

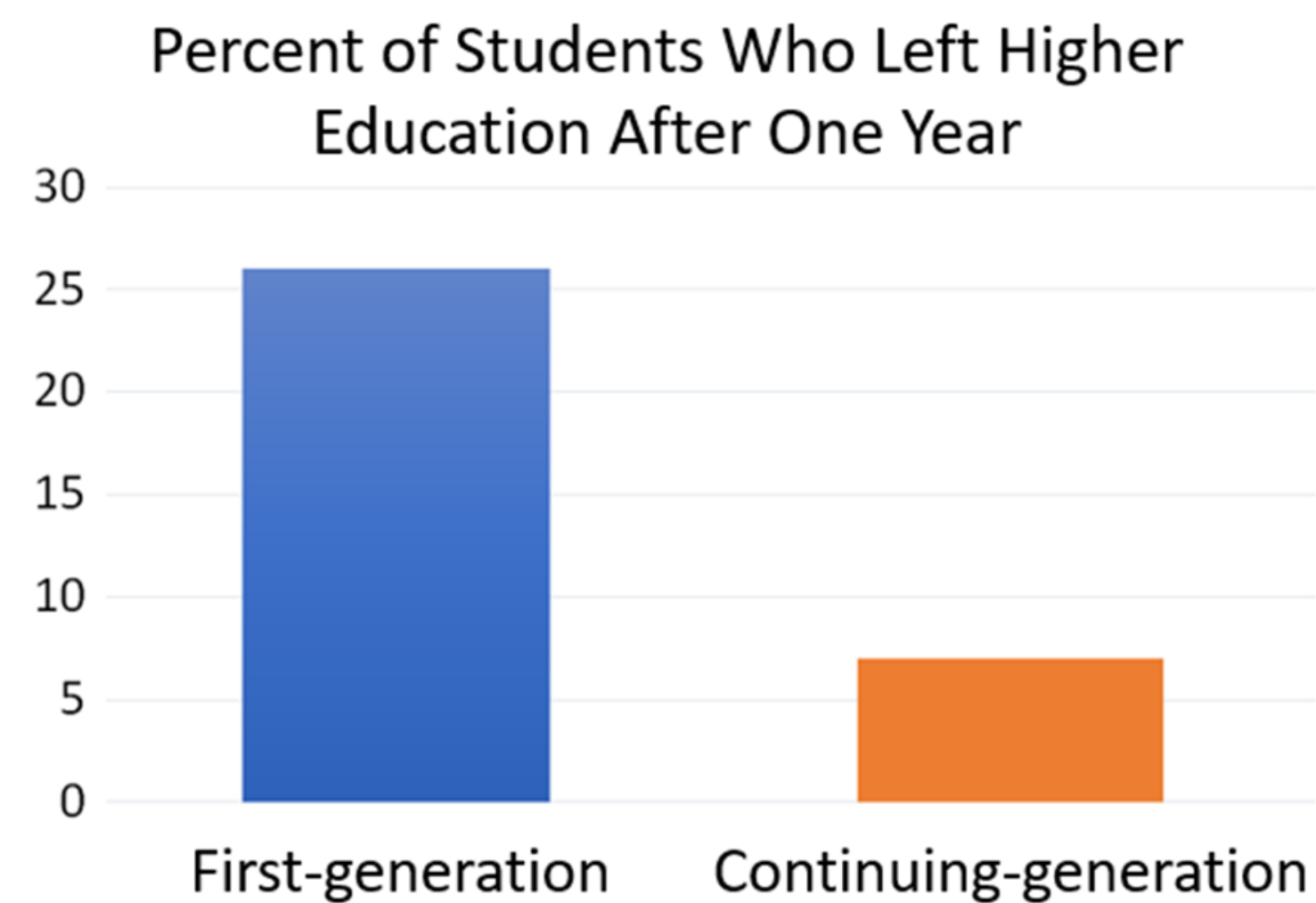
Relationship Between First-Generation Status and Psychological Well-Being, Perceived Stress, and Coping Strategies

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Background

- For college students, differences in life experiences may impact the type and severity of stressors, as well as access to coping strategies or resources (Garriott & Nisle, 2018; Quinn, Cornelius-White, MacGregor, & Uribe-Zarain, 2019).

