CENTER FOR FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT SUCCESS

AN INITIATIVE OF NASPA AND THE SUDER FOUNDATION

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS: RESEARCH FROM 2008–2019

by Amy Baldwin, EdD, La'Tonya Rease Miles, PhD, Whitnee D. Boyd, EdD, Dawn L. Bruner, EdD, Stephanie M. Foote, PhD, and Mike Gutierrez, MEd

NASPA
Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

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ABOUT NASPA

NASPA–Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education is the leading association for the advancement, health, and sustainability of the student affairs profession. We serve a full range of professionals who provide programs, experiences, and services that cultivate student learning and success in concert with the mission of our colleges and universities. Founded in 1919, NASPA comprises more than 15,000 members in all 50 states, 25 countries, and eight U.S. territories.

Through high-quality professional development, strong policy advocacy, and substantive research to inform practice, NASPA meets the diverse needs and invests in realizing the potential of all its members under the guiding principles of integrity, innovation, inclusion, and inquiry. NASPA members serve a variety of functions and roles, including the vice president and dean for student life, as well as professionals working within housing and residence life, student unions, student activities, counseling, career development, orientation, enrollment management, racial and ethnic minority support services, and retention and assessment.

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Center for First-generation Student Success, an initiative of NASPA and The Suder Foundation, is the premier source of evidence-based practices, professional development, and knowledge creation for the higher education community to advance the success of first-generation students. Based in Washington, D.C., the Center aims to acknowledge the intersectional experiences of first-generation college students. It offers an outlet for sharing cutting-edge research and current media conversations; opportunities for engagement through online learning, conferences, and events; and access to a bevy ofprograms and services intended to improve first-generation initiatives across higher education.

FROM THE EDITORS – Amy Baldwin and La'Tonya Rease Miles

We express our gratitude to the countless researchers who laid the foundation for this annotated bibliography project and the practitioners who inspired us. Thank you to the team (Stephanie, Whitnee, Mike, and Dawn) and also the Center for First-generation Student Success, NASPA, and in particular Sarah Whitley and Deana Waintraub Stafford.

This project has been a 2-year process, and we know the literature is evolving quickly. We also acknowledge that it is impossible to capture everything that has been written about first-generation students within our designated time period. If there are topics or articles from 2008 to 2019 that may not have been included, please email them to first-gencenter@naspa.org.

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FOREWARD

> ❝ **"Definitions belong to the definer, not the defined."**
> **—Toni Morrison** ❞

The experiences of students who are the first in their family to go to college have been the subject of much research since the GI Bill in 1944, yet their experiences have often been described in terms of "lack," "deficit," and "otherness" in the research literature. In the last decade, there has been significant and consistent movement toward challenging this narrative and raising questions about the role institutions have in supporting student success. Newer research inquiry has approached these questions with critical theoretical lenses and attention to the gaps in both literature and praxis.

This annotated bibliography provides a timely and accessible resource for scholar practitioners in multiple arenas of higher education. Of particular importance is that this work draws on research between 2008 and 2019. This time frame engages readers in new narratives of first-generation students and also unpacks the complexity of their multiple identities. Some of the research also problematizes the role of colleges and universities and their institutional agents to reframe and challenge the status quo for first-generation students.

The bibliography is organized to introduce first-generation students in a way that speaks to their heterogeneity. One theme pertains to their intersecting identity and explores race, class, ethnicity, and refugee and immigrant status as well as the confluence of these identities. A second metatheme addresses students' experience within higher education ranging from the classroom and pedagogy, to career readiness, to varying definitions and measures of student success. An extension of this metatheme is an emerging area of research that considers experiences of first-generation students in graduate and professional programs that are at the core of diversifying the academy. A third metatheme takes up the role of parental and familial support and social and cultural capital that is bound up in one's lived experience but also defined by the academy and disciplinary spaces in ways that can constrain first-generation students' success. The last metatheme comes back to story—and reflects on the opening quote by Toni Morrison. Who tells the story of who first-generation students are? What are their narratives and counternarratives? Which stories in mass media and pop culture reinforce narrow stereotypes, and where are the memoirs and works of fiction that paint a richer, more nuanced picture? All of this work is contained in this living document that will no doubt grow.

The work of the Journal of the First-generation Student Success and the Center for the First-generation Student Success exist expressly to cultivate spaces that push asset-based, evidence-driven understandings of first-generation students and the work that needs to be done to create greater equity in higher education. This annotated bibliography is an excellent primer to key research that will guide us on our way and raise new questions that are worthy of our attention.

Rashné Jehangir, PhD
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INTRODUCTION

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What is this project?

This project is an annotated bibliography of the research from 2008 to 2019 on first-generation students. The purpose of combing through a decade of material was to help us figure out how we got to our current understanding of first-generation students and first-generation college graduates.[1] We attempted to answer the question "How did we get here?" and we found that, while there has been a flurry of research and practice related to the first-generation student experience, there is so much more we can and should be studying and sharing.

Why now? (2008–2019)

When we considered how we would narrow our focus, we chose the dates of 2008 to 2019 because these years are marked by both intense promise and anxiety-producing uncertainty. We had a few milestones on our minds as we dug into the research: In 2008, the United States had begun an economic recession and elected its first Black president. Facebook, which was launched several years before, had amassed more than 350 million users, and in 2009, student loan debt eclipsed credit card debt. These are just a few events that set the tone for college experiences over the next decade. By 2019, President Trump had been elected, and the nation had lived under his legacy for several years. For sure, higher education scholars will be returning to this era to study the impact that technology, politics, economics, mental health, and many other topics have had on college students.

What did we find?

We knew from our own work with first-generation college students that there has been an increased interest in serving this population. More institutions are recognizing that their campuses do indeed have first-generation students, even if they seem hidden at first, and they are their own diversity group worth supporting. While the desire to serve these students is evident, the scholarship on how to serve them (or even how to identify their needs) lags, perhaps dragged down by the formal structures of publishing and by the time needed to develop and maintain new programs and initiatives. However, conversations are happening through nontraditional channels such as social media, blogs, podcasts, and news articles. Moreover, the topics of

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[1] Note: The experiences of precollege students are beyond the scope of this project.

conversation have moved beyond traditional academic topics to the lived experiences and mass media representations of first-generation students.

We have been able to identify a shift from a deficit lens to strengths-based approaches to the research as well as a recognition that first-generation students are not monolithic. In fact, we note in the sections on intersections of identity the diverse experiences of first-generation students whose other identities are more salient. And, we have discovered, much remains to be done. Our hope is that this project sets the tone and tenor for future research. Our goal is to usher in a new era of thought leadership, strengths-based research, and true innovation that provides systemic change that truly recognizes, celebrates, and supports first-generation students on campuses.

Who could use this work?

This project serves a variety of audiences including, but not limited to, college recruiters, admissions counselors, bridge program directors, academic advisors, and success coaches. Obviously, this project can be helpful to scholars and researchers, but teaching faculty also will benefit in ways that can inform and improve their classroom instruction. Mid-level administrators and student success program directors may find ideas for program development and student support, while upper-level administrators may find ideas that can inform strategic planning, resource allocation decisions, and grant proposals. Ultimately, we hope that this project assists those who seek to gain institutional buy-in for their work with first-generation students.

More broadly, this project is for anyone who wants a quick immersion into the research and representation of first-generation college students. We hope that it piques interest in learning more, helps researchers become more efficient in their own investigation, and contributes to the work of new and seasoned scholars. We would be remiss, though, if we did not make a call to action to current graduate students and those who are thinking about graduate school to seriously consider building onto the current literature and taking it in new, innovative, and creative directions.

Our process and format

The process of identifying, summarizing, and categorizing current research was in some ways more difficult than we expected. We made assumptions

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about categories we would use; in some cases we found more than we bargained for, and in others we were surprised by the dearth of studies. We made a conscious choice to not include dissertations or studies about precollege experiences. This was, by all accounts, a recursive project, one that begged us to look again, rethink what to include or exclude, and reorganize. We had intended to focus only on emerging trends, but we found many tried-and-true topics and frameworks. In some cases, the research didn't seem to tell us anything new or approach the subject from an innovative viewpoint. However, our search for fresh, new perspectives led us to explore representations of first-generation students in mass media and popular culture. The current fictional, autobiographical, and documentary representations of first-generation students are a much-needed addition to the understanding of their experiences throughout college.

List of topics:
- Career Readiness and First-generation Professionals
- Classroom Teaching and Pedagogy
- Graduate and Professional School Students
- Intersections of Identity
- Intersections of Identity Low-Income/Working-Class Students
- Intersections of Identity Student Refugees
- Mass Media and Popular Culture
- Memoirs and Fiction
- Parents and Families
- Social and Cultural Capital
- Student Success

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Authors

Amy Baldwin, former director of student transitions and the current senior lecturer of academic success and literacy, University of Central Arkansas (Lead Author)

Amy is the director of student transitions at the University of Central Arkansas. In addition to her duties overseeing a department that provides corequisite remediation and academic strategy support, she teaches writing, literacy, and student success. Her department cofounded First-Generation Student Awareness Week and provides continuing resources and support for first-generation students. Amy has written several textbooks for Pearson Education, including *The Community College Experience* and *The First-Generation College Experience*. Her current books include *College Success* (OpenStax) and *Promoting Belonging, Growth Mindset, and Resilience to Foster Student Success* (Stylus).

La'Tonya Rease Miles, PhD, dean of student affairs, Menlo College (Lead Author)

La'Tonya, or "LT," is the dean of Menlo College, where her portfolio includes housing and residential life, student activities (including student government, leadership, and clubs and major campus events such as student orientation), judicial affairs, mental health services, and first-year experience.

Dr. Miles has established two successful programs for first-generation college students—one at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and one at Loyola Marymount University—both recognized for national best practices. She regularly consults with institutions nationally concerning first-generation students and also has advised local high schools (including Loyola High School and Verbum Dei High School) about developing programs on their campus. Finally, she established and manages a national Facebook group, "Empowering First Generation Students;" she is the chief strategist for the First Gen & Juice brand; and she is a founder of the Black First-gen Collective.

Dr. Miles earned a PhD in American literature from UCLA, and her research interests include the hidden curriculum in higher education, narratives about the first-generation college experience, and the relationship of physical space and college student engagement. She is passionate about NBA basketball, college football, *The Flash*, and *Friday Night Lights*.

Whitnee D. Boyd, EdD, coordinator of special projects, Office of the Chancellor, Texas Christian University

Whitnee serves as the coordinator of special projects for the Office of the Chancellor at Texas Christian University (TCU). She received her doctorate of education in higher education leadership from TCU. Her passion for higher education stemmed from her time in the NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program at the University of Arkansas, where she received her BS in business administration with an emphasis in marketing. She went on to earn an MA in higher education from Louisiana State University. She started her career in higher education working with first-generation college students in TRIO. She has also worked with first-generation college students through Upward Bound, Student Support Services, work with student-athletes, and community-based college access programs. Her research centers on the experiences of first-generation college students and their ability to thrive from a strengths-based lens. She is the chair-elect for the Center for First-Generation Student Success Advocacy Group.

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Dawn serves as director of parent and family relations at the University of Rochester, a First-gen Forward Institution. Dawn earned a doctorate of education in executive leadership from St. John Fisher College. Her dissertation focused on the involvement of parents of first-generation college students. At the University of Rochester, Dawn chairs the First-Generation Students and Families Committee, developed to facilitate and advance institutional dialogue about first-generation student success, experiences, resources, and support. Previous higher education experience includes supporting students and families in counseling roles as well as coordinating admissions, recruitment, and student services for the Higher Education Opportunity Program. Dawn is passionate about education, first-generation students, and engaging parents/families to support student success.

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Stephanie is the associate vice president for teaching, learning, and evidence-based practices at the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education. Prior to joining the Institute staff, Stephanie was the founding director of the Master of Science in First-Year Studies, professor of education in the Department of First-Year and Transition Studies, and faculty fellow for High-Impact Practices at Kennesaw State University.

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Mike earned both a BA in psychology in 2013 and an MEd in college and university student personnel administration in 2015 from The University of Texas at Austin. Currently, Mike works with Student Success as senior program coordinator, focusing on first-gen programming, leaver's campaign, and Posse foundation. His research interests include first-generation college students, academic and nonacademic outcomes for men of color, enrollment management, and the role of student success initiatives.

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CAREER READINESS AND FIRST-GENERATION PROFESSIONALS

Introduction

Current data on the value of higher education often point to increases in lifetime earnings as people complete more education. In fact, a person who finishes a bachelor's degree earns on average almost $1 million more in a lifetime than a person who completes only a high school diploma.[1] The argument that is often made to attract first-generation students to higher education is that more education *usually* equals better career prospects, which leads to more long-term financial stability.

Nonetheless, few studies to date have investigated career readiness, career development, and career success for first-generation students. In fact, most of the research on first-generation students has focused on their college readiness and their experiences as they transition from high school to college. Less has been studied about their transition from college to work and their dispositions, their resources, and the choices they must make to graduate as the first in their family to fulfill their career goals. Larger questions about careers and first-generation students also loom:

· What kind of future workplace should we be preparing first-generation students for, and how does that preparation differ from continuing-generation students?
· What attitudes, skills, abilities, knowledge, and capital do first-generation students bring to the

issue of career readiness that can be leveraged to their benefit?
· What are institutions currently doing that have provided significant effects?
· What are the gaps in support that could provide a boost to first-generation students' career prospects?

Summary of Research

The extant research predominantly uses social cognitive career theory (SCCT) or career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) as lenses through which career aspirations have been studied. Extant research also focuses on precollege career aspirations and postcollege transition while very little has addressed the influences and experiences of first-generation students as they complete their degree or as they enter the workforce. Moreover, most of the research is deficit-oriented, focusing on what first-generation students lack in terms of support and influence. There is also a small body of work on first-generation student status and engineering as a pathway to a career.

1 https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/research-summaries/educ ation-earnings.html

In addition to the preponderance of deficit framing, some of the research conflates low-income with first-generation college students—or focuses mostly on the intersection of low-income and first-generation status—and continues to use this lens to examine the barriers that these students face in terms of inconsistent or inadequate parental support and influence, a lack of career role models outside the family, and the need for long-term economic stability.
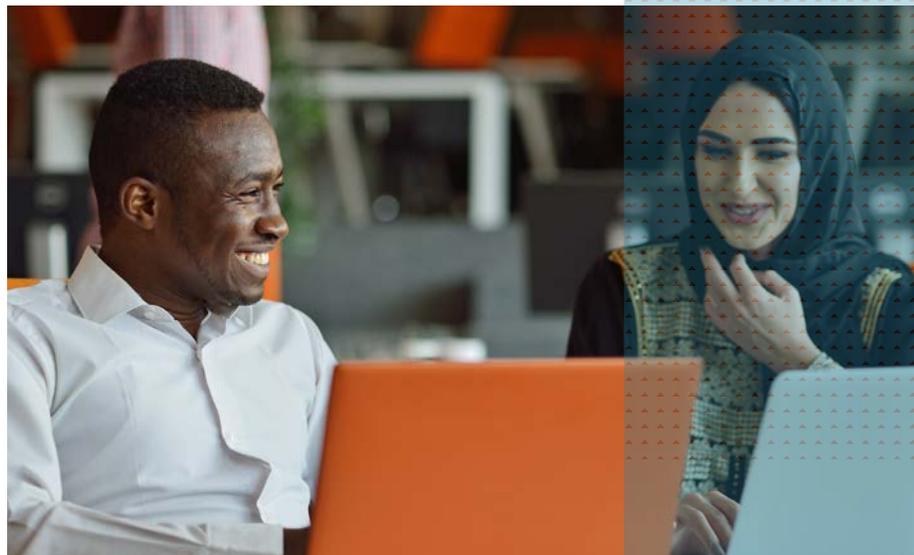
Strategies for improving outcomes for first-generation students, as evidenced by the research, include addressing both their internal and external influences. Career goals and aspirations are a good starting point for influencing career outcomes for first-generation students. Other studies point to the role that mentors and career resources can play in helping these students develop cultural and social capital for career readiness and transition. Despite promising pockets of research on career development, scholars and practitioners agree that schools need to do more for all college graduates, but especially first-generation students.

Suggestions for Future Research

As the world of work changes, so will higher education as it helps graduates successfully transition into the workforce. With this change comes a need for even more innovative research on first-generation students and careers. Specifically, more work needs to be done on the influence of college mentors on career aspiration and transition. Because much of the current literature implies that the student's family background inhibits their future employment success, the opportunity exists for future studies that highlight these students' strengths and assets, both internal and from their communities of origin.

Additional research is needed on the influence of socioeconomic status on major choices and career aspirations, specifically students' desire to pursue practical and concrete pathways to a career. Also, researchers can and should move beyond SCCT to other theoretical frameworks and student development theories that can provide a broader view of first-generation student development, mindset, and aspirations.

First-generation students are not a homogenous group; thus, it is imperative to highlight specific subpopulations—including but not limited to veterans, transfer students, undocumented students, and returning adults—who tend to be first-generation *and* may have unique or nontraditional career pathways. We also encourage future researchers to explore specific career pathways, including different fields such as fine arts and STEM, as well as the impact of digital career resources, such as the online networking platforms LinkedIn and Handshake. Finally, very little research

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has been devoted to postgraduation success, such as career searching, first jobs, and career transitions.

References

Ampaw, F., Partlo, M., Hullender, T., & Wagner, N. (2015). Do community colleges promote postsecondary and labor market success for first-generation students. *Journal of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, 27*(1), 9–28
Using human capital theory as the framework, this study used the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Survey data to determine whether first-generation students who enroll in community colleges are more likely to graduate with a bachelor's degree after transfer and participate in gainful employment than first-generation students who attend a 4-year university. First-generation students comprised 64% (*n* = 2,470) of the traditional first-time college students enrolled in a community college compared to only 44% (*n* = 3,900) of first-generation students who started at a 4-year institution. The results indicated that first-generation students who started at a community college were 18% less likely to transfer to a 4-year institution and less likely to complete a degree even if they did transfer. First-generation students who began at a community college saw no significant differences in employment, work hours, and supervision of employees, but they did earn on average $6,715 less per year than first-generation students who began at a 4-year university. The researchers concluded that the differences in earnings can be attributed to a lower persistence and degree-completion rate.

Carlson, S. (2016, January 17). Poor kids, limited horizons. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* https://www.chronicle.com/article/poor-kids-limited-horizons/
The author of this feature story focuses on the career aspirations of low-income students. The

goal of this piece is to highlight the struggles low-income students face compared to affluent students when choosing aspirational careers. The article highlights that the disconnect between low-income students and aspirational career selection could result from a lack of visible representation among their family, lack of career counseling in high schools, lower volition, and more. The author shares narratives from multiple students and provides recommendations for how to improve the process for students. First-generation college students do not receive much direct mention, but there is a proxy used, which is a lack of family members attending or graduating from college. #careerreadiness #lowincome #postgraduation

Eismann, L. (2016, November 1). *First-generation students and job success.* **National Association of Colleges and Employers.** https://www.naceweb.org/job-market/special-populations/first-generation-students-and-job-success/
The authors focus on factors that may influence the job success of first-generation college students. The authors used data from the National Association of Colleges and Employers' (NACE) 2016 Student Survey to synthesize trends and factors contributing to postgraduate transition. First-generation college students made up 40% of the 4-year enrollment in this survey. The article compares first-generation college students to non-first-generation college students in a number of areas, including choice of major, postgraduation plans, use of career centers, and more. The authors display much concern for the postgraduate transition into the workforce for first-generation college students. They call for more support for first-generation college students in areas like the job search process and outreach programs from on-campus career centers. #careercenters #careers

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Freie, C., & Bratt, K. (2011). Nice girls become teachers: Experiences of female first-generation college students majoring in elementary education. In C. S. Malott & B. Porfilio (Eds.), *Critical pedagogy in the twenty-first century: A new generation of scholars* **(pp. 377–398). Information Age Publishing.** This chapter presents a qualitative study on the experiences of white, female, first-generation, working-class college students who are majoring in elementary education. The researchers interviewed 15 students in an introductory education course at an institution in the Northeast. Findings include the following: Participants felt they lived in different communities that had little interaction with each other, and the students' environments contained contradictory values and beliefs. Themes that were prominent in the interviews included the tension within the classroom in which the interviewees described being a "good student" as someone who is there to learn and not "rock the boat," and the tension between the students' home and college lives. The students also indicated they didn't fit in at their institutions because of familial obligations. Another theme of the data analysis was the need to be close to and have time for family, which was one of the reasons these students chose elementary education as a major. This study has implications for further research in the classroom experiences of first-generation students as well as their choice of major and careers as they relate to traditional gender roles and expectations.

Garriott, P. O. (2019). A critical cultural wealth model of first-generation and economically marginalized college students' academic and career development. *Journal of Career Development, 47*(1), 80–95. **https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845319826266** The article focuses on first-generation and economically marginalized (FGEM) college students and the critical cultural wealth model of academic

and career development, which is, according to the author, a better model to describe the transition and success of FGEM students. This model includes the following components: structural/institutional conditions, social-emotional experiences, career self-authorship, and cultural wealth, which affects academic/career outcomes. The author argues that this intersectional framework allows researchers and practitioners to move beyond deficit-model approaches to more nuanced, experienced-based approaches that ask what the institutions are doing to fail FGEM students instead of why are FGEM students failing. The author concludes with a call for researchers to study the institutional and cultural barriers that we place in front of FGEM students as well as their own experiences and strengths.

Garriott, P. O., Flores, L. Y., & Martens, M. P. (2013). Predicting the math/science career goals of low-income prospective college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, **v60, 200–209. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032074** This study focuses on the math/science career goals of prospective first-generation, low-income students. The researchers used SCCT to focus on individual and contextual factors that contribute to the experiences of first-generation college students. The research participants consisted of 341 high school students who participated in TRIO programs. The study assessed age, gender, race/ethnicity, class rank, parental education and occupations, previous coursework, and educational goals through the use of a questionnaire. The implications for practice suggest that SCCT can be of use when developing interventions that link to career goals for first-generation, low-income students. Additionally, the authors propose that mentoring and shadowing programs, as well as family-based interventions and peer programming, may increase the participation of low-income, first-generation students in math and science fields. #career #lowincome #TRIO

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Gibbons, M. M. (2014). Addressing the needs of first-generation college students: Lessons learned from adults from low-education families. *Journal of College Counseling, 17,* 21–36. https://www.etsu.edu/coe/elpa/documents/qualjournalspring2016.pdf
The author investigated the effect of the family's lack of postsecondary education on first-generation students' career aspirations and work experience. This study is an analysis of the results of two phenomenological studies of first-generation students and their work and career experiences. The researcher found that several themes were salient for participants whose parents did not complete a college degree: parental influence, especially the influence of the father; career expectations, specifically the need to enjoy what they are doing; and college expectations, which did not always result in more financial security and success. The implications of this research point to the opportunity to provide mentors and campus activities that could serve as positive influences on first-generation college students.

Harlow, A. J., & Bowman, S. L. (2016). Examining the career decision self-efficacy and career maturity of community college and first-generation students. *Journal of Career Development, 43,* 512–525. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845316633780
This study tests the hypothesis that first-generation community college students will have lower levels of CDSE and career maturity than first-generation students who are attending a 4-year university and first-generation bachelor's degree-seeking students will report lower CDSE levels than continuing-generation bachelor's degree-seeking students. Researchers recruited 168 students who took three instruments: CDSE Scale-Short Form; Career Maturity Inventory-Revised, Attitude Scale; and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. They also completed a demographic survey.

The analysis of the results concluded that both community college and university first-generation students indicated lower levels of career maturity than non-first-generation college students; however, contrary to the hypotheses, first-generation community college students reported higher levels of CDSE than their counterparts. Interestingly, first-generation college students with the high (over $60,000/household) socioeconomic status reported the lowest levels of CDSE. The researchers call on further study to determine factors that could influence these findings.

Hirudayaraj, M. (2011). First-generation students in higher education: Issues of employability in a knowledge-based economy. *Online Journal for Workforce Education and Development, 5*(3). https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1098&context=ojwed
The author provides an overview of employability issues facing first-generation college students. He begins the article with a discussion of the characteristics of first-generation students and focuses on the effect that parental education has on children. One of the most notable effects is the cultural capital that college students benefit from when their parents have completed at least a bachelor's degree. The article also includes a brief description of employer expectations of first-generation students as well their own concepts of job versus career. The author makes the case that future research of first-generation students and careers in a knowledge-based economy is needed to determine how and how well these students transition from college to career and notes that federally funded programs, including TRIO programs, do not provide the kind of career counseling that could benefit first-generation students. The author ends with an urgent plea for more research on and interventions for first-generation college students

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and their transition into a workforce that is built on a knowledge-based economy. #culturalcapital #parentsandfamilies #career

Hurst, A. L. (2018). Classed outcomes: how class differentiates the careers of liberal arts college graduates in the US. *British Journal of Sociology of Education. 39*(8), 1075-1093. *https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2018.1455495*
This chapter focuses on the experiences of first-generation and continuing-generation college students at a liberal arts college in the Southeast United States. The author notes that first-generation students are more likely to bear the responsibility for choosing their major and career pathway, while continuing-generation students are influenced by their parents' opinions or own pathways even if they are not aware of the influence. Implications of this research include improving the institution's career-development practices and interventions for all students so they have a better understanding of what is possible and how to achieve it.

