent motives (H₂).

Evidence for Academic or Psychological Consequences? **Yes and No**

Transfer students only reported a lower sense of belonging to the university than traditional students (H₃).

Discussion

Future Directions

- Efforts to support transfer students should focus primarily on increasing their sense of belonging to the institution.
- Additional analyses with all students did indicate a cultural mismatch for 1st generation college students and students of color.
- Campus interventions should address all students’ intersecting identities.

Reference

Stephens, N.M., Fryberg, S.A., Markus, H.R., Johnson, C.S., & Covarrubias, R. (2012) Unseen disadvantage: How American universities’ focus on independence undermines the academic performance of first-generation college students. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(6), 1178-1197.