- First-generation students were nearly four times more likely (26% to 7%) to leave higher education after the first year than their continuing-generation peers (Engle & Tinto, 2008).



- First-generation and continuing-generation college students differ in personal and social demands, as well as in their abilities, relationships, and resources in achieving goals, which in turn leads to differences in psychological well-being (PWB) (Quinn et al., 2019).
- Institutional supports and reflective coping explained the relation between stress and perceived academic goal progress for first- but not continuing-generation college students (Garriott & Nisle, 2018).

Present Study

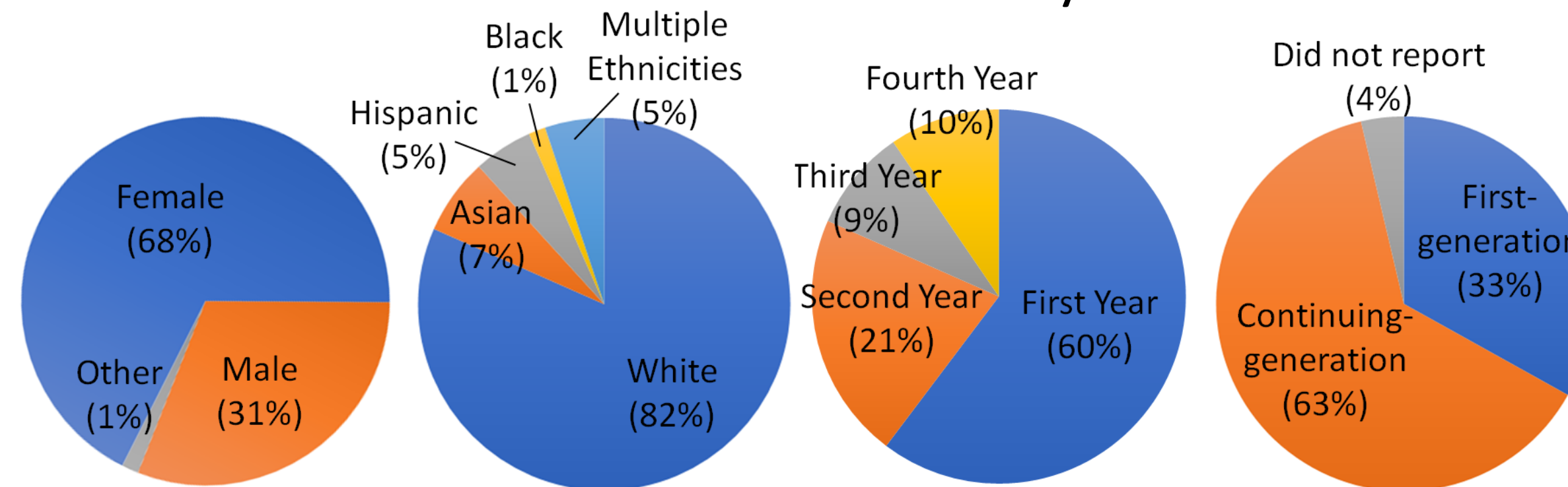
- Goal:** The present study seeks to examine differences between first- and continuing generation students in PWB, perceived stress, and coping strategies.

Hypotheses:

- First-generation status will be negatively correlated with PWB.
- First-generation students will have higher levels of perceived stress than continuing-generation students.
- First-generation college students will be more likely to engage in maladaptive coping strategies.

Participants

- Participants included 136 students from a 4-year higher education institution in central Pennsylvania.



Measures

The Scale of Psychological Well-being (Ryff, 1989).

- Six subscales: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth.
- Ex. Personal growth: "I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world."

The Global Measure of Perceived Stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983).

- Assesses the type and frequency of participants' feelings and thoughts during the last month.
- Ex. "In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?"

The Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (COPE) inventory (Carver & Scheier 1989).

- Assesses the different ways people respond to stress.
- Ex. "I have been getting emotional support from others."
"I have been thinking hard about what steps to take."