Jehangir, R. R., Telles, A. B., & Deenanath, V. (2019). Using photovoice to bring career into a new focus for first-generation college students. *Journal of Career Development*, 1–21. *https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845318824746*
For this study, the researchers collaborated with advisers from TRIO student support services at a large, research-intensive institution located in the Midwest. The goal was to examine how low-income, first-generation college students make meaning of their career development process during their first year in college (*n* = 28). Students were asked to take a photo that represented their vocational identity, and they also submitted an accompanying narrative. The researchers used an interpretative narrative approach to analyze the data and identified four key themes: (a) intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, (b)

struggles, (c) agent of change, and (d) envisioning the future. Generally speaking, the students sought to balance financial security with personal fulfillment and satisfaction. The authors recommend that career development services identify models and curricula that honor communal values and highlight students' strengths and self-authorship.

Kantamneni, N., McCain, M. R., Shada, N., Hellwege, M. A., & Tate, J. (2016). Contextual factors in the career development of prospective first-generation college students. *Journal of Career Assessment, 26*(1), 183–196. *https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072716680048*
The authors' purpose was to use SCCT with prospective first-generation college students to determine how "contextual influences such as ethnic identity, parental influences, and perceived barriers (POB) predict academic and vocational outcomes (e.g., school engagement)" (p. 184). The study participants (142) were selected to take part in a college preparatory program that served low-income students in two Midwestern cities. In addition to completing six assessments that measured characteristics such as ethnic identity, vocational outcome, and parental influence, participants took part in meetings, summer seminars, and coursework over a 4-year period. The findings include that a strong ethnic identity was positively related to vocational self-efficacy and student engagement. Additionally, the researchers found that parental support was related to vocational, educational, and engagement outcomes. An unexpected finding that contradicts previous research was that prospective first-generation college students who perceived the greatest barriers also demonstrated the greatest self-efficacy. Implications for practice include the opportunity to help students who are racial minorities develop a strong ethnic identity and to allow students to explore the influences of their

parents on their vocational aspirations and self-efficacy. Finally, career counselors could emphasize a stronger connection between academic engagement and career outcomes.

Lehmann, W. (2012). Extra-credential experiences and social closure: Working-class students at university. *British Educational Research Journal,* *38*(2), 203–218. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2010.535894

In this paper, the author explores the relationship between students' intended career goals and their (lack of) access to extra-credential experiences, such as career-related employment, internships, volunteer work, study abroad, or travel. Data were collected in a 4-year longitudinal study of working-class, first-generation students at a large research-intensive university in Ontario, Canada. When participants were interviewed during their first weeks in college, all of them agreed that the university is essential for career and life success, and many of them identified law or medicine as their preferred careers. By the students' fourth year in school, the percentage of participants wanting to become doctors and lawyers had dropped to less than 20% when students realized that the things that make them distinctive law school or medical school applicants (e.g., relevant work or volunteer experience) require either financial or social capital that they did not have. The author argues that universities must do more to make these opportunities more equitable and accessible to first-generation and working-class students. #lowincome

Ma, P., & Shea, M. (2019). First-generation college students' perceived barriers and career outcome expectations: Exploring contextual and cognitive factors. *Journal of Career Development, 20*(10), 1–14. *https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0894845319827650*

The authors sought to answer the research question, Does familial support, belonging, and

sense of coherence influence career expectations and moderate any negative barriers or experiences for first-generation college students? The participants (n = 153) took multiple surveys to measure campus connection, social support, sense of coherence, and career outcome expectations. Researchers found that the more barriers students perceived, the lower their career outcome expectations, and the higher their social support and sense of coherence, the higher their career outcome expectations. Sense of belonging, or campus connectedness, was not directly related to career outcome expectations.

Olson, J. (2014). Opportunities, obstacles, and options: First-generation college graduates and social cognitive career theory. *Journal of Career Development, 41*(3), 199–217. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845313486352

The focus of this study is the experiences of first-generation college graduates in the transition to careers and the workforce. The study uses SCCT to connect theory to practice on how career counselors can help first-generation college graduates adjust to the workforce through development of self-efficacy and perceived obstacles. The authors use case studies to highlight the challenges faced by first-generation graduates. The author positions the use of SCCT as an opportunity to help graduates navigate one's career path. It is noted that first-generation graduates may discount the value of outside of work interactions and intentional networking. Finally, Olson notes the heterogeneity of first-generation college students and warns career counselors not to make assumptions about their social class backgrounds, for instance. #firstgenerationgraduates #career

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Owens, D., Lacey, K., Rawls, G., & Holbert-Quince, J. A. (2011). First-generation African American male college students: Implications for career counselors. *The Career Development Quarterly, 58*(4), 291–300. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2010.tb00179.x
This study focuses on the needs and obstacles of first-generation African American males as they relate to career exploration and career development. The article addresses a number of the challenges faced by this population, including lower graduation rates attributed to things like lower sense of belonging, experiences of racism and discrimination, instructional and environmental barriers, and more. The article provides best practices that practitioners can use to better support the career development of first-generation African American men by adjusting services and support systems to fit the needs of this population. #AfricanAmerican #Career #AfricanAmericanMales

Parks-Yancy, R. (2012). Interactions into opportunities: Career management for low-income, first-generation African American college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 53*(4), 510–523. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2012.0052
The study's purpose is to better understand the social capital deficiencies that Black students experience and how those deficiencies affect career outcomes. Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions: "How do first-generation, low-income, African American college students obtain career-related social capital resources from university contacts? What is the impact of access to these resources on their postcollege career plans?" The author interviewed 58 African American students from a midsize university about their career goals, their social capital, and how resources affect their postgraduation plans and collegiate work experiences. The researcher found that respondents expressed a limited view of

their postgraduation options and career pathways. In addition, a majority of the students had neither social capital from their families, nor social capital from their institution through relationships with professors or through interactions with career services regarding career support. Therefore, they often had low career aspirations. The implications of this research indicate a need for universities to be more intentional with student populations who have not received the encouragement and direction from families and professors; universities need to find ways to encourage student participation in relationship development and in career services activities. #lowincome #AfricanAmerican #socialcapital

Raque-Bogdan, T. L., & Lucas, M. S. (2016). Career aspirations and the first generation student: Unraveling the layers with social cognitive career theory. *Journal of College Student Development, 57*(3), 248–262. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0026
This study, using the SCCT framework, focuses on career development characteristics in a comparison between first-generation students and non-first-generation students. Data for this study were collected through an annual survey given to 2,106 (11% were first-generation students) incoming first-year students the summer before matriculation. Questions on the survey included parental expectations of degree level, career-related parental support, perceptions of barriers, coping with barriers, student expectation of degree level, and student career aspiration. The findings included that there were few differences between first-generation students and non-first-generation students in terms of career aspirations. First-generation students' parents, however, were less likely to expect their student to earn a master's degree. College self-efficacy and college outcome expectations were more likely to predict career aspirations, more so than

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parents' social class, their degree-level expectations, career-related parental support, perception of educational and career barriers, efficacy for coping with educational and career barriers, and their own expectations of their degree levels. First-generation students, according to the researchers, develop career aspirations based on their confidence in the ability to complete college-related tasks and the outcomes they expect from earning a degree.

Salvadge, A. (2019, February 17). *The impact of internships and study abroad on the career readiness of first-generation students.* National Association of Colleges and Employers. https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/internships/the-impact-of-internships-and-study-abroad-on-the-career-readiness-of-first-generation-students/
The author uses NACE's 2018 student survey data to explore the effect that high-impact practices such as participating in internships and study abroad have on first-generation college students as compared to non-first-generation students. The author reports that first-generation students (45.7%) were less likely than non-first-generation students (52.9%) to participate in an internship during their 4 years seeking a bachelor's degree, and when they do participate in an internship, they are more likely to have unpaid and nonprofit internships. First-generation students did report at higher rates than non-first-generation students that participating in an internship positively influenced their career choices. First-generation students and study abroad data indicate that first-generation students were less likely than non-first-generation students to participate in study abroad, but more likely to have multiple experiences if they did participate. Career competencies that were influenced by the study abroad experience differed by first-generation students and non-first-generation students status.

Tate, K. A., Caperton, W., Kaiser, D., Pruitt, N. T., White, H., & Hall, E. (2015). An exploration of first-generation college students' career development beliefs and experiences. *Journal of Career Development, 42(4),* 294–310. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845314565025
This study focuses on the career development process of first-generation college students. The researchers seek to address a gap in research studying students being the first in the family to be in their career type. An exploratory qualitative research method was used to study the career development process of 15 first-generation college (primarily traditional aged) students studying at a large, public institution. The results of the study showcase both internal and external influences on the career development process of first-generation college students, such as family influence, lack of a career/professional network, and strengths possessed by first-generation college students (self-reliance, adaptability, etc.) compared to their continuing-generation peers, and more. The researchers deem it necessary for practitioners to engage in helping first-generation college students build professional networks at a very early stage in their college career and to engage first-generation alumni. #Career

Terry, R., & Fobia, A. C. (2019). *Qualitative research on barriers to workplace inclusion for first-generation professionals.* Research Report Series. Center for Behavioral Science Methods Research and Methodology Directorate, U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2019/adrm/rsm2019-03.pdf
The authors of this study used focus groups and interviews of first-generation professionals to answer the overarching question of what barriers do first-generation professionals face when working and advancing in federal government

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careers. Participants came from several metropolitan areas across the United States and worked in various federal agencies. In addition to interviews with first-generation professionals, the researchers interviewed supervisors of first-generation professionals. Results identified barriers to inclusion in the workplace, such as the participation in unpaid internships, developmental programs, and expensive leisure activities. First-generation professionals also reported that they had difficulty adjusting to the cultural norms of the workplace, including knowing how and when to communicate with supervisors, and they needed help with career development strategies such as interviewing and writing resumes. First-generation professionals also indicated that a program for first-generation professionals that was built on strengths would greatly help as it would reduce the stigma associated with being first-generation.

Verdín, D., & Godwin, A. (2017). *Physics identity promotes alternative careers for first- generation college students in engineering* **[Conference presentation]. American Society of Engineering Educators Annual Conference & Exposition.** [Physics Identity Promotes Alternative Careers for First-Generation College Students in Engineering (nsf.gov)](nsf.gov) This study focused on the postgraduation career intentions in engineering for first-generation students. The researchers asked, "How do first-generation college students' measures of physics, mathematics, and engineering identity constructs differ compared to non-first-generation college students?" and "How does a physics identity influence first-generation college students' choice of an engineering major and career aspirations?" The authors used the intersectionality of Nonnormative Identities in the Cultures of Engineering survey, and it was completed by 2,916 first-year engineering college students enrolled
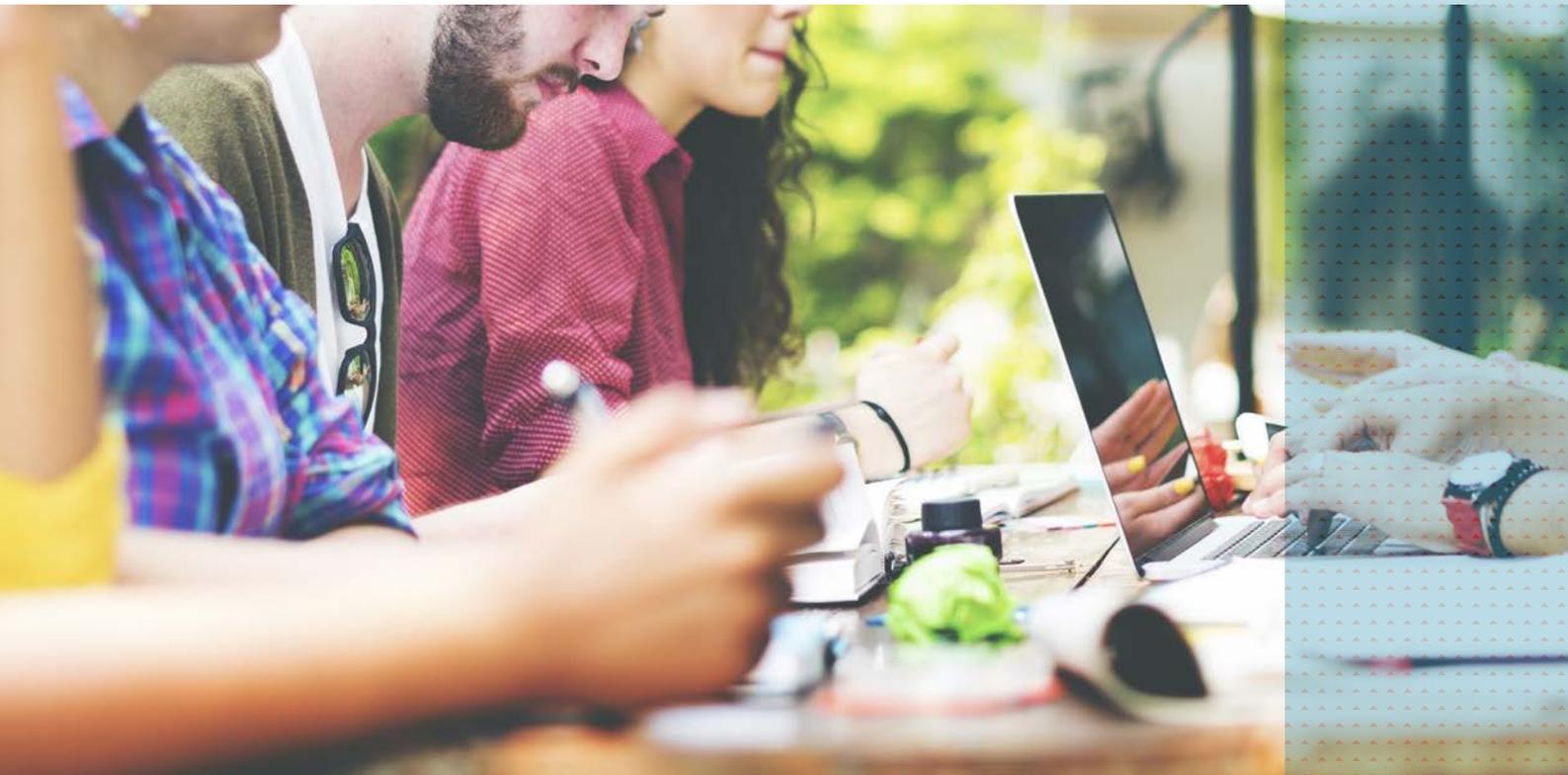
in four institutions across the United States; 20% identified as first-generation students. Questions in the survey asked students how their physics, mathematics, or engineering identity influenced their decision to major in engineering and their career aspirations. The researchers found that first-generation students had higher overall engineering, math, and physics identities than their non-first-generation students peers.

Verdín, D., & Godwin, A. (2018). *First-generation college students identifying as future engineers* **[Conference presentation]. Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY, United States.** [First-Generation College Students Identifying as Future Engineers (purdue.edu)](purdue.edu) Using the intersectionality of Nonnormative Identities and Cultures of Engineering survey (n = 2,916) and three different frameworks (future possible selves, belongingness in engineering, and engineering identity), the authors of this paper reviewed the factors that influence how first-generation students identify as engineers. They asked two research questions: "Which measures of career outcome expectations predict first-generation college students' responses to the questions, 'I feel like an engineer now' and 'I will feel like an engineer in the future'?" and "Which factors, that is, feelings of belongingness, engineering identity measures, and career outcome expectations, account for the most variance in predicting first-generation college students' responses to the questions, 'I feel like an engineer now' and 'I will feel like an engineer in the future'?" Data analysis included multiple regression to determine which career future satisfaction variables predicted first-generation students' current and future identification as engineers and hierarchical regression to

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determine which measures (i.e., belongingness, interest, recognition, performance/competence, and career outcome expectations) accounted for most of the variance. One finding was that first-generation students interest in engineering was a significant predictor of their identification as an engineer in the future and that first-generation students' desire for being well-known and for helping others was stronger than their desire for financial stability. The authors concluded that a sense of belonging is important for first-generation students and that creating a welcoming space was crucial to first-generation students' persistence.

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CLASSROOM TEACHING AND PEDAGOGY

Introduction

Because first-generation students spend a considerable amount of time in the classroom, it is important to consider classroom experiences and the environments. Historically speaking, *pedagogy*, which we define as "the methods and practices that are used for teaching," in higher education has lacked the professionalization that characterizes K–12 instruction. Simply put, professors are often not taught effective pedagogical practices nor trained in adapting curricula and policies to the needs of diverse learners (Jensen, 2011).[1]

Many higher education researchers believe that teaching and learning take place in spaces other than classrooms. To that end, many institutions offer students living and learning communities, cocurricular programs, summer bridge programs, and high-impact practices to expand on classroom instruction. *High-impact practices* are defined as "teaching and learning practices [that] have been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds" (Kuh, 2008).[2] Examples include writing-intensive instruction, study abroad and study away programs, and internships, among others.

Although there has been a marked shift from discussing college readiness for first-generation students to providing just-in-time strategies in the classroom to support them, more research is needed to determine which environmental factors have the biggest effect on these students.

Summary of Research

The research on teaching and pedagogy for first-generation students has focused primarily on the students' lived experiences of academic spaces—especially how these students make personal meaning of the academic content and their self-concepts. Many studies also share insights into first-generation students' negotiation of the classroom environment as it relates to student identity. One theme that reappears in these studies is the need to provide opportunities for first-generation students to share their stories and see themselves represented in the classroom. Another theme is the cultural capital that students either need to be successful in the classroom or that can be fostered as the result of pedagogical changes; however, it is worth noting that the term *hidden curriculum*, which is often linked to cultural capital, was not used in the studies listed below.

It is not surprising that many researchers addressed imposter syndrome and its effect on student performance. Some of the research highlights a tension between faculty and first-

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[1] Jensen, J. L. (2011). Higher education faculty versus high school teacher: Does pedagogical preparation make a difference? *Journal of College Biology Teaching, 37*(2), 30–36.

[2] Kuh, G. (2008). *High impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter.* AACU Press.

generation students. To frame that relationship, Cox (2009) uses the term *fear* in the title of her book on community college first-generation students. The result of this fear is a disengagement with the curriculum, but the focus is on faculty–student interactions rather than pedagogy.

Other studies have examined the use of service learning, living and learning communities, and the more specific multicultural learning communities (MLCs) as vehicles for pedagogical engagement and intellectual growth for first-generation students. This research also points to the importance of building community among first-generation students as an instructional approach that results in higher student engagement.

The final section of this work presents a curated list of institutional teaching and learning websites that offer specific strategies for supporting first-generation students in the classroom.

Suggestions for Future Research

Studying first-generation students in the classroom can continue to inform pedagogical practices, but what is needed—and *what is missing*—from the current research on teaching and pedagogy are

experimental studies on teaching and pedagogy, research into instructional practices, and implementation of course policies that support student learning. Most glaringly, studies on the hidden curriculum seem to be nonexistent over the last decade. If faculty want to create a responsive, inclusive curriculum that reveals the hidden curriculum, they will need to know what steps to take. To that end, future research is needed to help faculty and support services better understand what specific academic strategies they should use in and out of the classroom.

More research is also needed in the humanities and liberal arts—particularly how first-generation students navigate their studies in those classes. Finally, with the increased focus on first-generation students beyond a bachelor's degree, a corresponding focus on effective graduate and professional school curricula for this population is long overdue.

References

Canning, E. A., LaCrosse, J., Kroeper, K.M., & Murphy, M. (2019). Feeling Like an Imposter: The Effect of Perceived Classroom Competition on the Daily Psychological Experiences of First-

Generation College Students. *Social Psychological and Personality Science. 2020; 11*(5):647-657. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550619882032
This article describes the outcomes of a longitudinal study that examined the effect of first-generation students' perceptions of classroom competition on their success in STEM courses. Participants included 818 first- and second-year students, all enrolled in one STEM course, at a Midwestern university. The study involved an initial survey of the students' STEM classroom perceptions (in Weeks 2–4 of the semester). In Weeks 6–7, participants were asked to complete experience-sampling surveys. Invitations to complete those surveys were sent via text messages immediately after the students' STEM class. At the end of the semester, participants completed a final survey that examined their engagement throughout the semester. The participants' final grade in the STEM course and SAT score were also analyzed. Findings indicate that participant perceptions of competition in the STEM courses contributed to imposter feelings, which were greater for first-generation students. Ultimately, perceptions of competition, particularly for first-generation students, had a greater impact on their course outcomes compared with those of their continuing-generation peers. Specifically, first-generation students participants who perceived their STEM course to be competitive earned lower grades than their continuing generation peers.

Castillo-Montoya, M. (2017). Deepening understanding of prior knowledge: What diverse first-generation college students in the U.S. can teach us. *Teaching in Higher Education, 22*(5), 587-603. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2016.1273208
Drawing on qualitative data collected from observations and semistructured interviews with 18 first-generation students conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester, this study sought to shed light on students' sociopolitical prior knowledge by examining sociopolitical consciousness (SPC) in racially and ethnically diverse students enrolled in introductory sociology courses. The study's conceptual framework had three parts: prior knowledge, prior thinking, and making conceptual maps. The first major finding of the study indicates that participants' SPC comprised *awareness*, defined as knowledge of "sociopolitical structures (e.g., social class) or issues (e.g., poverty)" (p. 593), and understanding, which included both awareness of sociopolitical structures and issues as well as knowledge of the ways in which they "shape the lives of individuals and the organization of society" (p. 593). The second major finding attests that prior knowledge can vary based on topic of discussion—specifically, participants demonstrated awareness for some topics and understanding for others. Finally, the interview data collected found a relationship between subject-matter content and personal lived experiences. The SPC of study participants was informed by their individual experiences before they entered the sociology course, and during the course they were able to connect their prior experiences to concepts and ideas in that curriculum. These study findings can be used to determine how to draw on students' awareness and understanding to foster deeper, "expert" thinking.

Collier, P. J., & Morgan, D. L. (2008). "Is that paper really due today?": Differences in first-generation and traditional college students' understandings of faculty expectations. *Higher Education, 55*, 425–446. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-007-9065-5
The qualitative study described here examined the similarities and differences between faculty expectations of students and students' understanding of those expectations. Conducted

at Portland State University, the study involved focus-group interviews with business, liberal arts, and sciences faculty; it also held two separate focus groups for students—one for first-generation students and another for continuing-generation students. The results from the faculty focus groups revealed expectations that related to "workload and priorities, the explicitness of expectations and assignments, and issues related to communication and problem solving" (p. 432). Although there were similarities in the student responses in each of the categories, first-generation students demonstrated less innate role expert capacity (possessing the explicit and implicit knowledge of what it takes to be a successful student), in part because they lacked family-based cultural capital.

Conefrey, T. (2017). LEADing the way with ePortfolios in a first-generation learning community. *International Journal of ePortfolio,* **7(2), 161–173.**
The data for this case study were drawn from participants of the LEAD Scholars learning community for first-generation students at Santa Clara University, a private Catholic university. Fifteen students (all first-year and first-generation) gave the researcher access to their ePortfolios. The study had several research questions, including (a) Do ePortfolios make a difference in progress toward learning objectives for the course and/or toward objectives of the LEAD Scholars Program? and (b) What do reflections from students reveal about their transition to college? ePortfolios suggested that students were integrating learning from their first-year writing course, their learning community, and the other high impact practices. Together, these high impact practices appeared to deepen students' learning, encourage self-efficacy, and promote valuable 21st-century digital literacy skills. The major finding suggests that the process of collecting, selecting, and reflecting enabled students to reframe their own academic

journeys from a deficit belief in their academic preparedness to self-efficacy. This new narrative contributes to LEAD Scholars' high retention rates, prepares students to be engaged leaders, and encourages them to transform the world.

Conefrey, T. (2018). Supporting first-generation students' adjustment with high-impact practices. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice, 23*(1),139–160. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025118807402
This qualitative case study explores the role of high impact practices in improving engagement and academic outcomes for first-generation students at a private, 4-year college. The 25 participants were members of a first-year learning community designated for first-generation students. Data were collected from their ePortfolios and from course materials, along with interviews with the learning community director and faculty advisors. Researchers employed the social cognitive theory and social cognitive career theory frameworks, and three major themes emerged: (a) increased self-efficacy in literacy and study skills; (b) improved outcome expectations; and (c) a reduction in perceived barriers and an increase in perceived supports. The findings suggest that engaging first-generation students in high impact practices during their first quarter at college can have a beneficial impact on their adjustment, as these practices lead to an increase in self-efficacy and sense of belonging. The author further proposes that participation in HIPs also boosts retention and degree completion rates.

Cox, R. D. (2009). *The college fear factor: How students and professors misunderstand one another.* **Harvard University Press.** https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674053663
The author draws on 5 years' worth of interviews and observations of first-generation community

college students to explain the disconnect between faculty and their students. Framing the experiences of her students in terms of fear and loathing, in some instances, Cox describes their trepidations in the classroom, including resistance to the course learning objectives and processes. Although the author acted as an observer, she does offer suggestions in her final chapter for what professors and institutions can do to better serve students who see professors as disseminators of knowledge rather than facilitators of learning.

Culver, S. J. (2012). *Let's help them speak up across the cultural divide.* **Retrieved from** http://www.chronicle.com/article/Lets-Help-Them-Speak-Up/135706/
In this essay, the author shares her experience engaging students in classroom-based discussions, and she imparts strategies to foster a willingness to engage. Specifically, Culver describes asking students to email their assignments to her, experimenting with various forms of discussions and discussion groups, and assigning a reading from Malcom Gladwell's *Outliers*. The author also asked students to recommend ways for faculty to improve the experience of those students who identified as rural, working class, or first-generation; students indicated a need for affordable course textbooks and more faculty with diverse backgrounds.

DeFreitas, S. C., & Rinn, A. (2013). Academic achievement in first generation college students: The role of academic self-concept. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 13*(1), 57–67.
This article examines the role of *self-concept*, which the researchers define as "an individual's evaluation of self that is based on his or her past experiences and interpretations of those experiences" (p. 57). In this study, the researchers examined math and verbal self-concept, with the explicit goal of identifying

approaches that might improve first-generation students' academic performance (as measured by GPA). Using the Self-Directed Questionnaire III, researchers found that first-generation student participants with higher math and verbal self-concept scores on the questionnaire had greater levels of academic achievement compared to that of their peers with lower self-concept scores. As a result, the researchers suggest that focusing on increasing beliefs among first-generation students about their ability to write effectively, comprehend readings, and solve problems could ultimately increase their GPAs. Furthermore, the findings suggest that increasing interactions between students and faculty (both inside and outside of the classroom), allowing students to choose assignments and readings, communicating relevance of course materials, and providing timely and constructive feedback might also enhance first-generation students' sense of self-concept.

Dika, S. L., & D'Amico, M. M. (2016). Early experiences and integration in the persistence of first-generation college students in STEM and non-STEM majors. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 53*(3), 368–383. https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.21301
This article focuses on research on the influence of academic and nonacademic variables and aspects of the early college experience on the persistence of first-generation students in STEM and non-STEM majors. The researchers found that GPA in the first semester was a common predictor of persistence across all majors (STEM and non-STEM) of the first-generation student study participants. For students in the study who were STEM majors in the physical sciences, engineering, math, and computer sciences (PEMC), perceptions of math preparation influenced persistence. For students in the traditional STEM majors, regardless of first-generation status, social fit was a predictor of persistence, although

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that was not found to be true with students in the PEMC STEM majors. Using the study data, the researchers were unable to examine the impact of these variables on persistence to the second year; further, they expressed that additional research is needed to better understand persistence patterns of first-generation students in particular.

Eddy, S. L., & Hogan, K. A. (2014). Getting under the hood: How and for whom does increasing course structure work? *CBE: Life Sciences Education, 13*(3), 453–468. https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.14-03-0050
This study addressed the impact of active-learning course-level interventions on student achievement, disaggregated by race/ethnicity and first-generation status, at two different R1 institutions in an introductory biology course. The intervention consisted of three parts: intentional time allocation for student work outside of the class (e.g., preparatory and review assignments), class culture that emphasizes community, and increasing course value by focusing on higher order thinking during class time. The researchers used a survey, given to those enrolled in traditional and increased-structure biology courses, to collect students' perceptions and data on behaviors, to determine whether the intervention affected performance. In addition, the authors examined course and final exam failure rates. The results showed for Black students and first-generation students an increase in earned exam points in the moderate structure. Failure rates decreased in the moderate structure course compared with the low structure, but there were no significant results for first-generation students. Students did report spending more time each week in the moderately structured course, and they were more likely to view their classroom culture as a community. However, students were not more likely to report an increased value in the course. No significant differences in these

survey results were found between first-generation students and continuing-generation students.

Hao, R. N. (2011). Critical compassionate pedagogy and the teacher's role in first-generation student success. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 127*, 91–98. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.460
Here, Hao relates personal experiences teaching first-generation students and implores faculty and staff to take an instructional approach that is both critical and compassionate. First, the author describes methods to observe—the first tenant in compassionate communication—first-generation students through the use of personal introductions that encourage students to think about and share learning preferences, barriers, and so on. Next, Hao details feelings—the second tenant in compassionate communication—toward first-generation students. Related to need—the third tenant in compassionate communication—the author describes how he examined first-generation students' needs and how classroom pedagogy could respond to them. Lastly, Hao examines how other faculty members could encourage student requests for help by encouraging feedback on classroom instruction and reading assignments. Although the article relates one faculty member's approach to engaging first-generation students in the classroom, the compassionate communication framework offers a guide for readers to use in their own professional practice.

Horowitz, G. (2019). *Teaching STEM to first-generation college students: A guidebook for faculty and future faculty.* **IAP.**
Rather than focusing on redesigning STEM courses, Horowitz addresses "embedding appropriate information about study strategies into [the readers'] classrooms" (p. ix) with the goal of increasing first-generation student performance. The book begins by examining what first-generation students perceive as

barriers to their success, then the author transitions into examining success in STEM courses. The author proposes self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies as a viable approach to learning, given the characteristics of first-generation students and encourages faculty members to incorporate SRL into their classes. Chapters 5 and 6 offer a variety of SRL strategies and approaches for lecturers to incorporate into their STEM classes: self-reflection, frequent feedback, and ways to help students "retool" their study habits and behaviors. Horowitz also presents advice for graduate student instructors, psychological factors that influence student use of SRL (e.g., fixed mindset), strategies to mentor and establish relationships with students, and advice for undergraduates.

Institute for Higher Education Policy. (2012). *Supporting first-generation college students through classroom-based practices.* **Institute for Higher Education Policy.**
Commissioned by the Institute for Higher Education Policy's Walmart Minority Student Success Initiative, this report contains ways that minority-serving colleges and universities can better serve first-generation students. The report begins with an overview of the data and research on first-generation students and then includes both a summary of specific institutional programs and a discussion of best practices. Key suggestions with specific recommendations include "faculty as key allies," "curricular and pedagogical redesign," and "evidence-based solutions and holistic approaches to student success" (pp. 9, 14, 18).

Jehangir, R. R. (2009). Cultivating voice: First-generation students seek full academic citizenship in multicultural learning communities. *Innovative Higher Education, 34*, 33–49. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-008-9089-5
Drawing on the outcomes of a study that examined

the impact of participation in an interdisciplinary learning community, the article advocates for similar curricular interventions to support first-generation, low-income students. The Multicultural Learning Voices (MLVC) incorporated intentional curricular design focused on three themes in critical pedagogy: identity (examination of self and others), community (development of place and belonging), and social agency (participation in the MLVC, resulting in an examination of social change and civic engagement; pp. 36–37). The study found that student participants were able to find a sense of place and belonging as well as their personal voice and complex identities from their participation in the MLVC. Participants also described how experiences of conflict with social issues and/or "internal disequilibrium" (p. 41) resulted in change, and they discussed the process by which they built bridges between the learning community, home-world, curriculum, and their peers (p. 43). Finally, the author describes the transformative learning that participants described around enacting social change. There are several potential implications from the study for professional practice, including establishing expectations, engaging students in problem-based learning, providing opportunities for students to teach, fostering cognitive and affective ways of knowing, and focusing on constructive conflict.

Jehangir, R. R. (2010). *Higher education and first-generation students: Cultivating community, voice, and place for the new majority.* **Palgrave Macmillan.**
The author of this 8-year research study argues that low-income, first-generation students experience marginalization and isolation in college and that their learning styles and cultural capital are not valued at the university. The data were drawn from participants in an MLC at a large, predominantly white research university in the United States. The MLC was offered

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seven times to seven different cohorts of students (up to 24 students per cohort). In one of their courses, students wrote weekly reflections. The first part of the study analyzed those reflections; the second part included interviews with 24 students from four different cohorts. The major findings revealed that students experienced compartmentalization in three areas: home-world, school-world, social-world. The author makes several recommendations, including that faculty need to make curricular changes to address shifting campus demographics; there needs to be meaningful coalitions between faculty and student affairs professionals; more attention should be paid to low-income, first-generation students as they transition to the sophomore year; and the university must identify spaces (such as social or classroom) where there can be a critical mass of first-generation students.

Jehangir, R. R. (2010). Stories as knowledge: Bringing the lived experience of first-generation college students into the academy. *Urban Education, 45*(4), 533–553. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085910372352
This article describes the findings of participation in an MLC on first-generation, low-income students' feelings of isolation and marginalization at a large, Predominantly White Institution. The longitudinal study collected and analyzed student reflections through weekly journals and on a final assignment; data were also obtained via semistructured interviews with 25 students across four cohorts of MLC participants. The author found the concept of disequilibrium, particularly related to aspects of identity development, to be a common theme in the participant narratives. Moreover, students reported that navigating multiple intersecting identities was challenging in the absence of academic spaces that are welcoming and inclusive of all identities. Providing such spaces and allowing students to express their identities by sharing their lived

experiences inside and outside of the classroom are ways that faculty and staff can mitigate potential feelings of isolation and marginalization among first-generation students.

Jehangir, R. R., Williams, R., & Jeske, J. (2012). The influence of multicultural learning communities on the intrapersonal development of first-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 53*(2), 267–284. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2012.0035
This study aimed to identify the degree to which participation in an MLC fosters self-authorship development in low-income, first-generation students enrolled at a large research university. The students in the study were all participants in the TRIO program, a federally funded initiative that provides academic and leadership development and support for underserved student populations. Study data were collected via semistructured interviews of 24 former MLC participants; findings revealed that participation in the MLC contributed to students' self-authorship development— namely, the movement toward becoming the author of one's life. The researchers suggest that the curricular design and use of critical pedagogy—both of which helped situate the students' lived experiences in the curriculum for the MLC—resulted in self-authorship development. In response to the study findings, the researchers advocate for the examination of both pedagogy and curriculum as tools to foster inclusion and self-authorship in first-generation students.

Katrevich, A. V., & Aruguete, M. S. (2017). Recognizing challenges and predicting success in first-generation university students. *Journal of STEM Education: Innovations & Research, 18*(2), 40–44.
In this study, 160 students from college math classes answered demographic questions and completed two questionnaires adapted from the Advanced

Reasoning Skills Test and the Student Support Needs Scale. Forty-six percent of respondents were first-generation students. The researchers hypothesized that first-generation students would have lower grades in their math courses, lower critical thinking skills scores, and less support. The results suggested that first-generation students had lower academic and social integration, which may have been mitigated by work and family responsibilities.

Kim, Y. K., & Sax, L. J. (2009). Student–faculty interaction in research universities: Differences by student gender, race, social class, and first-generation status. *Research in Higher Education, 50*, 437–459. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9127-x
Using Astin's involvement theory (1984) and I-E-O (inputs-environment-outcomes) framework (1991) as the framework for this study, the researchers investigated differences in student–faculty interactions and student outcomes. For the purposes of the study, the researchers selected the following outcome measures: GPA, degree aspiration, integration, self-reported gains in critical thinking and social awareness, and satisfaction with the overall college experience. Findings showed statistically significant differences in the frequency of interaction between first-generation students and faculty (compared to that of their continuing-generation peers) around credit-bearing research, in-person or email communication with faculty, and in-class interactions. The authors suggest that faculty and staff consider how they can "maximize the educational efficiency of student-faculty interaction by minimizing the gender, race, social class, and first-generation differences associated with it" (p. 453). To that end, the authors propose creating strategies that are unique and responsive to each student group, but they acknowledge that more research is needed to identify approaches to foster interaction between first-generation students and faculty.

McKay, V. C., & Estrella, J. (2008). First-generation student success: The role of faculty interaction in service learning courses. *Communication Education, 57*(3), 356–372. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520801966123
This mixed-methods study examined service learning courses as a vehicle for first-generation students' academic and social integration. Specifically, the researchers sought to determine the aspects of interactions between first-generation students and faculty that foster academic and social integration and any relationship between these interactions and the participants' academic success. The authors found that interactions between first-generation students and faculty in a service learning course impact academic and social integration. Furthermore, the quality of these interactions influences perceptions among students of their abilities to accomplish short- and long-term goals. Although interactions with faculty can have many positive effects on students, the authors purport that the content of this particular service learning course contributed to academic and social integration in ways other courses may not. For example, students were motivated to communicate with the faculty member teaching the course and with their peers because they shared a common service-oriented experience that began in but extended beyond the classroom. The authors suggest that additional research be conducted on the impact of these types of experiences on first-generation students but that such studies involve data that disaggregate this population by other identity categories.

McMurray, A. J., & Sorrells, D. (2009). Bridging the gap: Reaching first-generation students in the classroom. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 36*(3), 210–214.
The authors make the case that although first-generation students have unique identities, there exist teaching techniques and approaches that

are suitable for all students. The strategies include being aware of student demographics (at the institutional and class levels); using illustrative examples that allow students to see themselves "on a path toward professionalization" (p. 212); incorporating humor and fun into instruction; providing opportunities for correction/redemption; creating a sense of community and welcomeness in and beyond the classroom by participating in campus activities and events; and fostering student interactions with peers and faculty/staff. Ultimately, the authors implore faculty to be willing to "cast a line" (p. 213) and try strategies that they think are innovative and potentially engaging for first-generation students.

Miele, J., & Nguyen, V. H. (2020). On par with the rest: First-generation college students and cultural intelligence. *Journal of Further and Higher Education,* **44**(6), 809–817. https://doi.org/10.1080/030987 7x.2019.1612044
This study compared the level of cultural intelligence (CQ) of first-generation students with that of their continuing-generation peers and looks at factors that are positively related to CQ. The authors examined the four capabilities of CQ—behavioral, motivational, cognitive, and metacognitive—and investigated whether there were any differences in each of these capabilities for participants. Researchers used Qualtrics to collect survey data from 199 undergraduate students; the data consist of demographic information as well as answers to questions related to CQ. The findings suggest that being a first-generation student may not be a factor that affects one's level of CQ. This finding is helpful when developing strength-based pedagogy and support to improve the students' learning experience.

Nunn, L. (2018). *33 simple strategies for faculty: A week-by-week resource for teaching first-year and first-generation students.* **Rutgers University Press.** https://doi.org/10.36019/9780813599519
In this book of practical strategies for teaching the author presents easy-to-implement strategies that help first-year and first-generation students understand the expectations of learning in college. The author also includes student voices throughout each chapter to underscore their needs and experiences.

Olson, R., & Pietros, S. (Eds.). (2019). *Early modern culture: First-Generation Shakespeare,* **14**(2).
This volume contains essays that developed from the 2018 Shakespeare Association of America seminar "First-Generation Shakespeare," led by Rebecca Olson. The authors' intention was to make the instruction of Shakespeare a better experience for first-generation students; in fact, many of the contributors self-identify as first-generation graduates. The essays are grouped into three broad categories: (a) essays that examine the field of Shakespeare studies; (b) essays about course design; and (c) individual assignments and campus initiatives that help all students, but especially first-generation students, in their study of Shakespeare. In interrogating their own discipline, the authors argue and demonstrate that the way Shakespeare courses are taught has a direct impact on who enters the field—namely, first-generation and students of color.

Pelco, L. E., Ball, C. T., & Lockeman, K. S. (2014). Student growth from service-learning: A comparison of first-generation and non-first-generation college students. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement,* **18**(2), 49–65.
This exploratory study at Virginia Commonwealth University focused on the effect of service-learning courses on student growth. An online questionnaire

of 321 first-generation and 782 non-first-generation undergraduate students asked about demographics, service learning details, and student growth. The authors found no differences between first-generation students' and non-first-generation students' responses. Female undergraduates—regardless of their generation status, financial need, or racial background—reported that they gained both personal and academic skills as a result of their participation in service learning courses.

Priebe, L. C., Ross, T. L., & Low, K. W. (2008). Exploring the role of distance education in fostering equitable university access for first-generation students: A phenomenological survey. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 9*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v9i1.452
This qualitative study looked at seven participants who completed a 24-question online survey. The researchers justified the validity of data from such a low number of respondents by arguing that "hidden" populations are often difficult to contact, and even with few data collection opportunities, the results could shed light on participants' experiences. The researchers reviewed the data and analyzed it for common themes and experiences. Findings fell into five categories: starting age and commitments; parental assistance; education stigma and debt aversion; work ethic, individuality, and discouragement; and social roles and expectations. The researchers noted that enrollment in a university's distance education program took place at least 2 years after high school graduation and that the impetus for participants taking classes online was to allow them to maintain their work or family commitments. The authors also detected a lack of parental guidance in the process or experience of distance learning; despite the work ethic and independent thinking exhibited by these students, they had negative experiences with family,

who assumed they would fulfill stereotypical social and gender roles.

Rahoi-Gilchrest, R. L., Olcott, S., & Elcombe, R. (2009). Creating living and learning communities that engage our first-generation students: Suggestions for policy and practice. In T. Heinz Housel & V. L. Harvey (Eds.), *The invisibility factor: Administrators and faculty reach out to first-generation college students.* **Brown Walker Press.**
The authors of this chapter recommend policies and practices related to living and learning communities for first-generation students. Using the living and learning community at Winona State University West Campus as the case study, the authors evaluated their residential college program for first-generation students via a focus group of 17 students and a subsequent satisfaction survey. Participants felt that the program offered a "home away from home," a sense of community, and an opportunity to connect with others. Participants also noted that while they saw the residential life staff often, they were less engaged with faculty in the program. Recommendations include using a variety of living and learning community models and modifying them specifically for first-generation students; inviting faculty who are both enthusiastic and knowledgeable about first-generation students issues; and allowing upperclassmen who are first-generation students to participate in the living and learning communities as mentors.

Roggow, M. J. (2014). Improving student performance outcomes and graduation rates through institutional partnerships. *Special Issue: Strengthening Community Colleges Through Institutional Collaborations, 2014*(165), 25–35. https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20088
This essay discusses a grant-funded program, developed in cooperation with Bronx Community

College and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, to provide educational opportunities in the criminal justice field to first-generation Latinx students. The program sought to engage students in the criminal justice field and to prepare them academically by using such pedagogical strategies as tasks and assignments that were directly related to the criminal justice job responsibilities. The program also instituted a first-year seminar that provided instruction on academic skill development. The author presents several recommendations for institutions that want to serve similar populations and improve their persistence and graduation rates: work with partnering institutions to ensure that students are ready to complete program requirements each year; collaborate with institutional research to track student achievement; and offer faculty development for integrating real-world assignments and tasks into existing curricula.

Scholes Young, M. (2016, May 6). Navigating campus together. *The Atlantic.* https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/05/how-first-generation-faculty-can-help-first-generation-students-succeed/481617/
The author, a faculty member, recalls her campus experiences as a first-generation college student and offers advice for how other faculty can make their classrooms more friendly toward and supportive for first-generation students. She elaborates on the hidden curriculum, noting that it is common for first-gen students not to ask questions; therefore, it is critical that faculty anticipate some first-generation students' needs and to address them clearly and without judgment.

Shademan, A. R., & Thompson, M. R. (2016). Are college faculty and first-generation, low-income students ready for each other? *Journal*

of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice, 18(2), 194–216. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025115584748
This study examined self-perceptions of college readiness among low-income, first-generation students and compared them with the perceptions that community college instructors had of the students' readiness. Further, the study investigated the types of pedagogies the instructors used to foster "cultural agency" (contributing to cultural capital) among first-generation, low income students in their classes. Interviews were conducted with six community college instructors and 21 students, all of whom were affiliated with a state initiative focused on creating teacher pathways. Study findings indicate a variety of perceptions of students' college readiness, from both the instructors and the first-generation, low income students themselves. The participant narratives suggest that "relational pedagogies" and any discourse that involves making personal connections with students, providing encouraging feedback, and monitoring and communicating progress to students in the class were all perceived as positive contributors to cultural agency.

Smith, J. M., & Lucena, J. C. (2016). Invisible innovators: How low-income, first-generation students use their funds of knowledge to belong in engineering. *Engineering Studies, 8*(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/19378629.2016.1155593
The study's goal was to better understand the experiences of first-generation, low income students in the engineering field. The 14 participants attended Colorado School of Mines, a public engineering university. Researchers conducted semistructured interviews, and the majority of students completed six interviews. This particular article examines five of the 14 participants, whose stories touch on belonging in engineering. During the study, students

began to identify the funds of knowledge that they bring to the discipline and how this prior knowledge contributes to their academic success. The students recognized the value of their family's work histories as well. These five students established their belonging in engineering by finding spaces that validated their class-specific funds of knowledge, such as designing projects that were useful in their home communities. Each of these students felt strongly that "the engineering curriculum, professors' teaching styles, and the everyday social practices of their peers marginalized, devalued, or even erased the experiences and knowledge of people who work with their hands for a living," including their parents (p. 23). The authors strongly recommended that engineering faculty validate students and their backgrounds and also increase their awareness of class differences.

Soria, K. M., & Stebleton, M. J. (2012). First-generation students' academic engagement and retention. *Teaching in Higher Education, 17*(6), 673–685. **https:// doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2012.666735**
Drawing on responses (n = 1,864) to the Student Experience in the Research University survey, this study sought to determine differences in persistence and academic engagement between first-generation students and their continuing-generation peers. The researchers found that first-generation students had lower levels of both persistence and academic engagement, as measured by contributions to class discussions, asking questions during class, and interacting with faculty. Recommendations for faculty teaching first-generation students include fostering "communities of belonging" (p. 681) through dedicated programs and services as well as HIPs. The authors also advocate for first-generation student support that spans academic and student affairs, including programs that feature mentoring and academic advising.

Stephens, N. M., Hamedani, M. G., & Destin, M. (2014). Closing the social-class achievement gap: A difference-education intervention improves first-generation students' academic performance and all students' college transition. *Psychological Science, 25*(4), 943–953. **https://doi. org/10.1177/0956797613518349**
The study described here sought to ameliorate the social-class achievement gap between first-generation students and continuing-generation students through the implementation of a "difference-education intervention" that gave voice to the diverse backgrounds of these students. Study participants, first-generation and continuing-generation students, were randomly assigned to panel discussions, one of which was standard and the other included difference-education. Although both panels boasted diverse participants, only the difference-education panel included stories that spoke to students' social-class backgrounds and identities. The study findings confirm that the difference-education panel had a positive effect on the reduction of the social-class achievement gap between first- and continuing-generation students. Furthermore, the intervention improved students' experiences with aspects of psychological adjustment as well as academic and social integration/engagement. Although the findings demonstrated a positive impact on first-generation students, continuing-generation students also saw improved outcomes from the difference-education panel.

Wiggins, J. (2011). Faculty and first-generation college students: Bridging the classroom gap together. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 2011*(127), 1–4. **https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.451**
In this foreword, the author, a first-generation student, describes some of the common academic and emotional challenges first-generation students experience as they transition to institutions of

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higher education. The author describes the Our Groups Program, federally funded through the U.S. Department of Education's Student Services Program, as an example of an initiative that responds to the needs of the whole first-generation student. Specifically, the program begins with a required Summer Experience Program and provides through a dedicated learning community continued support to participants through year-round advising, mentoring, and learning opportunities that have been intentionally created for first-generation students. The author calls for the development of more dedicated first-generation student programs and initiatives, dedicated funding for these efforts, and increased education about first-generation student identities for faculty and staff. This essay enacts a "call to action" to dedicate time and resources to efforts that enhance the experience of all first-generation students.

Yeh, T. L. (2010). Service-learning and persistence of low-income, first-generation college students: An exploratory study. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 16*(2), 50–65.
This study explores the experiences of low-income, first-generation students who participated in

academic and cocurricular service learning activities. Through purposeful sampling at one midsize, private university and one large, public university, the author identified and interviewed six low-income, first-generation students about their involvement in academic and cocurricular service learning activities. The author also reviewed program brochures, websites, syllabi, and learning objectives of courses that included service learning and observed at least one class meeting. The results indicate that the service learning was an important component of the students' college experience. Four major themes emerged from coding the qualitative data: (a) building skills and understanding, (b) developing resilience, (c) finding personal meaning, and (d) developing critical consciousness. Students reported that they were able to enhance their academic skills and understanding of the course content through these service learning experiences; they also indicated that they were able to develop leadership and networking skills, boost their self-efficacy, and learn more about their own values and motivations. Two additional findings were that the service learning experience functioned as a de-stressor and that it was eye opening in terms of students learning about experiences different from their own.

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GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS

Introduction

For this project, "first-generation graduate student" refers to a student who was a first-gen college graduate now enrolled in graduate or professional school. "If you're the first in your family to go to college, you're typically the first in a lot of things," said La'Tonya Rease Miles, in the 2019 *EdSurge* article, "Universities Look to Add More Support for First-Generation Graduate Students." "If your family may be skeptical or a little nervous or anxious about you going to college, then think of what they say when you tell them, 'I'm going to stay longer and acquire more debt.'"

We recognize that graduate and professional schools are another frontier for first-generation students. In some cases, the experiences are similar: Students still must navigate the hidden curriculum, wrestle with the complexities of family support, and balance present and future financial considerations. Even though they have graduated with a bachelor's degree and, based on national data, student loan debt, some first-generation students must deal with the tension of furthering their education in graduate school and delaying the paying of college debt or adding to it.

For the graduate/professional school application process, see Student Success.

Summary of Research

The articles and studies included in this section report some of the same themes described in studies about undergraduate first-generation students: First-generation graduates benefit from intentional family support from parents, spouses, siblings, and children as they continue to navigate uncharted territories; empathetic faculty mentorship is critical, especially from faculty who share similar backgrounds; and imposter syndrome is common, particularly because graduate students are expected to be more academically independent and self-reliant than undergraduates. Additionally, students demonstrated considerable resiliency in their graduate or professional school program. In sum, the first-generation college identity continues to be salient at this level.

Financial support is another major concern. Researchers report that first-generation graduate students need more information about funding their education, especially *before* they apply, and finances may deter students from applying to graduate or professional school in the first place. First-gens in graduate or professional school also report needing to work while in school, which can affect persistence and may impede participation in high-impact practices (e.g., internships).