Results

- Stress levels and PWB:** No significant difference existed between first- and continuing-generation college students for stress levels or PWB.
- Coping strategies:** Few significant differences existed between first- and continuing generation college students, except for planning abilities and emotional support. Fig 1.

Results

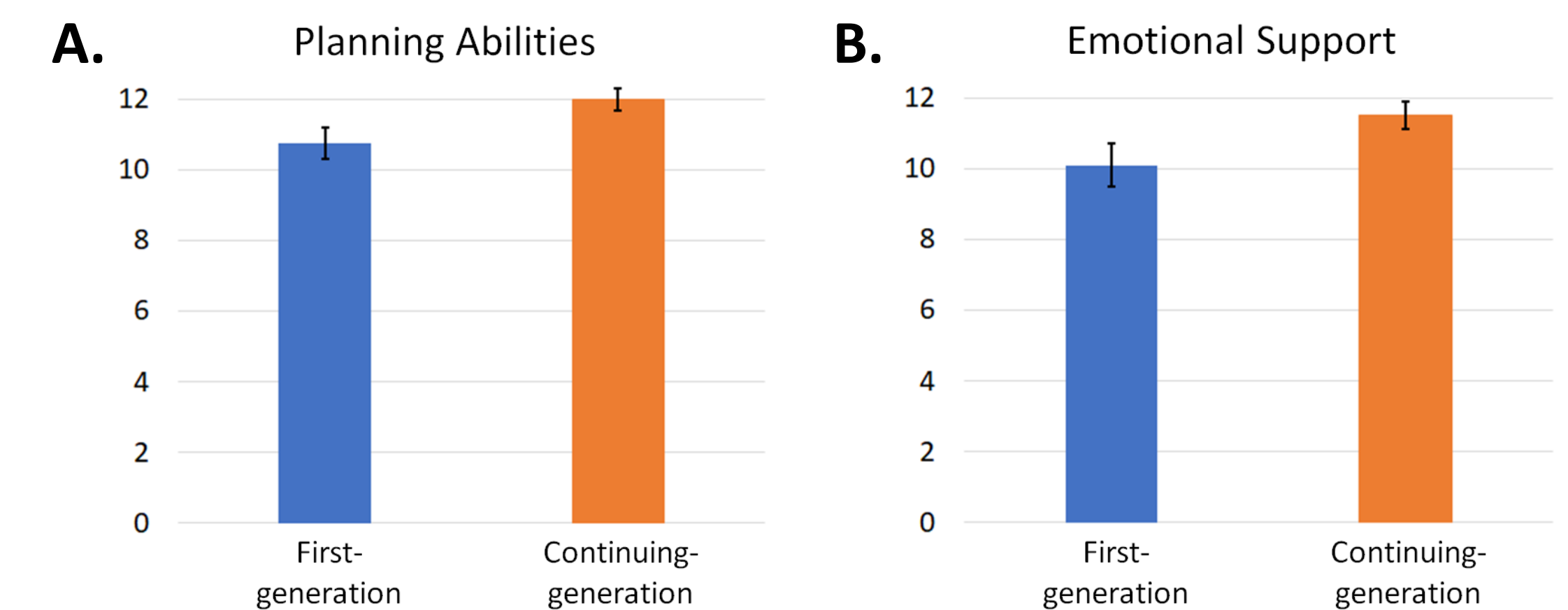


Figure 1. First- and continuing-generation college students differ in their planning abilities and emotional support. A. Students differed in that first-generation students tended toward lower planning abilities ($M=10.74$) than their continuing-generation peers ($M=12.00$, $p=0.022$). **B.** First-generation college students demonstrated slightly lower levels of emotional support ($M=10.10$) than their peers ($M=11.49$, $p=0.049$). Error bars represent \pm standard error.

Discussion and Future Directions

- Contrary to previous results, first- and continuing-generation students did not differ significantly in stress levels or PWB.
- It is possible that coping mechanisms and sources of support develop later in college, so analyses will be conducted on first-year students alone to investigate PWB and coping strategies earlier in the transition to college.
- An assessment of institutional support could lend insight into these findings.
- Understanding differences in PWB and stress of first-generation students, as well as the most effective forms of support, will allow institutions to better assist these students

References

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