Suggestions for Future Research

We acknowledge that there is a dearth of research on first-generation students in graduate and professional schools. Most of the extant research on this population focuses on the student's social, personal, and financial experience. The majority of these articles and studies focus on doctoral students; accordingly, there should be more work done on master's students. Given that the

culture and expectations of professional and graduate programs significantly vary according to academic discipline, there is great value in exploring first-gen experiences by field, such as medicine, the humanities, or business schools.

Areas of future research include academic transition issues, the path to degree completion, and career development as part of the graduate school experience. Other potential research areas include personal narratives of the graduate experience, personal and family expectations, aspirations for careers, and earning potential. For instance, what factors lead to persistence and graduation? Finally, there could be more scholarship on the experiences of McNair Scholars, Mellon-Mays awardees, and other alumni of predoctoral programs that specifically target first-generation students; these might include longitudinal studies or case studies.

References
Brosnan, C., Southgate, E., Outram, S., Lempp, H., Wright, S., Saxby, T., Harris, G., Bennett, A., & Kelly, B. (2016). Experiences of medical students who are first in family to go to college. *Medical Education, 50*(8), 842–852. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/medu.12995
Using Bourdieu's theoretical framework, researchers interviewed 22 first-generation students about their experiences as medical students. Findings aligned with Bourdieu's theory of social, cultural, and economic capital and revealed the following: Social and economic capital were considered barriers to academic progress, and the status as a medical student enhanced cultural capital.

Carlton, M. T. (2015). First-generation students and post-undergraduate aspirations. *SAGE Open, 5*(4), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015618433
The author of this article set out to determine if first-generation college seniors were less likely to apply to graduate or professional schools than their non-first-generation student peers. The study used the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen, which surveyed students at 28 elite colleges and universities, first in1999 and then again each spring semester until 2003. The author used binary regression to determine the

percentage of first-generation students who had applied to graduate or professional schools by their senior year, and if they did not, what the underlying issue was. The data analysis indicated that first-generation students were significantly less likely than non-first-generation students to apply to graduate school. However, when controlling for race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, being a minority student or a low-income student did not influence first-generation students application rates. The researcher then included additional variables and found that the amount of undergraduate debt significantly affected their plans to apply to graduate or professional school.

Gardner, S. K. (2013). The challenges of first-generation doctoral students. *New Directions for Higher Education, 2013*(163), 43–54. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20064
In this chapter, the author discusses the unique issues and challenges facing first-generation doctoral students, especially those who are students of color. These challenges include (a) understanding the system of graduate education; (b) financial

constraints, including student loan and personal debt; (c) feelings of otherness; and (d) imposter syndrome. Gardner closes with a number of recommendations to help facilitate students' persistence. For instance, she recommends that faculty and academic advisors highlight the real-world implications of their work; early outreach to high school students, especially how graduate education may be funded; and spaces for first-generation graduate students and first-generation faculty to identify one another.

Gardner, S. K., & Holley, K. (2011). Those invisible barriers are real: The progression of first-generation students through doctoral education. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 44*(1), 77–92. **https:// doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2011.529791**
The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of first-generation students enrolled in doctoral programs. The researchers interviewed 20 students representing a range of academic disciplines. Of particular interest is how the participants navigated the pipeline to graduate school. Four major themes emerged in the findings: (a) breaking the chain, (b) knowing the rules, (c) living in two worlds, and (d) seeking support. Many of the participants received little to no assistance gaining entry into graduate school. Additionally, few knew about financial aid resources and relied on student loans or outside jobs to pay for their education. Finally, the participants did not internalize their success and demonstrated imposter syndrome. The participants did demonstrate resilience, as well as aspirational and resistant capital.

Holley, K. A., & Gardner, S. (2012). Navigating the pipeline: How socio-cultural influences impact first-generation doctoral students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 5*(2), 112–121. **https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026840**
This study focused on three research questions: (a) How do disciplinary and institutional characteristics influence first-generation doctoral students? (b) How are finances perceived by first-generation doctoral students? and (c) How do family and community influences impact first-generation doctoral students? The researchers interviewed 20 participants from two different universities. Participants revealed that their first-generation college identity was largely invisible but they also claim that this identity is an asset. Although not all of the participants were low

income, all of them expressed concerns about finances. Finally, the students felt additional pressures from their families about getting a job and earning a high income after degree completion.

Howard, S. (2017). Black first-generation social work doctoral students. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 37*(5), 513–527. **https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2017.1370431**
This article addresses the literature gap of first-generation students in doctoral programs, specifically programs in social work. The author suggests that Black first-generation students who come from prominent families are more likely to have the cultural and social capital to succeed in graduate programs. The following suggestions for supporting Black first-generation students on the pathway to graduate education were given: Engage students on research, provide individualized mentoring, and encourage small group work among Black first-generation students.

King, A. C. (2017). Where do we fit? Challenges faced by first-generation graduate students in professional psychology. *Psychotherapy Bulletin, 52*(2), 23–27. **https://societyforpsychotherapy. org/challenges-faced-first-generation-graduate-students/**
Using cultural mismatch theory, this study examines the challenges that first-generation students face in a professional psychology doctoral program. Six participants were interviewed to explore their decision to attend college and graduate school, with a focus on their first-generation status. Students reported feeling disconnected from their families, expressed a desire for more guidance and support as they pursued graduate school, and found it challenging to access faculty.

Law School Survey of Student Engagement. (2014). *Looking ahead: Assessment in legal education: Annual results 2014,* **10–11. http://lssse.indiana.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/ LSSSE_2014_AnnualReport.pdf**
The Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSE) focuses on activities that affect learning in law school. The results show how law students use their time and what they think about their law school experiences; the results also highlight ways that law schools can improve student engagement and learning. The selected results in this report are based on responses from 21,173 law students at

70 law schools who completed LSSE in spring 2014. The study also used responses to two sets of experimental questions appended to the survey and given to different subsets of the 2014 respondents. In order to identify first-generation, students were asked to identify "the highest level of education completed by either of your parents (or the people who raised you)." Approximately 27% of respondents were first-generation students. The survey revealed that while undergraduate GPAs were fairly similar, first-generation students, on average, entered law school with lower LSAT scores than their peers. Additionally, first-generation students rely on loans to a greater extent than other students. Finally, first-generation students reported spending more time studying and working (especially during their first year) and less time with cocurricular activities like moot court and law journal, which are often desired of employers.

Leyva, V. (2011). First-generation Latina graduate students: Balancing professional identity development with traditional family roles. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 2011*(127), 21–31. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.454
The author conducted a series of interviews with Latinx women, who compose the largest first-generation student demographic group in the master of social work program at the university where she is employed. Six women were interviewed in dyads, and the participants ranged in age from their late 20s to late 50s. Most of the participants expressed support from their parents and family members for their academic goals, although a few mentioned that their family expected them to work and to contribute financially to the family income. All participants expressed concerns about balancing traditional gender roles within Mexican culture and the skills required of their profession, that is, social work. The author noted that it is not coincidental that these women chose a helping profession, which makes it easier for them to balance what is expected of them due to their gender and ethnicity/culture. Finally, most of the participants reported feeling stress when standing up to authority figures.

Longwell-Grice, R., Zervas Adsitt, N., Mullins, K., & Serrata, W. (2016). The first ones: Three studies on first-generation college students. *NACADA Journal, 36*(2), 34–46. https://doi.org/10.12930/nacada-13-028
This paper summarizes findings from three separate qualitative research studies, including one that focuses on sources of resiliency

and persistence of first-generation graduate students in a master's level graduate program at a 4-year public university. Using snowball sampling, the researcher interviewed nine students with the goal of identifying factors that contribute to first-gen student success. The majority of the participants shared that they benefited from significant emotional support from at least one parent. Although they felt competent and competitive after completing their undergraduate work, many participants described feeling uncomfortable with the culture of academia and often felt marginalized in class. Several participants revealed that the most significant cultural transition they experienced was anxiety about eclipsing their family members as they gained more academic credentials.

Lunceford, B. (2011). When first-generation students go to graduate school. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 2011*(127), 13–20. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.453
The author's goal in this narrative is to assist first-generation students with the transition to graduate school. Lunceford, a self-identified first-gen graduate, focuses on three main areas: the period in which the student is considering graduate school, the process of applying to graduate school, and preparation for graduate school. He concludes that many of the challenges students face as undergraduates are likely to persist when they are in graduate school. He also stresses the importance of quality faculty advising during the graduate school application process and calls upon professors to be more sensitive to students' life situations, so that first-generation graduates may have a more successful transition and graduate school experience.

Martinez, A. (2018). Pathways to the professoriate: The experiences of first-generation Latino undergraduate students at Hispanic-serving institutions applying to doctoral programs. *Education Sciences, 8*(32), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci8010032
The article explores the pathways of Latino first-generation students who aspire to become professors. The researcher used a phenomenological approach with 15 undergraduate students participating in a pipeline program for the humanities. Findings demonstrated that the professoriate and higher education tied to the student's identity and that the students had familial support, although family members did not understand the graduate school

process. The interviews also found how prepared the students were for graduate school in terms of understanding the process of their prospective programs as well as the importance of their community of peers. Implications include how practitioners and researchers can strengthen the pipeline to graduate school by offering early exposure to the idea, the expectations of the academy, and accepted norms and behaviors. In terms of programming, finding ways to involve family members and help them understand how graduate school is different from undergraduate programs would be beneficial for support. Programming may also enhance the ways graduate students can build community with their peers.

O'Bryant, J., & Schaffzin, K. (2018). First-generation students in law school: A proven success model, *Arkansas Law Review,* *70*(4), 913–956. https://scholarworks.uark.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=alr
This essay is divided into four sections: Part II includes a survey of literature to date regarding the experiences of first-generation students as undergraduates. The authors also summarize one study that focuses specifically on the experience of first-generation students in law school. In part III, they describe in detail the Tennessee Institute for Pre-Law (TIP) Program (University of Memphis), which serves as a bridge program for the targeted population. They attribute the program's success to guidance, financial support, and mentorship, among other factors. Finally, the authors conclude that TIP should be duplicated at other universities nationally in light of the increase of first-generation students.

Patton, S. (2012, December 3). Here's smarty pants, home for the holidays. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* https://www.chronicle.com/article/Heres-Smarty-Pants-Home-for/136069/
This article highlights the experiences of graduate students who were first-generation or from working-class backgrounds when they return home for the holidays or other occasions. It documents some of the tensions and misunderstandings that often occur between these students and their families who may not understand factors of graduate school life such as researching, writing, or the time needed to finish a degree. One interviewee explains how his family members value physical labor rather than intellectual labor and how they are more concerned about living day to day. Many parents express

concern about their student's employment prospects. Nick Repak, founder of Grad Resources, recommends that students "bring [family members] along" in the journey and to acquaint them with their work and lifestyle.

Portnoi, L., & Kwong, T. (2011). Enhancing the academic experiences of first-generation master's students. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 48*(4), 411–427. https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.6268
For this phenomenological research study, the authors sought to understand participants' academic experiences while pursuing a master's degree and to ascertain whether they perceived their first-generation status as significant during their course of study. A total of 25 participants participated in both one-on-one and group interviews. The findings suggest that these students could have benefited from intentional academic support in the following areas: (a) adapting to and understanding "the rules of the game," (b) combating their feelings of inadequacy and not belonging, and (c) addressing their sense of straddling the disparate social fields of their academic and home environments. Participants identified four factors—internal and external—that helped counteract negative experiences: (a) strong interest in the course material, (b) ownership of their educational experiences, (c) mentorship from faculty, and (d) positive peer-to-peer relationships. The researchers recommend that institutions identify and track first-generation students in graduate programs and provide opportunities for them to network with other students who share this identity.

Roksa, J., Feldon, D., & Maher, M. (2018). First-generation students in pursuit of the PhD: Comparing socialization experiences and outcomes to continuing-generation peers. *The Journal of Higher Education, 89*(5), 728–752. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2018.1435134
The authors had three research questions for this study: (a) Are there any differences in predoctoral research-related preparation between first-generation students and their continuing-generation peers? (b) Are there any differences between first-generation and continuing-generation students in their graduate school socialization experiences and exposure to research-related resources? and (c) Are there any differences between first-generation and continuing-

generation students' doctoral outcomes? To conduct the study, the researchers examined doctoral experiences and outcomes for first-generation and continuing-generation students during the first 3 years of their PhD biology programs. The authors surveyed 336 students representing 53 different institutions; 96 respondents (or 29% of the sample) identified as being the first-generation to attend college. The study revealed few differences between first-generation and continuing-generation students in either doctoral experiences or outcomes. It also found that first-generation graduates were much less likely to have a scholarly publication compared to their peers. The authors surmise that the first-generation students in their sample already are a "highly selected" group, having already persisted to a doctoral program, which, in turn, makes them even more likely to be resilient. They also acknowledge that the survey questions were more quantitative in nature and did not explore the quality of the graduate school experience.

Saguil, V., & Kellermann, A. L. (2014). The community college pathway to medical school: The road less traveled. *Academic Medicine, 89*(12), 1589–1592. **https://doi:10.1097/ACM.0000000000000439**
This study reviewed applications of students who are more likely to be first-generation or minority, and who had attended a community college before applying to medical school. The researchers found that students who enrolled in a community college were less likely to be accepted into medical school. The authors suggest that admissions committee members should consider community college attendance a positive rather than a negative. They also suggest that community college students look for research opportunities and seek rigorous academic courses when they transfer to complete their bachelor's degrees. An additional suggestion was to consider national military service programs that provide scholarships for medical school in exchange for a few years of service.

Seay, S. E., Lifton, D. E., Wuensch, K. L., Bradshaw, L. K., & McDowelle, J. O. (2008). First-generation graduate students and attrition risks. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 56*(3), 11–25. **https://doi.org/10.1080/07377366.2008.10400158**
The researchers conducted a longitudinal study designed to identify factors that might impede the attainment of graduate

degrees by first-generation students. Phase 1 of the study involved the identification of first-generation graduate students, their associated demographics, and the presence of potential attrition factors in their profile. Phase 2 involved tracking participants as they complete their degrees, identifying factors that contribute to their attrition, and determining whether their retention in academic study is associated with their personal resilience. All participants attended the same public university and were in the first year of their graduate program, including master's and doctoral degrees across disciplines. During Phase 1, participants completed a 71-item questionnaire. In comparison to their peers at this institution, the data showed that first-generation students were mostly married, white women in their 30s who had dependent children. Although it was expected that these students would be low income and non-white, the majority of them were white and not low income. The researchers recommend that institutions use demographic data to identify who their first-generation students are before developing programs and support services.

Tate, K. A., Fouad, N. A., Marks, L. R., Young, G., Guzman, E., & Williams, E. G. (2015). Underrepresented first-generation, low-income college students' pursuit of a graduate education: Investigating the influence of self-efficacy, coping efficacy, and family influence. *Journal of Career Assessment, 23*(3), 427–441. **https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072714547498**
The study examined the disparity in the graduate-level pursuit of underrepresented, low-income first-generation students as well as the negative mental health outcomes that come with unemployment. The researchers sought to understand how students who hold marginalized identities navigate the graduate school process and access faculty mentors, engage with research, and prepare for entrance exams such as the GRE. Using social cognitive career theory, the researchers administered five assessment instruments to the participants, all of whom were in a McNair Scholars program (n = 170). There was a statistically significant difference found for students' graduate school self-efficacy, but when students reported their family's values as an influence on their career development, there was a drop in their pursuit of graduate school. The researchers argue that the values are inversely related to the student's pursuit of graduate school as well as the need to honor their families through

education and career. Implications for graduate school preparation programs include finding ways to increase students' self-confidence by helping them become immersed in research, prepare for research projects, and become comfortable with the graduate school process.

Willison, S., & Gibson, E. (2011). Graduate school learning curves: McNair Scholars' postbaccalaureate transitions. *Equity & Excellence in Education,* **44**(2), 153–168. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2011.558416

This study examines 22 McNair scholars' transitions into graduate school in an attempt to identify factors that influence persistence and matriculation. The participants in this study were alumni from a midsize university's McNair Scholars; it is unclear how many of the participants identified as first-generation. During interviews, participants identified significant "learning curves" experienced in graduate school. Five themes emerged: academic readiness, weaving a supportive web, managing the clock, being accepted, and staying financially fit. The researchers recommend that McNair Scholars' mentors emphasize time management strategies, graduate-level reading and writing, and diverse research methods. They also recommend that the McNair Scholars institutionalize support for its students when they are in graduate school, to continue the support they received as undergraduates.

INTERSECTIONS OF IDENTITY

Introduction

"How many labels are necessary to understand first-generation students' needs?" asks Melissa Scholes Young in a 2016 *The Atlantic* article.[1] The argument of her essay is that the multiple, sometimes conflating, identities can be a hindrance to their success, but also a necessary way to flesh out who they are and how best an institution can provide support. In other words, Young suggests, "Labeling students allows schools to identify and deliver targeted resources."

It can be argued that first-generation identity is inextricably linked to the myriad other identities a student may have. In fact, intersectionality is a hallmark of first-generation student status. It is hard for a parent's educational status to be so salient that gender, race, or socioeconomic status plays a negligible role in your college experience. Federal programs, such as TRIO, acknowledge this when they provide support for first-generation and low-income students.

Intersectionality captures "the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities" (Collins, 2015, p. 2).[2] But do these additional labels and categories help us better understand first-generation students or do they continually muddy what we do know about first-generation students' experiences? In this section, we include a variety of intersections: adult learners, rural students, students of color, transfers, veterans, and white students.[3] To be considered, identity characteristics, rather than identity as a label, had to be the *primary focus* of the article or study about first-generation students. For instance, if the subjects' identity was incidental to the research question or the finding, then the entry is listed under a more relevant topic.

[1] Young, M. S. (2016, October 16). The cost of being first. *The Atlantic.* https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/10/the-cost-of-being-first/504155/
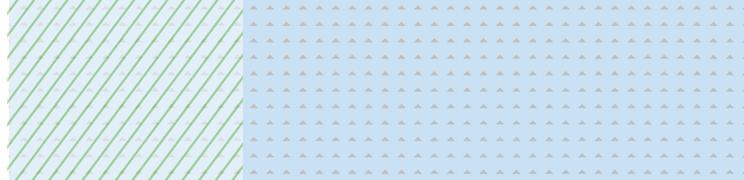[2] Quoted in Nguyen & Nguyen (2018). Original source: Collins, P. H. (2015). Intersectionality's definitional dilemmas. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 41(2015), 1–20.
[3] Low-income/working-class students and student refugees warranted their own individual sections.

It is worth noting that after the 2016 presidential election, higher education leaders began paying more attention to rural areas in the United States, presuming, perhaps, that these students were more politically conservative. Regardless of their political leanings, rural students are now considered "underserved" populations, and there will likely be a renewed interest in enrolling them and further supporting them once they matriculate.[4] The country's colleges and universities also found that recruiting international students became more difficult as Donald Trump's rhetoric and actions threatened their ability to travel and attend college in the United States.[5] The travel restrictions borne out of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic have only made recruitment of international students even more precarious and the support for first-generation students outside of the United States more critical.

Summary of Research
In the current research, it is clear that first-generation student status matters, but how much it matters depends on the

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[4] McDonough, P., Gildersleeve, R., & McClafferty-Jarsky, K. (2010). The golden cage of rural college access: How higher education can respond to the rural life. In K. Schafft & A. Youngblood Jackson, (Eds.), *Rural education for the 21st century* (pp. 191–209). Penn State University Press.

[5] Anderson, N. (2017, September 17). The Trump effect in college admissions: Rural outreach increases, international recruitment gets harder. *The Washington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/09/13/the-trump-effect-in-college-admissions-rural-outreach-increases-international-recruitment-gets-harder/?utm_term=.3e0e572bd0f

institution type and whether the students' intersecting identities, such as race and social class, are more prominent. Many of the resources shared below are qualitative studies that used grounded theory or critical race theory as the theoretical lens. Overall, these articles attempt to identify what factors lead to these students' success, and they promote counter-storytelling as a method for elevating first-generation student voices.

Unsurprisingly, Latinx students receive the greatest amount of attention and scholarship given their increased numbers within higher education; according to Excelencia in Education (2019),[6] Latinx are much more likely to be first-generation students compared to students in all other racial/ethnic groups. Many of the studies summarized here explore how the cultural values of Latinx students (e.g., strong family ties) may conflict with those of the institution, and they identify the potential for cross-cultural conflict or tensions. Despite this particular focus, more research is needed on the impact of institutional racism of first-generation students who are Latinx, such as criminalization, anti-immigration policies, and English language bias.

Additionally, it was common for many articles and studies to identify Latinx first-generation students as the target population but not address culture, race, or representation at all. Scholars and practitioners must be careful of conflating first-generation students with Latinx students and vice versa, which may lead to the risk of this diverse population being overrepresented while their specific needs still aren't met.

For immigrant first-generation students, according to the current research, their country of origin and their parents' educational attainment have an outsized effect on their cultural capital within higher education and, subsequently, on their outcomes. Their identities as well as their experiences of racial discrimination and language barriers keep them from gaining the generational advantages of completing a degree.

It should be noted that while there is a separate section for

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[6] Santiago, D. A., Laurel, J., Martinez, J., Bonilla, C., & Labandera, E. (2019). *Latinos in higher education: Compilation of fast facts.* Excelencia in Education.

the research focused on parents and families, the discussion of identity often includes the influence that parents and families have on first-generation students. The research notes, too, that parents and caregivers are overwhelmingly supportive of their students but have limited understanding of financial resources and university processes. These students' success hinges on family support and involvement and relationships with nonacademic personnel. What works, according to the researchers, is cultural groups for students, the cultural competence of higher education employees, and increased cultural awareness and sensitivity training for university personnel.

Suggestions for Future Research

The research on intersectional identity is ripe for further exploration. Overall, studies on first-generation students could benefit from more unpacking of the identity itself, which could lead to a more nuanced definition of "first-generation college" and, ideally, more nuanced student support. For instance, there could be a focus on 1.5 generation students (i.e., those who were born in their home country but came to new countries in early childhood and were educated there); students who were raised with or without their custodial parents; students whose parents completed degrees at nontraditional institutions such as for-profit institutions; and students and parents who complete college simultaneously.

The literature on intersections of identity for first-generation students spans a wide range of cultural, ethnic, race, and socioeconomic statuses. However, more research can be done on the following identities: gender, sexuality, adult learners, transfers, and veterans or military. Further, it is critical that a steady stream of literature be produced about the intersection of race/ethnicity and first-generation identity. This would include looking at the nuances *within* communities, such as the range of cultures that fall under the broad umbrella of "Asian American." A closer look at regional and local histories would also be fruitful, such as the differences between being Mexican American from California versus Texas, for example.

Defining First-generation Status

Davis, J. (2010). *First-generation student experience: Implications for campus practice, and strategies for improving persistence and success.* **Stylus. https://doi.org/10.1111/teth.12092**
The author's primary goal is to "present a more mature definition of the first-generation college student" and to provide nuance to the first-generation experience. Davis explores observable behaviors of these students, describes their internal psychology, and discusses what first-generation students have in common, despite their heterogeneity. The author incorporates narratives from 14 undergraduate students to underscore his points.

Heymann, L., & Carolissen, R. (2011). The concept of "first-generation student" in the literature: Implications for South African higher education. *Southern African Journal of Higher Education, 25*(7), 1378–1396.
This article is a review of the literature between 2000 and 2010 on the concept of *first-generation students* and its implications on higher education in South Africa. The authors used Bronfenbrenner's concepts of microsystems, exosystems, and macrosystems to structure their analysis. The subtopics of the review include motivation, locus of control, self-regulation, cognitive functioning, family, academic preparation, culture, and social capital. The authors concluded that institutions in South Africa can use this information to provide support for first-generation students.

Toutkoushian. R. K., Stollberg, R. A., & Slaton, K. A. (2018). Talking 'bout my generation: Defining "first-generation college students" in higher education research. *Teachers College Record, 120*(4), 1–38. **https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ab19/04072d9b6c32a7ca81abd5a5657951fb8199.pdf**
This study used the Educational Longitudinal Study data from 2002 to conduct follow-up surveys of students about their college-going behaviors. The researchers created eight definitions of a first-generation student to determine if the way in which first-generation student is defined affects the college-going rates of the students. The statistical models demonstrated that students with no college-educated parents were less likely to take the ACT/SAT, apply to college, and enroll in college than those with one or two college-educated parents.

Wildhagen T. (2015). "Not your typical student": The social construction of the "first-generation" college student. *Qualitative Sociology, 38*, 285–303. **https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-015-9308-1**

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This study demonstrates how the social construction of the first-generation student at a selective college can have negative consequences for those students. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with staff and first-generation students, along with observations of targeted events, the author finds that the school's definition instilled a strong affiliation with the institution but discouraged class consciousness among students. The study is one of few that explores the first-generation category as the object of analysis. Wildhagen theorizes that the increased focus on these students—as evidenced by more studies and targeted programs across institutions—may serve to uphold the meritocratic view of higher education as a route to upward mobility for hardworking individuals while minimizing class consciousness.

Young, M. S. (2016, October 16). The cost of being first. *The Atlantic.* https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/10/the-cost-of-being-first/504155/
In this feature story, the author weighs the costs and benefits of using the term first-generation college. For instance, Young noted that first-generation students "are often linked to or assumed to have economic disadvantage." On the other hand, the author argues that labels can help schools identify students in need and deliver targeted resources. Included is an interview with Chris Lam, a Georgetown student who cofounded AL1GN, the Alliance for Low-Income First-Generation Narrative.

Intersectional Identities
Housel, T. H. (Ed.). (2019). *First-generation college student experiences of intersecting marginalities.* **Lang.** https://doi.org/10.3726/b14422
In this book, the author examines identity and first-generation student status and how the stories of these students can help us explore intersectionalities. The book is divided into sections that include first-generation student and first-generation faculty stories and the marginalization of first-generation students. Additional topics in the book are self-efficacy and cultural capital as it relates to career trajectory and first-generation students' health and well-being. Finally, the author explores how institutions can best serve first-generation students in light of the multiple identities and influences that shape their college experiences.

McCoy, D. (2014). A phenomenological approach to understanding first-generation college students of color transitions to one "extreme" predominantly White institution. *College Student Affairs Journal, 32*(1), 155–169.
This study explores how first-generation students of color transition from large, racially diverse areas to an "extreme" White institution. McCoy used Schlossberg's transition theory as a theoretical framework, which explains how people transition and the ways they connect with systems for support in their time of change, with four factors affecting the individual's transition: situation, self, support, and strategies. The study also used critical race methodology with a phenomenological frame to focus on the students' racial, gendered, and classed lived experiences. Outcomes included how the first-generation students viewed their families as having high expectations of their pursuit of higher education, with enrolling in college seen as mandatory—not as a choice. Other findings included how the students viewed the admissions process as even more difficult due to their families' lack of experience, difficult transitions to begin their college careers, and feelings of culture shock in a "sea of Whiteness" at their institution (e.g., microaggressions, tokenism, racism). It is recommended that campuses deploy a summer bridge program to assist in the transition of first-generation students of color to campus and to provide the students an opportunity to earn college credits while getting to know others on campus. Additionally, it is imperative to recruit and retain faculty of color who can serve as mentors for first-generation students of color and assist in their transition to college.

Nguyen, T., & Nguyen, B. M. D. (2018). Is the "first-generation student" term useful for understanding inequality? The role of intersectionality in illuminating the implications of an accepted—yet unchallenged—term. *Review of Research in Education, 42*(1), 146–176. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732x18759280
The authors present an analysis of the literature of first-generation students from 1986 to 2017, focusing primarily on peer-reviewed research in which the term first-generation student is defined as a parameter of the studies. They find that the differences in how first-generation student is defined by researchers and institutions fail to capture the complexity of the student experience and do not

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take into account the intersections of other identities. The authors criticize the assumption that *first-generation student* status has a unique effect on student outcomes and presents a "conceptual conundrum" (p. 148). While they do not reject the creation or use of a first-generation student term to categorize students, the authors suggest that institutional policies and processes that do not take into consideration—or closely examine—the implications of other identities' impact on the student experience will continue to exclude these students from being recognized and supported.

Orbe, M. P. (2008). Theorizing multidimensional identity negotiation: Reflections on the lived experiences of first-generation college students. In M. Azmitia, M. Syed, & K. Radmacher (Eds.), *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development Special Issue: The Intersections of Personal and Social Identities, 120,* **81–95.** https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.217
This article advances a theoretical framework for understanding intersectional first-generation student identity. The author argues that all first-generation students experience "a similar set of dialectical tensions at home and on campus"; however, those tensions will vary depending on individual personal, social, and cultural realities (p. 82). The essay describes six primary and 12 secondary dialectical tensions that these students experience, including individual versus social identity, independence versus interdependence, and autonomy versus connection. This theoretical model suggests that successful negotiation of these tensions is crucial to college success both academically and socially.

Sarcedo, G. L., Matias, C. E., Montoya, R., & Nishi, N. W. (2015). Dirty dancing with race and class: Microaggressions toward first-generation and low income college students of color. *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs, 2*(1), 1–17.
The authors argue that there are severe emotional consequences for first-generation, low-income students of color who experience "raceclassist" microaggressions. Focusing on a case study, they use both critical race theory and Marxist analyses to explore these intersections and include counter-storytelling as part of the methodology. The researchers further argue that when low-income, first-generation students of color experience raceclassist microaggressions, it becomes difficult for them to visualize

themselves succeeding in college and, subsequently, they internalize the belief that they do not belong there. In order to counteract these impacts, the authors recommend the following: (a) Raise awareness of whiteness and white supremacy, especially among white students, faculty, and staff, to increase the visibility of racialized microaggressions; and (b) empower students of color via workshops and activities dedicated to their experiences. The research stresses that the institution must take a holistic approach (including student affairs programming, curriculum, and campuswide policies) to address and redress disparate impacts on these populations.

Adult Learners
Giancola, J., Munz, D., & Trarers, S. (2008). First- versus continuing-generation adult students on college perceptions: Are differences actually because of demographic variance? *Adult Education Quarterly, 58*(3), 214–228. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713608314088
This study is one of the few that have looked specifically at first-generation adult undergraduates and also one of the few that have focused on this population attending a 4-year university rather than a community college. The purpose of this research is to examine differences in the college perceptions of first-generation adult undergraduates compared to their continuing-generation counterparts. Students were asked to rate their satisfaction with multiple institutional variables, including academic advising, campus climate, registration effectiveness, and financial aid effectiveness. The data were collected from adult students attending Saint Louis University's School for Professional Studies. A total of 317 students completed the survey. The results reveal that there are no differences regarding satisfaction between first-generation and continuing-generation students; however, more women in both groups reported low satisfaction scores. The researchers call for more studies that control for gender and also argue that adult student populations should not be treated like a homogenous group.

Asian/Pacific Islander Students
Allaire, F. S. (2019). Navigating uncharted waters: First-generation native Hawaiian college students in STEM. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 21*(3), 305–325. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1521025117707955
The primary goal of this qualitative study was to explore two

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intersecting identities: Hawaiian and scientist. For instance, what does it mean to hold this cultural identity while working in Western STEM-related fields? Initially, Allaire did not consider first-generation identity, but it emerged as a major theme in the findings. Data were gathered via oral histories of 10 participants (all self-identifying as native Hawaiian) in conjunction with a grounded theory framework. The participants (or "narrators") included undergraduate and graduate students in STEM-related fields of study, science teachers/professors, science professionals, science lobbyists, and individuals working for/with STEM-related programs. Many of the narrators shared that their families were unprepared for how to support them in college, particularly in STEM. Additionally, their cultural identity often seemed in conflict with studying science. Some of the narrators described feeling lonely and tokenized in the classroom. Often, their multiracial or multiethnic backgrounds meant that they were singled out as a "poster child" for diversity at their respective institutions. Finally, many of the participants shared that they experienced racial microaggressions about their abilities from teachers and professors. The author's recommended that STEM-related programs acknowledge the value added of diverse individuals and recognize that they bring unique perspectives to STEM fields. Additionally, the narrators stressed the importance of supportive cohort programs and a dedicated faculty mentor who understands students' experiences.

Buenavista, T. (2009). Examining the postsecondary experiences of Pilipino 1.5-generation college students. *ASHE/Lumina Fellows Series, 8,* **1–12.**
Buenavista introduces the term "1.5 generation college students" to describe Pilipino students whose parents were college educated outside of the United States but whose postsecondary experiences resemble those of traditional first-generation students born in the United States. Due to a host of factors, particularly related to racism and cultural bias, these students typically do not rely on their parents for college guidance. The author recommends that more information be gathered about a student's educational history, such as the location and institution type of a parent's college degree, and that student affairs practitioners should be aware of 1.5 generation students and their histories and backgrounds to better serve them.

Ducklow, L., & Toft, J. (2019). Perspectives from Hmong-American women about the first-generation college student experience in higher education. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work. 29*(6), 455-472. https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2019.1570887
This article focuses on female Hmong-American first-generation students and the larger institutional and systemic factors that promote and impede their university experiences. The participants (*n* = 6) all lived in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, and all had completed at least 1 year of college. They were recruited using a snowball-sampling process. Four major themes emerged in the findings: (a) culture clash and tensions between school and home environments; (b) institutional impediments (like academic tracking) and racial microaggressions; (c) triangulated support including family, friends, and faculty/staff; and (d) changing views about Hmong-American women in higher education. The researchers recommend further studies on the impact of institutional racism on this specific population. They also call for first-generation-specific services that are culturally relevant.

Museus, S. D. (2011). An introductory mixed-methods intersectionality analysis of college access and equity: An examination of first-generation Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 151,* 63–75. https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.399
This research posed two main questions: (a) Do first-generation Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) face inequities in college access? (b) If so, what factors explain these inequities? To answer these questions, the author used a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were collected from a longitudinal study including 1,460 AAPI students related to college access. Chi-square results show that first-generation students exhibited significantly lower educational experiences compared to their continuing-generation peers. Qualitative data were collected from interviews with 30 first-generation AAPI students who were part of the longitudinal study; participants were asked about the factors that hindered or contributed to their pursuit of a college degree. Four themes emerged in the analyses: anticollege cultures in home communities, financial constraints, navigating the college application process alone, and—the one positive influence— support and high expectations from parents. The author stressed

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the value of mixed-methods approaches because they often lead to holistic approaches to educational outcomes.

Panelo, N. (2010). The model minority student: Asian American students and the relationships between acculturation to Western values, family pressures, and mental health concerns. *The Vermont Connection, 31,* **147–155.**

This article discusses the concerns of Asian American first- and second-generation college students who feel fully integrated in their cultural heritage and how their acculturation to Western culture relates to mental health concerns. Panelo also addresses how parental involvement or pressure to perform academically perpetuates the model minority myth. The author calls for more cultural sensitivity among student affairs professionals who support Asian American students. Additionally, Panelo recommends targeted outreach to the parents and families to help them navigate higher education. #parentsandfamilies #mentalhealth

Talusan, L., & Franke, R. (2019). (Un)Fulfilling requirements: Satisfactory academic progress and its impact on first-generation, low-income, Asian American students. *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs, 5*(1), **15–28.**

In this study, the authors used one-on-one interviews with six students to better understand how Asian American first-generation students navigate the satisfactory academic progress (SAP) process. Asserting that race matters, the research team applied several frameworks, including social and cultural capital, culturally engaging campus environment, and Asian critical race theory. The participants reported that their families supported their college journey but were not able to understand or assist the students with the financial aid process. A number of recommendations were made, including online access to SAP information (e.g., videos or online checklists), financial aid information in languages other than English, and intentional involvement with the Asian American Studies Department or Asian American Studies Success or Cultural Center.

Tang, J., Kim, S., & Haviland, D. (2013). Role of family, culture and peers in the success of first-generation Cambodian American college students. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement, 8*(2), **Article 2.** https://doi.org/10.7771/2153-8999.1057

This study examined the experiences of Cambodian American first-generation students at a large public institution in California. In the qualitative study, 13 participants were asked what personal, institutional, and/or community forces shape their college experiences. The authors found that parents supported their students' academic pursuits and attempted to be engaged in the experience despite not having college experience themselves. Students also found support in ethnic-based student organizations and peers. The researchers made several recommendations, including the following: Faculty, staff, and community members need to be culturally competent; faculty, staff, and senior leaders should be visibly present at student-led and student-run cultural events; and university staff should actively reach out to parents and families to gain their perspectives on the institution.

Black Students

Alcock, A., & Belluigi, D. Z. (2018). Positioning home for resilience on campus: First-generation students negotiate powerless/full conditions in South African higher education. *Education as Change, 22*(1), **1-27.** https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/3602

The methodology of this study drew upon the narratives of seven Black South African students attending a predominantly Black university. Using positional theory, the researchers sought to understand the students' transitional experiences. Participants were invited to "[t]ake photographs that show you as a student at home and on campus," and then they discussed the photographs in semistructured interviews. Findings showed that students thought of themselves as having more agency than their peers and family members, and they tended to distance themselves from their home community. Students also represented their newly acquired academic identity as something positive, and they identified their resilience as a source that enables them to be successful in school. It is noteworthy that Black South Africans who are first-generation students comprise the majority of students in South African universities. The authors theorized

that being in the majority at their institution makes a difference. For instance, students rejected the notion that they are from a "disadvantaged community" or other ways that Black communities are pathologized. Finally, the researchers called for more opportunities for students to reflect on themselves and to make meaning of their experiences.

Field, K. (2019, November 25). This woman goes door to door to steer students to college. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.*
This long-form article focuses on an employee of the federally funded SOAR (Students + Opportunities + Achievements = Results) program, which is intended to raise college-going rates among low-income students and students of color. The piece shows the perspective of Sonya Pritchett, a Black first-generation college graduate and doctoral student, who works as a SOAR precollege advisor and student advocate in a low-income, predominantly Black town in Alabama. Many of the parents were not initially welcoming of the support, but many of the successful outreach strategies described reflect an awareness of a Black cultural milieu, such as the recognition that many Black families distrust the government and only reluctantly share government-issued documents due to historical racism.

Liversage, L., Naudé, L., & Botha, A. (2018). Vectors of identity development during the first year: Black first-generation students' reflections. *Teaching in Higher Education, 23*(1), 63-83. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2017.1359159
This research study uses Chickering and Reisser's seven vector identity development theory as a framework for understanding the experiences of Black first-generation students at a South African university. Participants (*n* = 10) were identified from a criterion-based purposive sampling and by snowball sampling. The researchers conducted focus groups in addition to individual interviews with two participants. All of the data were gathered early in the participants' second year of study. Six themes emerged from the discussions and interviews: my emotional journey, my people at home, social networking on campus, dealing with diversity, becoming independent, and getting to know myself. The authors then analyzed these themes according to Chickering and Reisser's seven vectors and conclude the

following: The students struggled early on during the transition from high school to university; going to college strengthened the participants' relationships with their parents who also supported their educational goals; and the students established new social networks, especially if they lived on campus. To date, very little is known about the psychosocial functioning and identity characteristics of South African first-generation students from various ethnic and socioeconomic groups.
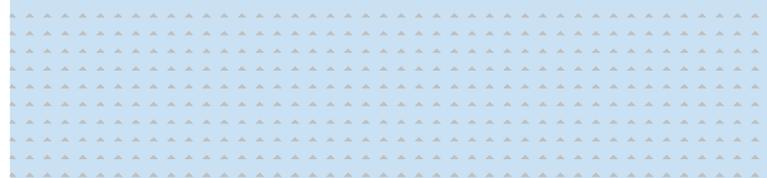
Latinx Students
Bejarano, C. E., & Valverde, M. (2012). From the fields to the university: Charting educational access and success for farmworker students using a community cultural wealth framework. *Association of Mexican American Educators, 6*(2), 22–29.
Given the dearth of scholarship concerning students from farmworker backgrounds, this study sought to better understand their persistence at university. The researchers used a mixed-methods research approach involving self-administered questionnaires, observations, and key informant interviews as part of the ongoing evaluation of the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) housed at New Mexico State University. The university is located in a densely Latinx area of New Mexico, only 40 miles from the U.S.–Mexico border. Quantitative data were collected from 130 freshmen CAMP students; qualitative data were collected from six CAMP students representing a cross-section of the participants (freshmen and alumni) who volunteered to be interviewed in 2009. The researchers also observed CAMP workshops, graduation ceremonies, annual banquets, and student presentations between 2008 and 2011. A descriptive analysis of the CAMP students surveyed reveals that although as children most of them experienced a variety of challenges related to agricultural work, these challenges may have actually helped prepare the participants for their transition into and success at the university. Additionally, the CAMP staff, most of whom came from similar backgrounds, fostered a familial community that helped students navigate the institution.

Burgos-Cienfuegos, R., Vasquez-Salgado, Y., Ruedas-Gracia, N., & Greenfield, P. M. (2015). Disparate cultural values and modes of conflict resolution in peer relations: The experience

of Latino first-generation college students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 37*(3), 365–397. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986315591343

The study researched Latino students and peer relations in regard to cross-cultural conflicts in a college setting. It examined individualistic values versus collectivist values and the influence of family on Latino students. The study used a qualitative method with 14 students (three to seven in each group) as the researchers conducted interviews and recorded demographic information. The findings demonstrated how student peer relations affect the transition of Latino first-generation students specifically when transitioning into a more diverse and individualistic environment in college. Implications for navigating a new college environment include expanding on the differences between cross-cultural values as students enter a diverse and individualistic setting. Other implications for staff include understanding the differences for Latino first-generation students and the challenges they may face in cross-cultural peer interactions, especially when it comes to conflict resolution.

Davenport, B. (2016). *Grit and hope: A year with five Latino students.* University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520960077

This book follows the lives of five Latino students in San Diego, California, who are enrolled in a program called Reality Changers. The program was started by Christopher Yanov in an effort to help young, low-income students get to college. The program expects enrollees to meet certain requirements each year. In exchange, they get the support and challenge needed to attend prestigious institutions of higher learning. The author spent a year learning about the program and the young people who participated in the program to find out why it works and if it could be a national model

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Fiebig, J., Braid, B.L., Ross, P.A., Tom, M.A., Prinzo, C. (2010). Hispanic community college students: Acculturation, family support, educational barriers and vocational planning. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 34*(10), 848–864. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2010.491995

This study examined the various characteristics (e.g., sex, age, generational status) associated with acculturation as well as perceived barriers for Hispanic community college students who were enrolled in precollegiate (i.e., remedial) courses. The authors sought to assess how the students' first-generation status would influence their need for family support and what type of vocational preparation they held as well as what kind of educational goals they aspired to. The study was conducted at a Hispanic-Serving Institution in California with 219 Hispanic students enrolled in intermediate writing and reading classes. Through a logistic regression model the researcher used a set of instruments including the short acculturation scale, career development inventory, and kinship social support measure, among others. Results for acculturation found that citizenship status played a role in how connected students felt to their culture of origin. Regarding career development, the researchers found that female students had explored more of their future careers than their male counterparts, and this gendered difference is also shown with men who were the first in their family to attend college expressing higher educational barriers than their female counterparts. Implications for practice include assessing acculturation levels of students along with their families in order to better understand how these family networks can support students. Implications at the policy level include analyzing institutional culture and support for retention of Hispanic students and commitment to precollegiate courses assisting students in their educational journeys.

Gloria, A. M., & Castellanos, J. (2012). *Desafíos y bendiciones:* A multiperspective examination of the educational experiences and coping responses of first-generation college Latina students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 11*(1), 82–99. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192711430382

This research is specific to the experiences of first-generation Latinx female students and examines familial connections, peer networks, and strategies for success in college. Also, the researchers explore coping strategies for Latinas and provide an avenue for students to give *consejos* for other Latina students. Set at a 4-year university, the researchers used a nonparametric sampling method with a qualitative approach of 30- to 45-minute interviews. The total sample included seven Latina students, two

student services professionals, and one mental health service professional. Results show how these Latina students viewed their first-generation experience as unique and addressed the challenges they overcame to reach their current status. Familial obligations and balance of work–school–family relationships was also a theme that arose from the study. The implications on Latina students, specifically Mexican American students, are discussed within this study on how to have culturally responsive services for this population. Practitioners are urged to help Latina students seek groups and individuals with similar backgrounds and to provide space for peer networking, community building, and mentorship.

Horwedel, D. M. (2008). Putting first-generation students first. *Diverse: Issues in higher education, 25*(5), 10–12.
This brief provides an overview of what various U.S. institutions (all in California and Texas) are doing to support the growing number of first-generation students on their campuses. The article mentions that many of these students also identify as Hispanic and require tailored services for their specific needs. Popular support mechanisms include University 101 courses that address topics like time management and study skills; early outreach to K–12 students; mentoring programs; and living-learning communities.

Latino, C. A., Stegmann, G., Radunzel, J., Way, J. D., Sanchez, E., & Casillas, A. (2018). Reducing gaps in first-year outcomes between Hispanic first-generation college students and their peers: The role of accelerated learning and financial aid. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice. 2*2(3), 441-463. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025118768055
The purpose of this study was to better understand the role of accelerated learning and financial aid on outcomes of first-generation students who identify as Latinx. The three research questions are (a) How do Hispanic first-generation students and Hispanic non–first-generation students compare in their first-year outcomes (i.e., first-year cumulative GPA and first-to-second-year retention)? (b) Do the relationships between financial aid status and first-year outcomes differ by first-generation student status among Hispanic students? and (c) Do

the relationships between accelerated learning participation and first-year outcomes differ by first-generation student status among Hispanic students? The researchers hypothesized that both financial aid and accelerated learning participation would help to reduce the gaps in first-year outcomes between Hispanic first-generation students and their Hispanic non–first-generation students peers. The final sample size was 2,499 incoming first-time students from the 2012 freshman cohort of a predominantly Hispanic-serving postsecondary institution located in the southern United States. The study compared first-year cumulative GPA and first-to-second-year retention between Hispanic first-generation students and Hispanic non–first-generation students. Results showed that compared to their Hispanic peers, Hispanic first-generation students had significantly lower first-year cumulative GPAs on average (2.53 vs. 2.85) and significantly lower first-to-second-year retention rates (75% vs. 79%). Hispanic first-generation students who received financial aid were more likely to return to the same institution for their second year of college than those who did not receive financial aid (78% vs. 60%). The results suggested that successful participation in accelerated learning programs appears to play an important role in improving the first-year GPAs of Hispanic first-generation students. The authors recommend that educators and counselors encourage Hispanic first-generation students to participate in accelerated learning as a way to prepare themselves for college coursework while simultaneously earning college credit. This would allow Hispanic first-generation students to get accustomed to and grow in confidence in their ability to succeed in college while having the support of their high school environment.

Manago, A. (2012). The new emerging adult in Chiapas, Mexico: Perceptions of traditional values and value change among first-generation Maya university students. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 27*(6), 663–713. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558411417863
Using Greenfield's theory of social change and human development, this mixed-methods study included interviews about cultural value shifts with 14 first-generation indigenous Maya university students who transitioned from a rural to an

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urban environment and to pursuing life and a career outside of agriculture. The authors posed two hypotheses: (a) Participants would perceive cultural value change as they transitioned to autonomy, and (b) participants would perceive cultural value change in that they would be more likely to support gender equality. Results of the data analysis included a confirmation of the hypothesis that participants' view of gender equality increased with "economic development, education and individualistic values" (p. 703). Additionally, the authors found that participants' increase in autonomy reflected the opportunity to experience a phase of emerging adulthood much like young adult experiences in more developed countries.

Nuñez, A. M. (2011). Counterspaces and connections in college transitions: First-generation Latino students' perspectives on Chicano Studies. *Journal of College Student Development, 52*(6), 639–655. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2011.0077
The article furthers discussions on how fostering a sense of community and battling racism are important for Latino first-generation students. The study focuses on how this sense of community that students built allowed them to grow their confidence, battle racism, and aid their transition to college. Through a qualitative study including semistructured interviews, the participants were recruited from an introductory Chicano Studies course with a specific focus on second-year students. The outcomes provide insight into how ethnic studies classes can help Latino students make the transition to college, build a sense of belonging, and find community within and outside of the university. Other discussions include how student affairs professionals can help these students handle racism and build social support networks. The author recommends that staff interrogate the ways in which cultural studies courses are incorporated into university-sponsored programs.

Nuñez, A. M., & Sansone, V. A. (2016). Earning and learning: Exploring the meaning of work in the experiences of first-generation Latino college students. *The Review of Higher Education, 40*(1), 91–116. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2016.0039
The authors examined Latino students who must work while enrolled in college in order to be able to attend higher education.

They used semistructured interviews as part of a larger investigation of first-generation students and their transition to college. Students were recruited for the study from a Chicano Studies class. Major findings included that students worked because their family expected them to and because they sought financial security. Ultimately, the students' goals were to create "familial uplift" and to financially support their families. Future research could focus on the types of work opportunities Latino students are able to access. The authors also recommend that future research focus on how citizenship status and other social identities students hold shape their understanding of their college experiences and what opportunities are available to them.

Pyne, K. B., & Means, D. R. (2013). Underrepresented and in/visible: A Hispanic first-generation student's narratives of college. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 6*(3), 186–198. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034115
This article examines the ways researchers look at graduation rates and persistence of Latino first-generation students in higher education. Through a case study analysis of a female, first-generation, low-income Hispanic student in her first year at a selective predominantly white institution, the authors used a critical race theory approach to look at academics in relationship to low college access and success statistics for Latinos. The in-depth case study analysis is part of a larger study that followed 10 first-generation, low-income students in their first year of college at several institutions. The goal of the study was to paint the lived experience of the individual within the context of the institution. Findings showed how systems in the classroom played a role in the student's understanding of identity and judgments from others based on their immigration status, race, and class. Implications include how leadership and administrators use an Anglocentric approach to defining student success without taking the individual characteristics of students into consideration. Future research and programming should also examine new perspectives of addressing student populations such as low-income students, immigrant students, and Latino first-generation students and moving past racial organizations and centers to validate the lived experiences of these students at the larger university level as a whole.

Reyes, N. A. S., & Nora, A. (2012). *Lost among the data: A review of Latino first generation college students.* **Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.**
This white paper provides a profile of extant information about Latinx first-generation students. The profile includes information about high school graduation rates, college aspirations, factors impacting college adjustment and achievement, persistence, and promising practices for supporting Latinx first-generation students. The authors point to areas in need of further research .

Storlie, C. A., Mostade, S. J., & Duentas, D. (2016). Cultural trailblazers: Exploring the career development of Latina first-generation college students. *Career Development Quarterly,* **64(4), 304–317.** https://doi.org/10.1002/cdq.12067
Grounded theory and a social constructivist paradigm were the focus of this study, which aimed to describe the experience of Latina first-generation students, specifically the influence that their values have on their career development. The study used semistructured interviews (n = 10) that covered topics such as life roles, cultural influences, and academic support and challenges. The results included two major themes: (a) fitting in and (b) redefining career development pathways, both of which contained a few subthemes that underscored the contradictions and complexities of the college experience and career aspirations of Latina first-generation students. Implications of this research include opportunities for career coaches, counselors, and mental health experts to better support Latina students by addressing the gap in college and career knowledge of families and students; by recognizing potential values conflict between student and family; and by including families in college and career programming.

Tello, A. M., and Lonn, M. R. (2017). The role of high school and college counselors in supporting the psychosocial and emotional needs of Latinx first-generation college students. *The Professional Counselor, 7***(4), 349–359.** https://doi.org/10.15241/amt.7.4.349
This article examined the growing Latinx first-generation student population by addressing the reasons why only 11% of low-income first-generation students earn degrees compared to

55% of continuing-generation students. The article sought to analyze the social and cultural capital these students possess while also providing high school and college counselors with tools to improve their college completion rates. The article reviewed key themes centered on Latinx culture, including *familisimo* (connection to family), *personalismo* (personalized communication style respectful in nature), *simpatico* (promotion of harmonious interactions), and *fatalismo* (connection to fate for life events). Factors related to the Latinx first-generation college experience included examining the university environment and microaggressions (verbal/physical assault) on students during their time in college. Strengths from the review of literature included the coping strategies and resiliency of these college students and how counselors can provide culturally responsive programming. Implications for high school and college counselors included involving the community in programming for students and specifically leveraging connections between the student and their family for their success. The article also encourages practitioners to advocate for Latinx first-generation students by creating awareness of microaggressions on campus, lack of diversity at their institutions, and methods to improve their coping mechanisms. Implications for research include diving deeper into specific cultural backgrounds within the Latinx community (e.g., Mexican American, Cuban) to better understand the needs of these students.

Torres, F. C. (2019). Facing and overcoming academic challenges: Perspectives from deaf Latino/a first-generation college students. *American Annals of the Deaf, 164***(1), 10–36.** https://doi.org/10.1353/aad.2019.0008
This study compared experiences between hearing and deaf Latinx first-generation students. The research questions included (a) What are the specific experiences common among first-generation deaf Latino/a college students? and (b) Do academically successful deaf Latino/a college graduates have similar or different experiences than deaf Latino/a college students who do not graduate from college? Using grounded theory, the methodology included purposive sampling of two groups (n = 11 participants). Eight participants were born in the United States, two were from Mexico, and one was

from Nicaragua. Overall, both sets of students shared many commonalities, including experiences related to (a) reading, communication, and language used in the home while growing up; (b) a lack of parental involvement while the participants were in elementary and high school; and (c) a lack of parental involvement and communication while the participants were attending college. While participants from both groups (those who graduated and those who did not) reported experiencing minority-status stress while in college, it appears that they dealt with it in different ways. The participants who graduated from college seemed to be more assertive than their peers in the study as well as more involved in various college activities. They also expressed feelings of pride related to being Latino/a.

Verdin, D., & Godwin, A. (2018). Exploring Latina first-generation college students' multiple identities, self-efficacy, and institutional integration to inform achievement in engineering. *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering, 24*(3) 261–290. https://doi.org/10.1615/jwomenminorscieneng.2018018667

In this qualitative study, a theme analysis was used to explore the experiences of Latina first-generation students' experiences in engineering. The research questions included (a) How do Latina first-generation students in engineering describe their engineering experience, culture, and feelings of belongingness? and (b) How do Latina first-generation student experiences in engineering impact their academic self-efficacy, institutional integration, and achievement? (p. 268). The methodology consisted of 1-hour semistructured interviews with seven female participants from the Mathematics and Engineering Science Achievement Engineering Program at a public Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI); Reid's Collegiate Achievement Model was used to investigate intersectionality. Participants shared their experiences of being in the engineering classroom, faculty relationships, and belongingness, including how their ethnic and gender identities often were the most noticeable or salient within the context of engineering. They developed coping strategies for dealing with bias and reported that community engagement and faculty interactions contributed toward their feelings of institutional integration and, ultimately, persistence.

Wick, D., Willis, T. Y., Rivera, J., Lueker, E., & Hernandez, M. (2019). Assets-based learning abroad: First-generation Latinx college students leveraging and increasing community cultural wealth in Costa Rica. Frontiers: *The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 31*(2), 63–85. https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v31i2.455

This qualitative study of Latinx first-generation students included 25 students from a U.S. HSI who were studying social work. The study used Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth (CCW) model as the framework to examine the strengths that U.S. Latinx first-generation students bring to service and study abroad experiences in Costa Rica and how these students' strengths relate to the CCW framework. The authors analyzed the qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, and in-country journals to look for themes in the experiences. The findings of this study include that participants were able to leverage their linguistic and familial capital in their experiences and strengthen their aspirational and resistance capital. The authors also noted that the students' experiences deepened their biracial identities, strengthened their commitment to fighting injustice, and inspired them to encourage other Latinx students to study abroad.

Native American/Indigenous

Bell, A., & Benton, M. (2018). Experiences of indigenous and non-indigenous first generation students at an Australian university. In A. Bell & L. J. Santamaria (Eds.), *Understanding the experiences of first generation university students: Culturally responsive and sustaining methodologies* **(pp. 47–71). Bloomsbury Academic.**

This study consisted of four focus groups of non-Indigenous and Indigenous students and non-first-generation students and first-generation students at an Australian university. Students were asked to provide demographic data prior to the discussion. The average age of the focus group participants was 27.7 and the racial and ethnic diversity was wide-ranging. The researchers used the informal method of "yarning," which focuses on telling stories, which connected to the Indigenous cultures' way of storytelling. The theme of "journey" was used to elicit narrative responses from the participants. These questions and prompts included the following: "Describe a bit about your first day at USyd," and "How do your family and friends respond

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to you being at uni?" (p. 54). Findings included the following themes: "university as a foregone conclusion versus a complex decision" (p. 54); importance of networks and support; "cultural dissonances" (p. 58); and balancing financial, familial, and social expectations. The researchers also found that participants' families and friends reacted differently to their higher education aspirations depending on their first-generation student status. They also acknowledged that while they found themes in the focus group data, there was a diversity of experiences. The study concluded that universities need to recognize the cultural backgrounds of Indigenous students and faculty should develop their own awareness of Indigenous culture and history.

Naepi, A., & Naepi, S. (2018). A notch in my heart: University practices that help Canadian first generation student success. In A. Bell & L. J. Santamaria (Eds.), *Understanding the experiences of first generation university students: Culturally responsive and sustaining methodologies* (pp. 73–96). Bloomsbury Academic.
The authors combine the strengths of Indigenous Canadian first-generation students and the university to provide suggestions for how to support first-generation students. They first discuss the purpose and focus of higher education in Canada and its responsiveness to the needs of Indigenous students. Using a strengths-based approach, the authors suggest leveraging the potential of Indigenous first-generation students by recognizing the positive attributes they bring to the institution. The authors identify three pathways for recognizing and supporting the potential of Indigenous first-generation students: university culture, university structures, and university teaching and research. All three pathways ask questions about the focus, nature, and goal of the institution as it relates to understanding and elevating the needs of Indigenous first-generation students.

Schmidt, J., and Akande, Y. (2011). Faculty perceptions of the first-generation student experience and programs at tribal colleges. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 2011*(127), 41 - 54. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.456
This chapter provides a brief background on tribal colleges and presents the results of interviews with several faculty from these schools. The methods included in-depth, semistructured telephone interviews with 12 faculty members from five different tribal colleges throughout the United States. Of the faculty interviewed, 50% were female and 50% were male, 58% were first-generation college graduates, and 66% identified as Native Americans. The interview questions covered their perceptions of four basic areas, including their perceptions of the challenges that current and former first-generation students face. Faculty believed that parents were not supportive of higher education in general and observed that students have many family obligations. Interviewees also mentioned that students often arrive at school (typically 2-year colleges) with insufficient academic preparation because their rural high schools are under-resourced. To address these challenges, the faculty recommended that tribal college students have early exposure to college, including participation in summer bridge programs. They also found that small class sizes and institutional programs that validate and incorporate Native traditions are successful. In the conclusion, the authors noted that not all first-generation students are the same and that individual needs and cultural backgrounds should be taken into consideration when designing curriculum or support.

Wolfgramm-Foliaki, E., & Santamaria, L. J. (2018). Excavating stories of first generation students in Aoteara New Zealand. In A. Bell & L. J. Santamaria (Eds.), *Understanding the experiences of first generation university students: Culturally responsive and sustaining methodologies* (pp. 27–46). Bloomsbury Academic.
Using culturally appropriate methodology and strategies, this study analyzes narratives and visual representations of first-generation students of Maori (n = 8) and Pasifika (n = 16) descent who are studying in New Zealand. The authors' findings include that first-generation students viewed their journey to the university as positive, recognized the sacrifices their families had made to get them to university and the importance of being first, and struggled with academic expectations. The chapter ends with a list of recommendations for both university staff and fellow first-generation students. Some of the suggestions for staff include making learning expectations clear and supported, while suggestions for fellow students include reaching out for help and making friends.

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Rural Students

NOTE: For these sources, it was not presumed that "rural" is synonymous with "first-gen."

Ardoin, S. (2017). *College aspirations and access in working-class rural communities: The mixed signals, challenges, and new language first-generation students encounter.* **Lexington Books.**
This qualitative case study explores how rural, working-class first-generation students obtain college knowledge and decode university jargon. The researcher interviewed and observed two college counselors and eight students at two different rural public high schools. As expected, the students had limited college knowledge. The study also found that the college counselors had limited time resources and needed more current training to provide optimal support to their students. The researcher recommends that rural schools not rely solely on these counselors to provide college access information. #hidden curriculum #rural students #college access #college counseling

Bradbury, B., & Mather, P. (2009). The integration of first-year, first-generation college students from Ohio Appalachia. *NASPA Journal, 46*(2), 258–281. **https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.6041**
This study focused on the experiences of first-generation students who attended a university that primarily enrolls first-generation students from the Ohio Appalachian region. The researchers interviewed nine students and focused on their transition from high school to college. Regarding successful transition to college, four common themes were found among the participants, including the pull of home, academic adjustment, belonging, and financial realities. The students did find institutional "fit" at the university and felt affirmed by the university faculty. Further, despite tensions at home, students maintained close ties and regular communication with their family members. The researchers recommend further studies on the unique experiences of the parents of first-generation Appalachian students. #parent/family support, #rural students, #transition, #firstyearexperience

Carr, P., & Kefalas, M. (2010). *Hollowing out the middle: The rural brain drain and what it means for America.* **Beacon Press.**
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-010-9266-2
The authors, who are married to each other, relocated to a small town in Iowa to study the so-called brain drain phenomenon. Using survey data from 275 former high school students, in-depth interviews with more than 100 young adults across the nation who attended the local high school in the late 1980s and early 1990s, along with intensive community-level fieldwork, the researchers identified four types of students: achievers (who are college-bound and most ambitious, and who abandon the area), stayers (a working-class group who remain local), seekers (who tend to pursue the military as a way of exploring other locations and also financial stability), and returners (who eventually come back home). According to the researchers, these pathways are not random but predictable. The study also explores the roles that adults in the community play in contributing to the brain drain.

Hand, C., & Payne, E. M. (2008). First-generation college students: A study of Appalachian student success. *Journal of Developmental Education, 32*(1), 4–15.
This study focuses on a subgroup of first-generation students, those from Appalachia, and the factors contributing to their academic persistence. The participants were students from the student support services (SSS) program at a major flagship university in the United States (n = 21). Initial survey questions asked about students' ability to participate in the study, the education level of parents, where they grew up, length of time at the university and in the SSS program, and involvement in campus programs. Nine students agreed to be interviewed. The themes that emerged from this phenomenological study coincide in many ways with Payne's (2005) research on poverty and the available resources, or lack of resources, which determine the extent of a person's poverty. As revealed in the results, the primary factors affecting the participants' academic persistence included the importance of the home culture and family, financial concerns, internal locus of control, relationships and emotional support, and communication of information about resources such as financial aid and student services. Most of the students relied on informal interaction on and off campus for their emotional support. As is common for many rural students, all of the participants live close to the university and had plans to live near their home after graduation and even for graduate school.

The authors noted that the students did not appear to be at an academic advantage, perhaps because they were attending a flagship university with high admissions standards. The authors also observed that first-generation students are not perceived as needing help and, therefore, often do not get it.

Hlinka, K., Mobelini, D., & Giltner, T. (2015). Tensions impacting student success in a rural community college. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 30*(5), 1–16. https://www.elvisontap.com:3000/api/pdf/2015%2F5%2FJRREv30n52015TensionsImpactingStudentSuccess.pdf
In this qualitative study, the authors asked what phenomena served as barriers or sources of encouragement for rural students in Kentucky as they transitioned from high school to community college and on to a 4-year institution. Students and some community college faculty were interviewed as individuals and in a group setting. Three distinct tensions emerged in the findings: (a) The community college "coddles" versus "cutting the apron strings" to foster student independence; (b) all students said that their families pushed them toward academic and career success but they also had nonacademic, conflicting responsibilities at home, (c) students felt torn about leaving the region for better economic opportunities versus staying to be near family. The authors have a number of recommendations, including more career counseling at the community college and active engagement with parents and families. #community college #transfer students #family engagement #career services

Marcus, J., & Krupnick, M. (2018, February 15). *Who's missing from America's colleges? Rural high school graduates.* National Public Radio.
Citing a variety of reports and studies, this feature describes the low college-going rates of students from rural areas. Some of the contributing challenges for this population include drug addictions, poor access to the internet, and culture shock. The piece stresses that for prior generations, a college degree was not necessary for advancement or financial stability in rural areas; however, that is no longer the case, therefore many of these students are first-generation students. #rural students

Means, D., Clayton, A., Conzelmann, J., Baynes, P., & Umbach, P. (2016). Bounded aspirations: Rural, African American high school students and college access. *The Review of Higher Education, 39*(4), 543–569. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2016.0035
This qualitative case study explores the career and educational aspirations of rural African American high school students in a southeastern state. Most of the participants, who attended the same predominantly African American high school, had little to no family history of college. The researchers conducted one-on-one semistructured interviews with 26 high school juniors. Three major themes emerged in the findings: (a) The students experienced tension related to college choice and leaving home to attend college; (b) the students had emotional support from family members, their high schools, and college-access organizations but felt as though they did not have a "roadmap" for college success; and (c) the students experienced considerable financial and academic barriers while in school. #precollege #rural students #African American students #parent and family support #career support

Nadworny, E. (2018, December 12). *"Going to office hours is terrifying" and other tales of rural students in college.* National Public Radio.
In this feature, the author highlights new university initiatives that target first-generation students from rural areas. Campus profiles include the University of Michigan and Lycoming College. The article describes the unique experiences of these students and also mentions that because many of them are white, they often are overlooked and underserved on campus. This article is part of a special series that focuses on rural students. #rural students #white students

Transfer Students
Vega, D. (2018). Navigating postsecondary pathways: The college choice experiences of first-generation Latina/o transfer students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 42*(12). https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2017.1360219
The qualitative study described in this article focused on the experience of six high-achieving first-generation Latina/o students

who had transferred from community colleges to a 4-year HSI. The participants in the study—all juniors or seniors—had cumulative GPAs of 3.5 or higher. Analysis of the data collected from the participant interviews revealed four themes that influenced their decision to enroll in a community college first: (a) inadequate guidance from school personnel, (b) financial concerns, (c) familial factors, and (d) community college as an appropriate match (p. 853). Two additional themes emerged related to the decision to transfer to a 4-year institution: (a) access to greater opportunities, and (b) support and motivation (p. 853). For several of the participants, enrollment in a community college was an "undermatch," which refers to the decision by an individual who identifies as low-income and/or racially or ethnically minoritized to choose a nonselective or access institution (p. 850). Implications for practice include providing students who identify as first-generation and Latina/o with individualized guidance on college choice as well as aspects of financial aid. Similarly, at the postsecondary level, academic advisors should be prepared to help Latina/o first-generation students understand and navigate the transfer process. Finally, the author calls for additional research on undermatch and the relationship between this concept and academic success, particularly for those who begin at a 2-year institution and ultimately transfer to a 4-year institution.

Veterans

Wurster, K. G., Rinaldi, A. P., Woods, T. S., & Liu, W. M. (2013). First-generation student veterans: Implications of poverty for psychotherapy. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 69*(2), 127–137. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.21952

The purpose of this article is to help university counselors better understand the unique experiences of student veterans who are also first-generation students. It includes an overview of first-generation students and demographics of student veterans, and it ends by discussing the intersection of these identities. The authors note that student veterans, particularly those who come from a low-income background, may experience "the dual burdens of high expectations and lack of support" from family and the institution, respectively. They note that properly trained clinicians can make a positive impact and advocate on behalf of these students.

White Students

Stuber J. (2011) Integrated, marginal and resilient: Race, class and the diverse experiences of white first-generation college students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 24*(1), 117–136. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518391003641916

This study focuses specifically on the experiences of White, working-class first-generation students. The research question is "How do these particular students understand their college experiences, especially in terms of their academic and social adjustment?" For instance, do the students have an awareness of their Whiteness or their first-generation identity and, if so, how have these identities impeded or fostered their success at the university? The author conducted interviews with 28 participants (sophomores and juniors) attending one of two institutions: a large, public university and a small, liberal arts college in the United States. Stuber found three patterns of adjustment among these students: (a) Half reported feeling well-integrated into the university and expressed few feelings of marginality; (b) one quarter experienced persistent and debilitating marginality; and (c) the remaining quarter overcame their feelings of marginality and became socially and academically engaged on campus. The author observes that Whiteness operates as an asset when it serves as a default signal for middle class status, which protects some students from feeling marginalized. However, for those students who have more scarce economic resources, their race may function as a liability, meaning they may be overlooked for programs that are meant to serve them but may be perceived as for non-Whites only, such as TRIO. Stuber contends that universities should help empower students by increasing and refining their social vocabulary so that they may connect with those from similar backgrounds and potentially seek social change.

Wilkins, A. C. (2014). Race, age, and identity transformations in the transition from high school to college for Black and first-generation White men. *Sociology of Education, 87*(3), 171–187. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040714537901

This study used an intersectional lens to analyze the identities of Black men and first-generation white men in high school and

college. The researcher conducted 18 interviews with Black men (regardless of generation status) and eight interviews with white men who were first-generation students; all participants had attended either a predominantly white or affluent high school. Questions, data, and analysis ranged from economic status to relationships to accessing information to "staying out of trouble." From these interviews the researcher developed case studies and found that White men's identity transformations

began in high school and eased their transition to higher education. However, the identity strategies that worked in high school for Black men no longer worked in college: "Expectations for the performance of [B]lack masculinity became narrower in college, however, and the costs of coolness increased" (p. 185). Some of this strain came from Black men's personal relationships, "making it difficult for them to craft emotionally and academically supportive personal relationships" (p. 186).

INTERSECTIONS OF IDENTITY: LOW-INCOME AND WORKING-CLASS STUDENTS

Introduction

Low-income, working-class, and *blue-collar* are all qualifiers that have been added to the *first-generation* descriptor to refine this identity. These terms are often included as part of a deficit-minded orientation in discussions about first-generation students' needs, challenges, and opportunities.[1] It is common, then, for researchers and practitioners to presume first-generation students are low income.[2]

Certainly, the economic downturn of 2008 changed how researchers think about how social class relates to the purpose and promise of higher education for the most marginalized students. Several studies and news features focused specifically on first-generation and low-income or working-class students, as the amount of sources in this section attest.

As the meaning of *low income* expands beyond the parameters of the federal or sociological definitions of class to include students who are in need more broadly, higher education practitioners will be studying and serving a larger population of students. The question remains as to whether the increased number of students who may struggle with paying for college—but who are not, by definition, working class or low income— will complicate the research on true lower class students.

As the higher education landscape shifts to focus on college affordability and the promise of social mobility, many popular narratives regrettably default to comparing very poor students with very wealthy students. The result is the fetishization of low-income students and a limited perception that the first-generation college experience is marked by individual struggle and sacrifice.

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[1] When defining *low income*, many researchers turn first to the federal definition: "an individual whose family's taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level amount" (US Department of Education, 2019; https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/incomelevels.html). The term *working class* usually refers to blue-collar or hourly wage work in manufacturing and service industries.
[2] Bowen, W. G., Chingos, M. M., & McPherson, M. S. (2009). *Crossing the finish line.* Princeton University Press.

Because social class affects a family, if not multiple generations of a family, it is hard to separate low-income, working-class student issues from family dynamics. If the goal of a first-generation, low-income student is to earn a degree that provides a stable, white-collar job, then the effect of achieving that goal (or not) will reverberate throughout the family. For more information, review the Parents and Family Support section.

This focus on low-income and working-class first-generation students assumes that working-class and low-income students' motivation for attending college is more salient than that for other groups of students: the ability to earn a degree that will enable them to move from working-class to middle-class status. Couple this assumption with a deficit-orientation in the research, and it can be easy to overlook positive characteristics of working-class and low-income students. Nevertheless, many students and institutions are embracing the synergy between these identities and are now naming or renaming their first-generation programs "FLI" (first-generation and low income) to acknowledge the intersections.
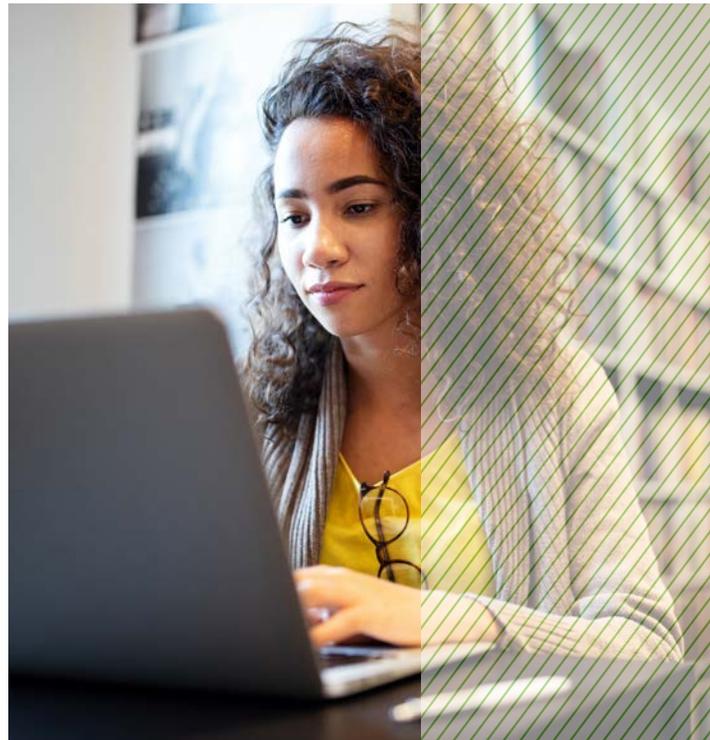
Summary of Research

The research on low-income and working-class students primarily examines the influence that social and economic status have on cocurricular experiences, such as study abroad and internships. For instance, in first-generation studies since 2008, researchers have routinely addressed how economics impact the entire academic pipeline from college access through career readiness, noting how finances often determine whether students can participate in activities that may make them competitive applicants for graduate and professional school.

Researchers regularly pointed to the great diversity within low-income populations, noting that working-class communities are heterogeneous. Scholars stressed the importance of understanding the intersection of race and class but also argued that there are commonalities—or a working-class culture—shared among groups. Despite these commonalities, many studies have found that low-income, first-generation white students could benefit from targeted outreach. Finally, compared with other

sections in this bibliography, the literature listed below focuses on many populations outside of the United States, including those in Australia and South Africa.

Perhaps most notably, many authors and research studies challenge or at least attempt to complicate the notion that a college education leads to social mobility, thereby leveling the playing field for students. Most scholars in this section point out that educational outcomes and careers are shaped largely by class (and race). Along those lines, it is mentioned several times that college and university programs reflect middle-class values and norms that typically conflict with working-class sensibilities and culture. One way to challenge the system, several researchers argue, is for students to tell their own counternarratives as a form of resistance and validation.

Suggestions for Future Research

As mentioned previously, it is common within contemporary scholarship and popular literature for writers to compare low-income, first-generation students with their wealthy, continuing-generation peers, particularly at elite institutions. However, the majority of first-generation students attend public institutions, including community colleges.[3] Given this landscape, it would be fruitful for future research to explore the experiences of low-income students by institution type. For instance, what is unique about first-generation students who navigate higher education at schools that have critical masses of low-income students? Further, there is much to be gained by examining the particulars of liberal arts colleges compared with those of research universities, because of the different campus cultures and expectations.

Several scholars argue that the average American university upholds middle-class values and expectations and that these expectations are reflected in campus and national policies, including, for example, the recommendation that undergraduates and graduate students not work more than 20 hours per week.[4] And yet, it is evident that many students need to work to pay for school expenses or to contribute to the family income. There is much insight to be gained by a closer examination of low-income students who work (either part- or full-time) while attending college, especially with regard to their perception of work–school balance.

Finally, recognizing that myriad forces affect a student's success in college, several authors in this section recommend more studies on the intersection of class on *pre-college experiences*, such as K–12 education, teacher expectations, and college access.

References

Allan, B. A., Garriott, P. O., & Keene, C. N. (2016). Outcomes of social class and classism in first- and continuing-generation college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 63*(4), **487–496. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cou0000160**

This study sought to examine perceptions of classism to better understand academic and well-being outcomes among first-generation, low-income college students. more than 1,200 participants—most of whom identified as continuing-generation students (*n* = 922)—took part. The authors examined first-generation status and social class as predictors of classism and, in turn, as a predictor of life satisfaction, academic satisfaction, and GPA. They found that social class and first-generation status predicted perceptions of classism, which, in turn, predicted life satisfaction and academic satisfaction. Students also shared that some of the classism they experienced was institutional, which often led to low participation in sports teams, clubs and organizations, and social activities.

Ardoin, S., & Martinez, B. *Straddling class in the academy: 26 stories of students, administrators, and faculty from poor and working-class backgrounds and their compelling lessons for higher education policy and practice.* **Stylus. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2020.0039**

Although this book focuses on social class, most of the contributors also identify as first-generation students and address their experiences in their narratives. Perspectives are shared from undergraduates; graduate students; early career, midcareer, and senior administrators; nontenured and tenured faculty; and external educators. One of the major themes addressed includes how first-generation college graduates straddle class within academia and also within their families and communities.

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[3] Redford, J., & Hoyer, K. M. (2018). First-generation and continuing-generation college students: A comparison of high school and postsecondary experiences. *Stats in Brief.* https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018009.pdf

[4] See Perna, L. W. (Ed.). (2010). *Understanding the working college student: New research and its implications for policies and practices.* Stylus.

Case, K. (2017). Insider without: Journey across the working-class academic arc. *Journal of Working-Class Studies, 2*(2), 16–25.
Building on Patricia Collins's concept of an "outsider within" (1986), the author theorizes about her own identity as an "insider without." Case describes a three-phase arc as she details her experiences as a working-class academic within academia. Critical to her identity as a person from a rural area is her first-generation student experience, particularly as she continued her education in graduate school. Case calls for an increased visibility of working-class identities among the faculty. She also acknowledges new first-generation faculty campaigns that are promoted on some campuses and calls for their expansion to include "working class," as those identities often overlap.

Dews, C. L., & Laws, C. L. (2010). *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working-class.* **Temple University Press.**
This volume is a collection of autobiographical and analytical essays written by faculty and graduate students from working-class backgrounds. Many of the writers also identify as first-generation students and address the intersection of that identity (and more) with being low income or working class. Major themes include "class passing" and balancing home/family culture with academia.

Eitel, S., & Martin, J. (2009). First-generation female college students' financial literacy: Real and perceived barriers to degree completion. *College Student Journal, 43*(2), 616–630.
This study sought to identify the financial literacy needs of female first-generation students and to determine how those needs relate to persistence and degree completion. The researchers used a two-part mixed-methods approach: first, 204 students were surveyed via the Jump$tart Survey to measure what they knew about financial literacy. The researchers found that white participants had significantly higher scores than those of their counterparts. Thirty-nine students participated in focus groups and reported their methods for budgeting as largely trial and error; the students expressed disinterest in a university course on the topic of financial literacy, due to time constraints. Finally, many participants did not see financial literacy as

relevant to their experiences as college students. The researchers anticipated that effective financial literacy programs would improve persistence and graduation rates, but the study results revealed that students faced several intersecting challenges and no one solution would be the remedy. For example, many students had family obligations or responsibilities that affected their personal finances. The author recommends more studies that examine financial literacy among groups of first-generation students rather than research that compares the financial literacy of first-generation students with that of their continuing-generation peers.

Foster, B. L. (2018, February 26). What is it like to be poor at an Ivy League school? *The Boston Globe.* https://www.bostonglobe.com/magazine/2015/04/09/what-like-poor-ivy-league-school/xPtql5uzDb6r9AUFER8R0O/story.html
This featured story profiles several first-generation, low-income students at Ivy League institutions. The author notes that there has been an increase in these students beginning in 2004, when Harvard (and, later, other elite institutions) offered to waive tuition for students and families whose income was below a certain threshold. The article further addresses how institutions need to support the students once they are admitted. Also discussed is the founding of the First-generation Student Union at Harvard and the establishment of 1vy G network. The article concludes with a discussion about the anxieties that students have about what life will be like for them after graduation.

Freie, C. (2016). First-generation, female college students in the web of the academy. In *The working classes and higher education: Inequality of access, opportunity and outcome.* **Routledge.**
How do first-generation, working-class students make meaning of their own college experiences? In this research, which is part of a larger study, Freie interviewed students and focused on the impact of class and financial obstacles. All 15 participants identified as white, first-generation, female working-class students at an institution in the Northeastern United States. Participants' self-reported descriptions of college experiences run counter to traditional narratives about college as a space where young adults experience freedom and find themselves.

Additionally, the participants offered their own definition of what it means to be a "good" or "serious" student, which often meant not participating in university-sanctioned activities, such as clubs. The author argues that working-class students may be in college to change their economic situation, but those same financial challenges often make it difficult for them to be successful in a traditional or middle-class sense.

Gray, B., Johnson, T., Kish-Gephart, J., & Tilton, J. (2017). Identity work by first-generation college students to counteract class-based microaggressions. *Organization Studies, 39*(9), 1227–1250. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840617736935
This study focused on the effects of race and class, and their intersectionality, on first-generation students at two large, Predominantly White Institutions. The researchers interviewed recent graduates with lower socioeconomic backgrounds who had participated in programs that serve first-generation students. Findings included that first-generation students experienced identity threats to their social status in the classroom by feeling unprepared for college-level work; seeing class differences on campus in the way students dress and act toward campus workers; encountering stereotyping and microaggressions because of their race and class; and experiencing "identity collapse," where an observer may make assumptions about the person based on the most visible identity. First-generation students used the following strategies to mitigate the effects of identity-based microaggressions: intrapersonal identity work, "dodging the issue," code switching, and building peer support networks.

Hinz, S. E. (2016). Upwardly mobile: Attitudes toward the class transition among first-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 57*(3), 285–299. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0033
Using Bourdieu's cultural capital theory and Hurst's class-identity model (2010) as the frameworks for the study, Hinz interviewed 12 students and four faculty/staff members at a large, public, selective Midwestern university. The study aimed to answer the following two questions: How do first-generation students explain their "class-identity reformation"? And what factors influence their attitudes toward class transition when

they are in college? The author found that first-generation students could identify differences between working- and middle-class traits but did not hold loyalty to one class or another. Hinz proposes an expansion of Hurst's categories of types of first-generation students from two categories (Loyalists and Renegades) to four: Loyalists, Mobile Loyalists, Renegades, and Converts. Hinz suggests that the new categories of Mobile Loyalists and Converts indicate that first-generation students experienced positive experiences with the class transition, and that these nuanced categories of class identity were assisted by coursework, role models, and a reassuring student organization.

Hurst, A. L. (2010). *The burden of academic success: Loyalists, renegades, and double agents.* **Lexington Books.** https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/90.1.333
For this in-depth study of social class, the author interviewed 21 working-class students attending a public university in the United States for 3 years; all participants except for one is a first-generation student. Hurst's goal was to take a critical look at academic success among this population, instead of focusing on working-class failures and stereotypes (as is common in other studies). When "moving up" via higher education, students tend to fall into three categories: Loyalists, who distinguish themselves from their middle-class peers and who reserve close relationships with others from the working class; Renegades, who have a stronger affinity for the middle-class status they seek to achieve and who aspire to cut working-class ties; and Double Agents, whose strategy of success includes an ability to move between classes without establishing exclusive boundaries. The book proposes recommendations, including a working-class inclusive curriculum in universities, training for social activism, and alternative educational institutions that are designed with first-generation, working-class students in mind.

Hurst, A. L. (2012). *College and the working class: What it takes to make it.* **Sense.** https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-752-3_2
Here, Hurst focused on low-income, first-generation students who successfully obtain 4-year degrees. She created composites of five different students to show common experiences that first-generation, working-class students

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face. Each chapter highlights different aspects of a students' journey, such as the decision to go to college and culture shock on campus. In the concluding chapter, Hurst argues that class identity and allegiance remain ambiguous for this population as they ascend from working class to middle class and continue to engage with their families and communities. The author offers four concrete steps to help create a working-class-friendly campus: (a) make college more affordable; (b) actively recruit and support working-class students; (c) create a working-class-friendly curriculum; and (d) increase career guidance and support.

Jack, A. A. (2019). *The privileged poor: How elite colleges are failing disadvantaged students.* **Harvard University Press.** https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674239647
In this qualitative study, Jack focused on the experiences of first-generation, low-income students at an elite, private institution. His interviews make clear that not all of these students experience the university in the same way, and he notes that the "privileged poor" typically adjust more quickly to school because of their prior exposure to elite institutions while in high school. Alternatively, the so-called doubly disadvantaged have a harder transition. Jack argues that institutions must be cognizant of the heterogeneity within the first-generation and low-income populations, and he stresses that college access is not enough to create equitable outcomes for these students.

Johnson, C. (2009). The nine needs of lower-income first-generation college students. In T. Heinz Housel & V. L. Harvey (Eds.), *The invisibility factor: Administrators and faculty reach out to first-generation college students*. **Brown Walker Press.**
Drawing upon his experience as a first-generation student from a working-class background, Johnson describes the challenges that are unique to this population, noting that low-income first-generation students "often come from backgrounds with different cultural values and expectations that move against college success" (p. 127). He offers nine ways that institutions can work intentionally to support this population, such as intrusive advising/guidance and low- or no-cost transformative experiences like study abroad or undergraduate research.

Lawless, B. (2009). Guiding class consciousness in first-generation college students: A pragmatic approach to classism in the academy. In T. Heinz Housel & V. L. Harvey (Eds.), *The invisibility factor: Administrators and faculty reach out to first-generation college students* **(pp. 23–33). Brown Walker Press.**
Lawless discusses the issue of class consciousness by first describing her own experience as a first-generation student. The chapter is divided into sections in which the author examines specifically social class awareness, class consciousness (including linguistic differences), and classism. Lawless then provides practical examples of how to minimize the negative effects of classism in the classroom, including allowing students to share their experiences, being mindful of our own class and experiences, and becoming an ally to students through high-quality interactions.

Lehmann, W. (2009). Becoming middle class: How working-class university students draw and transgress moral class boundaries. *Sociology, 43*(4), 631–647. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038509105412
The participants in this study include Canadian, working-class first-generation students attending a large research-intensive university in Ontario. Sixty-five percent of their parents had not attained education beyond high school. Seventy-five participants were interviewed during their first semester and were asked about their reasons for attending college. In the second wave of the study, 55 were re-interviewed during their second year of school and were asked to reflect on their college experiences thus far. Nearly all participants described coming to college as a means of social mobility meant to propel them to middle-class status. Their parents often affirmed this desire. Financial stress was another major theme found in the interviews, and students reported that they often were not employed in jobs or participating in cocurricular activities related to academics or their chosen career field. By their second year in college, many students reflected that their working-class backgrounds—especially their strong work ethic, maturity, and independence—were critical to college success. The author claims that a working-class background is an "enabling," or a positive, influence on students and theorizes

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that these participants will likely retain their working-class values even after they gain middle-class status.

Lehmann, W. (2009). Class encounters: Working-class students at university. In C. Levine-Rasky (Ed.), *Canadian perspectives on the sociology of education* **(pp. 197–212). Oxford University Press.**
The data presented in this chapter are taken from the first phase of a 3-year longitudinal study conducted at a research-intensive university in Ontario. In this phase, 75 newly enrolled first-generation and working-class freshmen were interviewed soon after starting university. A majority of the students insisted that they had "always" known that they wanted to go to college prior to enrollment; however, at this time, many of the students in this study expressed uncertainty and anxiety about their decision to attend university or their ability to obtain a degree. Some participants had already begun thinking of exiting school. In the interviews, students reflected openly about their class status, with some asserting that their working-class background was advantageous to their college success (due to high motivation or low academic pressures from family), while others perceived their background as a disadvantage. The author argues that more attention should be paid to the ways in which university experiences are shaped by family background and social class.

Lehmann, W. (2009). University as vocational education: Working-class students' expectation for university. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 30*(2), 137–149. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425690802700164
How do working-class students frame their decision to attend university? How does their social-class background translate into expectations about college? This study explores how these students achieve educational success despite the well-documented barriers that they face. It draws upon qualitative interviews with first-generation, working-class students at a Canadian university. Lehmann found that many participants are motivated by their parents' blue-collar or working-class backgrounds—often framed in terms of their parents' regrets, missed chances, or lack of opportunities. Many of the students (and their parents) expressed concern about the employment value of their degree. The children of immigrants in this study

also felt the need to justify the sacrifices that their parents made when coming to Canada. In conclusion, Lehmann advises universities to be more aware that working-class students may have a vocational approach to higher education, as opposed to viewing school as a natural rite of passage, as is true for many middle-class students.

Lehmann, W. (2013). Habitus transformation and hidden injuries: Successful working-class university students. *Sociology of Education, 87*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040713498777
The data for this article were collected in a 4-year longitudinal study of first-generation and working-class students at a large, research-intensive university in Ontario. In total, participants were interviewed three times, but this study is restricted to a subsample of 22 students who remained in the study for 4 years. They also achieved academic success (performing substantially above average) and were constructively involved in university clubs or organizations. Lehmann sought to understand how these students negotiated their working-class habitus with the middle-class values of the university. Students revealed that their working-class backgrounds contributed to their success; they also viewed their university experience as "transformative" and better than their "old" (working-class) habitus, which the students felt was narrow-minded and limiting. Lehmann cautions that such upward mobility narratives overlook the hidden injuries that students experience in academia or the relationships that may be disrupted as students increase their cultural capital. He concludes by arguing that the university upholds middle-class hegemony as ideal and renders working-class values as deficient and even pathological.

Lehmann, W. (2013). In a class of their own: How working-class students experience university. In R. Brooks, M. McCormack, & K. Bhopal (Eds.), *Contemporary debates in the sociology of education* **(pp. 93–111). Palgrave Macmillan.** https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137269881_6
Using data from a previous research study on first-generation and working-class students in Ontario, the author seeks

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to answer the following questions: (a) Why do working-class students attend university? (b) How prepared do they feel for school, and what were their expectations prior to attending? (c) What are their actual experiences? (d) How do the participants interpret their experiences, and how do their working-class backgrounds inform these experiences? Although Lehmann predicted that the students who carefully planned for college would experience adaptation and success and that students who drifted into school would be disadvantaged, he found that the pathways are unpredictable. He also found that all the students drew upon their working-class backgrounds to make meaning of their university experiences—but in different ways. To this end, Lehmann argues that working-class students are not a homogenous population; universities need to account for diverse needs; and practitioners should consider antecedents to entering higher education, such as family and peer support.

Lehmann, W. (2016). Influences on working-class students' decisions to go to college. *The working classes and higher education: Inequality of access, opportunity and outcome.* Routledge
It is generally believed that going to college is a disruptive moment for first-generation, working-class students who presumably must separate from their families and class backgrounds to be successful. In this chapter, Lehmann argues that the transition to college for this population is more nuanced and complex. For instance, from interviews with first-generation students in their first year, he finds that many of the participants were high achievers in high school and, consequently, exposed to forms of cultural capital that assisted them once they arrived on campus. Going to college was considered normative for these participants, and few of them considered other options besides university. Lehmann advises policymakers and scholars to focus on earlier educational stages in working-class students' lives (e.g., experiences in high school). Finally, he recommends that universities tailor career services to better serve this population given the students' and their families' financial and emotional investment in higher education.

Longwell-Grice, R., & Longwell-Grice, H. (2008). Testing Tinto: How do retention theories work for first-generation, working-class students? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 9*(4), 407–420. https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.9.4.a
This article examines the experiences of four white, male, working-class first-generation students and their perceptions of faculty support and faculty–student interactions. The study focused on the conceptual framework of Tinto and how retention and engagement efforts are aided by students creating bonds with faculty members. The researchers used an in-depth phenomenological interview methodology and conducted interviews with students 2 to 3 weeks apart during their first semester of college. All four students stopped out after the end of their first semester due to several reasons, including family illness and academic probation or dismissal. In the findings, students expressed that their faculty wanted to "weed out" students in entry-level courses. They also believed that the faculty were unapproachable and felt as if they were a bother to their professors whenever they needed to ask for help. Implications for faculty include how they structure their classes to be more welcoming for first-generation students and how they can develop relationships as mentors. Implications for staff include how to help working-class first-generation students transition from high school to college and build relationships with staff who are there to serve them.

Martin, G. (2015). "Tightly wound rubber bands": College experiences of low-income, first-generation White students. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 52*(3), 275–286. https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2015.1035384
This study was conducted at a 4-year, public research university in the Midwest. Seven white students—most of them worked up to 40 hours a week. Data was collected through individual interviews and journal entries. Each participant was asked to participate in two semistructured interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes each. Participants were asked how they spent their time, energy, and financial resources. A monoracial sample was used to minimize the confounding influences of the race/class dynamic in U.S. society and educational systems, and phenomenology was used as a research methodology. Participants exerted

considerable energy into accruing economic capital in order to pay for college expenses, multiple students expressed their frustration and sadness that they were "missing out" on activities such as volunteering in the community or participating in student organizations. Most participants' stories they felt stretched too thin in college due to the necessity of work combined with the rigors of college academics. For most of the students in this study, however, even an awareness of the potential benefits of becoming involved outside of class would not allow them the time to be involved due to the necessity of working for pay.

Mayo, L. (2015, May 18). The double life of a blue-collar scholar. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.*
In this personal essay, the author, an English professor, reflects on her past upbringing, specifically the summer she spent working alongside her mother at a factory shortly before she went to college. Mayo went on to teach at a community college, where she attempted to reconcile her identity as a "blue-collar scholar"— that is, a person from working-class roots who obtained a doctorate. She concludes that these personal experiences inform the work that she does as a community college professor and makes her ideally suited to teach the students there.

Morton, J. M. (2019). *Moving up without losing your way: The ethical costs of upward mobility.* **Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691179230.001.0001**
Here, the author explores what she refers to as the "ethical costs of upward mobility"—that is, the emotional and social strain on relationships with family, friends, and communities. Morton focuses exclusively on "strivers," or first-generation, low-income students whose life circumstances could be potentially transformed by a college degree. She argues that the conventional narrative about upward mobility via higher education does not adequately prepare students for the emotional, psychological, and ethical challenges they will likely face. With this work, Morton seeks to establish a new narrative that more transparently describes what these challenges may look like. The findings were based on interviews with 28 students from the same university but also include stories from the researcher's own experiences as a person of color, first-

generation graduate, and immigrant. Finally, Morton offers a different perspective of upward mobility and ultimately argues that there must be an alternative model of upward mobility for students, particularly one where they do not have to sacrifice their communities of origin in exchange for academic success.

Moschetti, R., & Hudley, C. (2008). Measuring social capital among first-generation and non-first-generation working-class, White males. *Journal of College Admissions. 198,* **25-30. https:// eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ829418**
Previous studies have shown that gender has an impact on students' success in college and that young men, regardless of race or socioeconomic status, seek institutional support and may be at a disadvantage because of it. The research team measured social capital by assessing the number and quality of students' ties to institutional agents. The study sample included 35 participants who identified as white male freshmen with family incomes ranging between $20,000 and $59,000. Approximately half of the participants were first-generation students. Recruited students completed a web-based questionnaire, which had to be completed in a single sitting. Results found that first-generation students had slightly less communication with institutional agents about their college experiences than did their peers; both groups reported accessing fewer than two institutional agents for social–emotional support; and first-generation students accessed institutional agents more frequently if they had high aspirations for the future. For the authors, this study implies that low-income and working-class white males may have fewer opportunities to access institutional agents because there are few programs and resources that target them. They also recommend that eligible students should be contacted as soon as they are admitted to campus.

Mullen, A. L. (2010). *Degrees of inequality: Culture, class, and gender in American higher education.* **Johns Hopkins University Press. https://doi.org/10.1086/662141**
Informed by critical educational theory, Mullen explores how the social background of college students affects their college experience. Mullen interviewed 100 juniors and seniors at Yale University and Southern Connecticut State University; 50 percent

of the Southern students were first-generation students. The interview questions explored college choice, college major, and academic and extracurricular activities. Mullen contends that the educational journeys of these students reflect and uphold economic stratification and that advantaged students continue to accumulate advantages throughout their schooling. Whereas the more privileged Yale students focused on personal enrichment while in school, the Southern students viewed college as a necessary preparation for the workforce. Mullen posits that open access measures will not sufficiently address this stratification and instead argues for fundamental changes to U.S. economic and social policies.

Mullen, A. L. (2015) "You don't have to be a college graduate to be intelligent": First-generation students' perspectives of intelligence and education. In *The working classes and higher education: Inequality of access, opportunity and outcome.* **Routledge. 160-176**
Drawing from a comparison study of students attending a state university and those attending an Ivy League university, this work examined the views students have on intelligence and the qualities of individuals whom they regard as intelligent. The data were drawn from a qualitative study of college juniors and seniors. More than half of the students attending "State College" identified as first-generation students; 20 percent of the students attending the private school were first-generation students. Nearly 75 percent of the State College students listed a family member—most often their father—as the most intelligent person they knew; "Ivy University" students, however, tended to identify friends. Generally, the first-generation and low-income students from State College valued life experience, self-taught abilities, and other characteristics typically not acquired in formal schooling. Additionally, they appreciated "everyday" individuals who are warm and caring with a sense of humor as opposed to being erudite or stuffy. Mullen theorizes that working-class students may experience tensions with their definitions of intelligence, as they could conflict with those qualities valued by the university. Additionally, she recommends that approachable professors from backgrounds similar to those of first-generation students can be instrumental in retaining them.

Oldfield, K. (2012). Still humble and hopeful: Two more recommendations on welcoming first-generation poor and working-class students to college. *About Campus, 17*(5), 2–13. **https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.21093**
In the follow-up essay to his 2007 article, Oldfield offers more reflections (or "lessons learned") about the unique experiences and challenges of first-generation and working-class students. He observes that middle- and upper-class families shop for college and tend to have more school options available to them and that working-class students may have strongly held beliefs about the arts being feminized and therefore of little value to men. Oldfield offers some recommendations for institutions, such as intentional efforts to recruit and hire administrators from working-class backgrounds, and also suggests that universities make publicly available the numbers of first-generation or working-class students, faculty, and administrators.

Paulsen, H., & Griswold, J. (2010). Understanding the impacts of socioeconomic status on first-generation students: A case study. In T. Heinz Housel & V. L. Harvey (Eds.), *The invisibility factor: Administrators and faculty reach out to first-generation college students.* **Brown Walker Press. 75-89.**
This study examined the institutional, social, and academic challenges faced by first-generation students at a small liberal arts college. Most first-generation students at this institution also identify as lower-middle or lower class. The purpose of the research was to understand how social class affects college experiences—with a special emphasis on access to social and academic opportunities. The researchers sent a survey via email to the entire student body; the responses were sorted by socioeconomic category. After the survey, 21 first-generation students were interviewed: 10 of them self-identified as lower class, 7 self-identified as lower-middle class, and 4 self-identified as middle class. Survey data revealed that all the lower-class students attended a public high school; were more likely to work their way through school; and worked more hours than their peers. Further, due to financial constraints, they are less likely to participate in cocurricular activities like study abroad or residential learning

communities. The researchers argue that institutions need to pay more attention to class differences, and they make several recommendations, including increase classroom sensitivity to class diversity, provide financial assistance for study abroad opportunities, and ensure sufficient access to computers and other technology for all students.

Reay, D., Crozier, G., & Clayton, J. (2009). "Strangers in paradise"? Working-class students in elite universities. *Sociology, 43*(6), **1103–1121.** https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038509345700
This case study focused on nine working-class first-generation students attending an elite university in the United Kingdom. The methodology is not clear, but the data found that the students did not report any disconnection from their family and cultural backgrounds while at university and instead demonstrated an ability to successfully navigate between home and school. The researchers attribute this versatility to students' prior schooling. Students reported feeling like a "fish out of water" before attending college among their own working-class peer group. Participants also revealed considerable resilience and self-reliance strategies; it is inferred that they had strong self-regulation at an early age.

Silva, J. M. (2016). Working-class youth and the betrayal of the future. In *The Working Classes and Higher Education.* **Routledge. Chapter 9.**
This chapter examines how working-class young adults navigated higher education, with a specific focus on neoliberalism and the discourse of failure and betrayal. By *neoliberalism*, Silva refers to economic uncertainty, social isolation, "the privatization of risk," and an emphasis on personal responsibility rather than community solidarity. For 2 years, the author interviewed 100 working-class adults located near Lowell, Massachusetts, and Richmond, Virginia, whose parents had not earned college degrees. She found that most of the participants held unstable service jobs and that many of them had hoped that a college degree would help them achieve financial stability. Unfortunately, these young adults described feeling confused and betrayed by the promise of higher education. In fact, one of the major findings

is that the participants identified the education system as a major obstacle and the reason for their uncertain futures. For instance, many of them said that they were often confused by bureaucracy and did not know how to navigate financial aid processes; as a result, some participants found themselves in a cycle of debt or withdrew from college altogether. Although many participants believed that school would create opportunities for advancement, the author observes that the education system actually widens class gaps. She recommends more studies about how working-class students seek jobs after graduation and the role that university bureaucracy plays in students' struggles.

Snell, T. (2008). First-generation students, social class, and literacy. *Academe, 94*(4), **28–31.**
Snell presents a first-person exploration of academic experiences as they intersect with family, class, and economic values. He argues that first-generation students' academic preparation and behaviors, as well as selection of major, are influenced by students' income, class, and economic levels.

Soria, K. (2015). *Welcoming blue-collar scholars into the ivory tower: Developing class-conscious strategies for student success.* **Journal of College Student Development. 57(5), 627-628.** https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0062
Soria examines how social class has an impact on the experiences of working-class college students and how campus leadership can reduce the barriers these students may face. The author's argument is based on how social class has a complicated set of issues that cannot be resolved solely with financial aid. Through an exhaustive literature review, Soria explores the narratives of upward mobility and discusses the theoretical framework Bordieu employs for social, cultural, and economic capital. Other chapters include research on interactions with faculty and peers and how students navigate the hidden curriculum in higher education. Outcomes include research-based practices and recommendations for practitioners on how to serve working-class students effectively. This short text concludes with suggestions on how to increase access for working-class students and how to grow precollege support networks.

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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. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027143
The authors propose a cultural mismatch theory to address why first-generation students may not have equitable outcomes with their peers; in other words, interdependent norms from working-class backgrounds may conflict with middle-class independent values that are upheld at American universities. Four different studies tested this theory, and participants included university administrators and undergraduate students. The studies found that when university culture was represented in interdependent terms (e.g., being part of a community), performance gaps were reduced. The findings have implications for university media and communication teams and publications; can shift the way that research opportunities are described (to focus on collaboration and not just "independent study"); and could also positively affect continuing-generation students.

Stuber, J. (2016). Normative institutional arrangements and the mobility pathway: How campus-level forces impact first-generation students. In *The working classes and higher education: Inequality of access, opportunity and outcome.*
Here, Stuber elaborates on the "campus turn," or how locally structured environments and campus contexts shape peer dynamics and, in this case, the experience of working-class first-generation students. Sixty students attending two different institutions were interviewed in the original study. This specific chapter examines the experiences of 28 students; half are working-class, first-generation students and half are continuing-generation students from upper-middle-class backgrounds. All the participants except one identified as white. Stuber found that continuing-generation students arrived on campus accompanied by their parents and with considerable fanfare. In contrast, because their specific needs were not addressed during orientation or move-in, first-generation students described the experience as a hassle

and not a rite of passage. Those who participated in one particular program targeting first-generation and low-income students had a better experience with orientation because they had participated in a summer bridge program designed for them, and so they already felt knowledgeable about the campus. The author observes that students' marginalization was reinforced by the institution's seemingly neutral campus policies and programs intersecting with first-generation students' dispositions and inclinations to work independently and solve problems on their own. Stuber suggests requiring work-study students to participate in leadership seminars; incorporating faculty into more cocurricular programming; and forging partnerships with local businesses for job-shadow opportunities.

Thering, A. (2012). White, working class, first-generation college student narrations of the "value" of a college education. *International Journal of Learning, 18*(4), 49–60. https://doi.org/10.18848/1447-9494/cgp/v18i04/47581
The researchers sought to explore how white, working-class first-generation students narrate their college-going experiences and to identify what value these students place on obtaining a college degree. The article argues that previous literature on first-generation students focused heavily on quantitative data and less on the ways these students frame earning a college degree as a means to improve the socioeconomic status of their family as a whole. The article employs a qualitative study through interviews with 18 students (8 men and 10 women). The study took place over 7 months, and students participated in a three-part interview; the researchers used grounded theory to discover their themes in data analysis. Results demonstrated that the students viewed a college degree as the key to improving social mobility and to becoming employed. Implications from this study affect both student affairs and academic affairs; the findings reveal how students interact with programming, such as career engagement/career services, and select their major.

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Van Galen, J. A., & Dempsey, V. O. (Eds.). (2009). Trajectories: The social and educational mobility of education scholars from poor and working-class backgrounds. *Sense.* **https://doi.org/10.1163/9789087907266**
This collection of essays is written by academics who identify as being from a poor or working-class background; most of them were also first-generation students. The work challenges and adds nuance to the commonly held belief that public education in North America leads to upward mobility. One of the goals of the project was to learn more about how poor and working-class students achieve middle-class status and navigate their environment. Major themes include mobility as loss as well as gain; the myth of meritocracy; and social class as lived experience. Data were elicited through a series of unstructured phenomenological interviews.

Yeh, T. L. (2018). *Giving back: Community-based learning and men from low-income, first-generation backgrounds.* **Diversity and Democracy, 21(4), 15-16.**
This article draws upon data from a mixed-methods study of male first-generation students, the majority of whom came from low-income backgrounds. Given that most students who participate in community-based education (volunteer opportunities) are white females from middle- to upper-class backgrounds, this study sought to explore the experiences of those populations least likely to persist in college. In the initial quantitative phase, data from the 2004/09 Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) Longitudinal Survey were used to investigate national participation rates of male first-generation students in community service experiences. In the subsequent qualitative phase, Yeh interviewed 15 men (14 of whom came from low-income backgrounds) from two universities in the Pacific Northwest. The group included eight current students, two recent graduates, and five staff who worked with community-based education programs. An analysis of the BPS data showed that, nationally, male and female low-income college students were significantly less likely to volunteer than higher income college students. Interviews with participants who identified as low income reported ongoing financial struggles, a need to maintain paid employment, and challenges with the commute to community engagement sites. The male students who did participate in community-based learning described several positive outcomes: academics felt more relevant; expanded communication and leadership skills; and personal and spiritual growth, among others. To increase access to and participation in community engagement, Yeh recommends allowing students to count relevant paid experiences for service learning requirements, compensating students for community engagement, and offering scholarships for participation.

INTERSECTIONS OF IDENTITY: STUDENT REFUGEES

Introduction

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, a refugee is "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion." Additionally, they have crossed an international border to find safety in another country. What, then, becomes of a student refugee who continues their education in a new country?

Having crossed borders, students who are refugees may be mislabeled simply as "international"; however, their distinct experiences with protracted war, discrimination, social dislocation, and, in many cases, torture compels us to consider them as a distinct *equity group* in need of distinct resources and support (Baker et al., 2018).

These students, by definition, are already seeking help at the international level, but the overarching question is, How does a student's refugee status add to their first-generation student status? Contemplating this question can lead to additional ones: Does a refugee status burden the students' sense of asking for additional support at the institution? Are they less likely to seek out additional resources? How do they view the layers of intersectional identity in terms of their pathway to college success? Are institutions culturally competent enough to serve students with this additional identity? In other words, what additional needs should be met because of refugee status? The research points to some answers, but questions still remain.

Summary of Research

The majority of the studies in this section were conducted in Australia, followed by the United Kingdom, with only two in the United States. All of the refugees in the studies were racial or ethnic minorities attending a Predominantly White I nstitution in a Western nation. The studies also had similar approaches: Generally, students who were identified as refugees were asked about the kinds of support they have received at the university and recommendations they have in light of their experiences. For example, most of the research questions asked, "What are students' struggles?" and "What can the school do better?" Interviews and focus groups were the overwhelming research methodology. Additionally, several authors stressed the importance of student "voice" and personal experiences.

Results of the studies showed that students typically experienced culture shock within their new country coupled with institutional culture shock. Students regularly reported having some trouble with English language proficiency and financial aid, but mostly they felt like they did not belong at their respective institutions. They also struggled with Western learning styles and classroom expectations, such as speaking in class and working independently. Finally, it was generally agreed that student refugees need extended support and orientation beyond a bridge program or the first semester.

Unsurprisingly, these studies confirmed that cultural capital from one country does not translate to cultural capital in another country, because these students often faced significant financial, cultural, and psychological challenges even if they had earned a college degree prior to relocating. Nearly every study or essay concludes that educating and supporting student refugees in higher education is not simply an academic issue but a *national concern*. The university plays a critical role in the overall success of the refugee population, which, in turn, improves the host country economically, socially, and culturally. Accordingly, it is argued, the host institution needs to learn more about these students and make a concerted effort to improve cultural competency by way of staff and faculty training and workshops.

Suggestions for Future Research

Existing research currently focuses only on a few "hot spots" or countries (particularly Australia); however, refugee populations exist in many locations, including, of course, the United States. Similarly, most of the student refugees in these studies were from African countries. But Amnesty International reports that in 2019, more than two thirds of all refugees came from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Syria has been the main country of origin for refugees since 2014. Meanwhile, the top host countries include Turkey, Jordan, and Colombia; the United States and Australia aren't even in the top 10. Although insightful and meaningful, the current studies uphold a simplistic narrative of "white" countries saving or supporting students from the developing world. Further, a focus on white or non-white student refugees attending nondominant institutions like Historically Black Colleges and Universities would enrich this topic.

Some of the studies note that women experience displacement distinctly from men, with issues including physical and sexual violence, childcare expectations, and overall sexism and gender discrimination. Additionally, some individuals flee their home due to persecution based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. In light of these differences, future studies should disaggregate data by gender and sexuality, and institutions should be encouraged to highlight resources for these particular individuals. No research was found on the prearrival educational experiences of student refugees; however, that information could provide critical insight on this population.

Another issue that is not widely addressed in this literature is the student's experience within their local community. Do they feel included socially or do they feel marginalized despite the efforts of their university community to include and support them? Some of the studies dance around the edges of inclusion in the larger

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community, and for sure, there are not many examples of students who felt completely welcomed, understood, or supported. Instead, the findings in the current research point to many opportunities for higher education communities to provide more personalized, long-term cultural, academic, and social support.

While ample documentation shows what's not working, it is crucial to identify promising practices. It would be helpful to highlight resources or specific classroom practices that have been proven effective, such as orientation curricula and intentional pedagogical practices. Further, the research can be reframed to highlight what positive aspects refugees *bring to the institution*. This would include a deeper dive on community organizations and cultural groups and how they support university students as well as ways that parents, family members, and peers support student refugees.

References

Baker, S., Ramsay, G., Irwin, E., & Miles, L. (2018). "Hot," "cold" and "warm" supports: Towards theorising where refugee students go for assistance at university. *Teaching in Higher Education, 23*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2017.1332028
This study explores how students from refugee backgrounds navigate their way into and through a regional Australian university, paying particular attention to their access to and use of different forms of support. "Cold" support refers to university resources that students consider unfamiliar and formal, for example, central learning support services such as tutoring. Students expressed a preference for the "warm" support offered via trusted people who act as literacy/sociocultural brokers or "hot" support from their family, peers, or experienced community members. Via interviews, the participants shared that they view university study as integral to their social networks and community. The seven participants were from African (*n* = 6) and Asian (*n* = 1) backgrounds and were at varying stages of their college education. By opening up the inclusion criteria to include students who both came from "refugee-producing countries" and had refugee-like experiences, this study broadened the potential participant pool and also brings awareness to students who are often

overlooked and marginalized within this already disadvantaged group. Finally, the authors recommend that academic advisors, librarians, counselors, administrative staff, and English language support staff be provided with relevant cultural training and education; universities should seek to participate in the diverse communities in which they reside; and those staff who provide warm support should be properly supported and recognized by their institutions for the work they do.

Brooker, A., & Lawrence, J. A. (2012). Educational and cultural challenges of bicultural adult immigrant and refugee students in Australia. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning, 52*(1), 66–88. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ972831.pdf
The aim of this study was to document the challenges encountered by immigrant and refugee adults early in their Australian education. The participants were 35 students (19 women, 16 men) attending a college in a suburb of Adelaide. The college caters to the specific needs of adult immigrant students who are beginning their education in Australia; however, the participants had had a range of educational experiences prior to their arrival to Australia. For instance, two students had completed university degrees elsewhere, and three of them had not completed elementary school in their home country. Participants came from regions with recent histories of substantial conflict and war, such as Central and East Africa (14), South Asia (11), and the Middle East (10). Most (32) had lived in Australia for less than 5 years. Students completed a self-administered, online computer interview; researchers were nearby to answer questions and to debrief. The results revealed that newly arrived adults' bicultural experiences vary, with at least two different experiences: those who commit to both Australian and heritage cultures and those who do not commit to one or both. The researchers also found that asking the students to use concept maps to explain their experiences was particularly helpful, since most of them had limited English proficiency. Further, the biculturally committed group had more positive feelings about school and relied more on school counselors for academic support than their counterparts, who tended to rely on extended family.

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Clarke, J., & Clarke, J. (2010, October). *High educational aspirations as a barrier to successful university participation: Learning from Sudanese student experience* **[Conference presentation]. Proceedings of the 9th Conference of the New Zealand Bridging Educators. University of Wellington, New Zealand.** http://fabenz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/NZ-Bridging-Educators-Conference-Proceedings-2010.pdf
This study is based on in-depth interviews of Sudanese students from the University of Southern Queensland. Nine adult students from refugee backgrounds were interviewed about their experiences as university students. The research questions included, "What are the major challenges and surprises encountered in your interactions at university?" "What services do you use at university and why?" and "What can be done better to assist Sudanese students at school?" The students had come to higher education by various routes, including those who viewed the university as a last resort after other options (such as employment) had not been realized. Students were surprised by the degree to which students were expected to work independently in Australia, and they felt uncomfortable participating in group discussions and doing oral presentations. The researchers recommend that the teachers provide more direction on assignments; that the university provide more language, study skills, and computer classes; that more tutorials be offered in academic skills such as critical writing, group work, and critical thinking; and that students be offered more opportunities to mix with Australian students and have greater access to traineeships.

Earnest, J., Joyce, A., de Mori, G., & Silvagni, G. (2010). Are universities responding to the needs of students from refugee backgrounds? *Australian Journal of Education, 54*(2), 155–174. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F000494411005400204
This study had three main objectives: (a) Examine the perspectives and needs of students from refugee backgrounds enrolled in higher education; (b) document how these experiences influence personal educational outcomes and engagement with university life and culture; and (c) propose student-based recommendations for universities. A total of 10 in-depth, semistructured interviews were conducted with six male participants and four female

participants from Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, and Eritrea who attend an Australian university. Despite variation in the sample and the diverse and complex backgrounds particular to each student, the researchers found common themes among them. For instance, many students shared that their university experience often is overwhelming given the combination of stressors relative to resettlement issues and adapting to new educational settings, making it challenging for them to just focus on school and courses. Students recommended the following interventions (among others): more guidance and support to attend university while they are still in high school; increased resources and attention during the first year of college; and increased financial support. The authors noted that more research is needed on refugees in college and not just in high school.

El Jack, A. (2010). "Education is my mother and father": The "invisible" women of Sudan. *Refuge, 27*(2),19–31. https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.34719
This article provides a comprehensive overview of the unique gendered experiences of Southern Sudanese refugee women and girls who are seeking educational opportunities in the United States. Relevant to this bibliography, the author interviewed 10 female students attending various colleges and universities across the country. Some students shared that their educational experiences adequately prepared them for tertiary study. Other participants were enthused that higher education allows them to contribute to their households and communities. Despite these opportunities, female refugees, many of whom experienced gender-based violence prior to arrival, also struggled with language barriers and had inadequate childcare while they were in college. The author argues that refugee services must take gender into account; otherwise, female students will continue to be marginalized and underserved.

Ferede, M. (2010). Structural factors associated with higher education access for first-generation refugees in Canada: An agenda for research. *Refuge, 27*(2), 79–88. https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.34724
The author of this paper is particularly interested in exploring what structural factors are associated with higher education

access for first-generation refugees in Canada. The first half of the essay makes the case for why it is important to focus on the educational outcome of refugees, noting that it makes good economic and civic sense for the country. The literature review is restricted to empirical studies written in English on first-generation refugees to Canada. The findings demonstrate that low-income individuals in Canada are less likely to attend university than their wealthier counterparts, and most refugees are low income. Research indicates that low-income refugees are likely to misperceive the costs and benefits of higher education and to be deterred by high tuition costs. The author argues that the gap in the literature exposes a need for inquiry into the ways in which prearrival experiences influence refugees' participation in Canada's postsecondary institutions. The paper concludes by underscoring the need for qualitative research, not just empirical studies.

Gray, K., & Irwin, E. (2013, November 27–29). *Pathways to social Inclusion: The participation of refugee students in higher education* [Conference presentation]. **Proceedings of the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia Conference, Flexibility: Pathways to Participation, Melbourne, Australia.** https://doi.org/10.18793/lcj2015.17.02
This paper outlines the growth of refugee student participation in targeted programs at the University of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia. It includes a discussion of the educational and cultural barriers to learning that refugee students face, the range of support currently provided, and the challenges to effectively support these students in their academic/professional goals and participation in the broader community. The authors note several themes that impact students' success at the institution: the cultural meanings placed on education and the importance of family; negotiating learning styles in an unfamiliar setting; and the crucial intersections between education, community, and social inclusion. The findings show that refugees view higher education not only as a pathway to employment but also as a link to a higher degree of social status within their specific ethnic community. Finally, the authors argue that universities are well positioned to take the lead in linking refugee students with their local communities and facilitating social inclusion rather than marginalization in the country.

Harris, V., & Marlowe, J. (2011). Hard yards and high hopes: The educational challenges of African refugee university students in Australia. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 23*(3), 186–196. http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/pdf/IJTLHE935.pdf
This paper draws upon interviews with African refugee students and academic staff at an Australian university. Twenty students were interviewed in focus groups of up to four participants, and 10 teaching staff were interviewed individually. Students were asked to reflect upon their experience at the university so far, including any challenges or racism they may have encountered. Staff interviews focused on their perceptions of this group of students and their potential obstacles at university. Staff often expressed concerns that they do not have the specific capacity or time to address issues relating to English language writing and comprehension, and thus are "setting up the students to fail" outside of the university. Many students reported challenges with developing language comprehension, adapting to new academic expectations, finding culturally appropriate means of seeking help, and balancing community obligations with university life. The authors recommend that institutions with critical masses of refugee students (a) invest in cultural competence and move beyond an orientation model in favor of long-term academic support and intervention; (b) help students overcome "forbearance" or the reluctance to seek support from faculty and staff; and (c) recognize the additional labor involved in providing quality emotional, social, and academic support for disadvantaged and minoritized populations.

Jehangir, R., Stebleton, M., & Deenanath, V. (2015). *An exploration of intersecting identities of first-generation, low-income students.* **National Resource Center.**
Using Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecology theory, this study seeks to understand the multiple and fluid identities of upper-division first-generation refugee students at a large, public, predominantly white research institution in Minnesota. Data were drawn from focus groups (*n* = 39), and six major themes emerged: (a) visible/invisible, (b) different worlds, (c) perpetual border crosser, (d) burden of privilege, (e) establishing voice, and (f) call for genuine commitment. The authors stress that the first-gen

population is a diverse and heterogeneous group; therefore, it is important not to generalize findings or provide generic support for these students. Further, most of the students described a push-and-pull relationship with their families. Many students also experienced racial microaggressions at the university, and several described feeling anxious about the increasing cost of college attendance relative to their financial aid.

Joyce, A., Earnest, J., DeMori, G., & Silvagni. G. (2010). The experiences of students from refugee backgrounds at universities in Australia: Reflections on the social, emotional, and practical challenges. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 23*(1), 82–97. http://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq001
This paper reports on the findings of a study undertaken with students from refugee backgrounds studying at universities in Victoria and Western Australia. The study used focus groups and in-depth interviews to capture the voices and perceptions of refugee students. Eleven in-depth, semistructured interviews were conducted with six male and five female participants from various African countries. Two major findings are that students have to balance learning the Australian higher education system while also learning how to be a general citizen of the country (e.g., public transportation, banking system), and female students have additional domestic responsibilities at home. The researchers argue that universities could take a more active role in promoting their courses through their community, church groups, and civil society to act as a bridge to university and to assist refugee students with enrollment challenges.

Kanno, Y., & Varghese, M. (2010). Immigrant and refugee ESL students' challenges to accessing four-year college education: From language policy to educational policy. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, 9*(5), 310–328. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2010.517693
The purpose of this study is to examine what challenges immigrant and refugee English as a Second Language students face in accessing and participating in higher education, with a primary focus on the students' perspectives. *Immigrant* and *refugee ESL students* are defined as first-generation immigrants in the United States for whom English is not their first language

or their English proficiency is considered insufficient for university standards. The researchers interviewed 33 ESL students and seven university personnel at a major public university. The study found that linguistic challenges were not the participants' primary concerns; rather, the students identified three other barriers to their success: (a) structural constraints at the school that applied only to ESL students (such as course requirements), (b) limited financial resources, and (c) self-censorship or self-doubt that led them to believe that they are not full members of the university community. The findings suggest a need for policy changes that shift away from remediating the students' academic literacy to policies and resources that address their social, cultural, and linguistic capital. The authors also advocate for multilingualism in classrooms and the incorporation of non-English languages in composition courses. Additionally, they recommend university outreach programs that specifically identify and target ESL students through graduation. Finally, the researchers call for stronger partnerships between community colleges and 4-year institutions, given that these students are more likely to begin their pathway at a community college.

Lawson, L. (2014). "I have to be my own mother and father": The African student experience at university, a case study using narrative analysis. *The Australasian Review of African Studies, 35*(1), 59–74.
This article focuses on the experience of one refugee college student attending a university in Australia. The primary research question is, What factors enabled the student to navigate and to succeed on campus? Through his narrative, which is shared over a 2-year period, the student reveals that he had difficulty identifying university resources, he struggled to pick classes and to choose his major, and he also experienced racism. The article's title is taken from one of the student's reflections that he has had to make decisions about school and careers with little to no parental guidance. Despite structural and institutional barriers, he demonstrated considerable resilience and perseverance. The author argues that universities need to find intentional ways to engage refugee students like this one and to make them feel welcomed and part of the campus community. Additionally, credit-bearing units that deal with cross-cultural issues proved

to be helpful. The author also recommends a dedicated contact person for students from refugee backgrounds in addition to specific orientation sessions that address cross-cultural issues and strategies for successful study.

Morrice, L. (2009). Journeys into higher education: The case of refugees in the U.K. *Teaching in Higher Education, 14*(6), 661–672. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510903315282.
In this piece, the author highlights the stories of four individuals who enrolled in a 6-month accredited course, Ways Into Learning and Work, intended to provide advanced higher education pathways and career support for refugees in the United Kingdom who earned professional degrees in their home countries. Participants reported that the course supported them in identifying a career path thanks primarily to networking with visiting speakers and mentors in the course. They were able to navigate the U.K. higher education system only by having direct contact with admissions officers, as opposed to via the traditional application process. The former students also continued to reach out to the course organizers for support, including letters of reference, support with job applications, and information about advanced English courses. In sum, despite having obtained college degrees elsewhere, the participants had limited social capital in their new country. Through personal reflections, the participants also realized that the cultural capital they had acquired in their home country was not valued in the United Kingdom. Morrice stresses that there are systemic and structural issues that the course could not mediate, such as racism, discrimination, and poverty; the author argues that program evaluations must be captured over time to identify some of these nuances and not just focus only on quantitative data such as job placement.

Ramsay, G., Baker, S., Miles, L., & Irwin, E. (2016). Reimagining support models for students from refugee backgrounds: Understandings, spaces and empowerment. In M. Davis & A. Goody (Eds.), *Research and development in higher education: The shape of higher education* **(pp. 279–288). Fremantle: Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia.**
This paper is based on research that explores the

experiences of students from refugee backgrounds enrolled in undergraduate degree programs at a regional university in Australia, where the student and staff population is predominantly from a monocultural Australian background. The research design included in-depth, semistructured interviews with seven students, ongoing engagement with the participants over the 3-month period of research, and a follow-up meeting with the participants to seek feedback on the researchers' interpretations of the project findings. This methodology was chosen to highlight the voices of the students themselves. The participants reported feeling excluded from institutional support systems, and it is believed that spaces on campus were designed for a homogenous student body. In the discussion, the authors stress that it is important for staff to recognize students' distinct experiences, backgrounds, and cultures/ native languages. They recommend that student services be redesigned in collaboration with students to address their specific needs.

Silburn, J., Earnest, J., De Mori, G., & Butcher, L. (2010). *Life: Learning interactively for engagement—Meeting the pedagogical needs of students from refugee backgrounds: Final report.* **Australian Learning and Teaching Council.**
In this summary of a funded report is a call for new teaching approaches to account for the increase in refugee students in Australian universities. The goals were to learn about the students' experiences and then develop pedagogical practices accordingly using a precede-proceed model. It is found that students need constant year-round support and that current university or orientation courses are not sufficient and need to be extended. In addition to this publication, the Council produced and distributed an awareness-raising DVD for academic staff.

Turner, M., & Fozdar, F. T. (2010). Negotiating "community" in educational settings: Adult South Sudanese students in Australia. *Journal of Intercultural Studies, 31*(4), 363–382. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2010.491276
This paper focuses on the ways in which learning was influenced by refugee students' perceptions and subsequent

negotiation of community. The methodology included observation of 40 South Sudanese adult students, alongside some semistructured interviews. The participants saw education not merely as an individual endeavor, but as a way to achieve long-term goals for their community. The researchers observed that students were more successful when they viewed their teachers/instructors as helping them achieve their goals. For Sudanese refugees living in Australia (and other refugee groups), culture and community contribute to students' learning outcomes and educational experiences. The authors of this paper argue that teachers can and should be aware of these connections and be mindful that the learning environment is part of the students' orientation to the broader local community and not independent of it.

Vu, L., & Walter, N. (2013). *Preparing immigrant students for education in Minnesota*. **Minnesota Office of Higher Education.** In response to changing demographics in the state of Minnesota, this report seeks to understand the unique experiences of immigrant students and to identify best practices for serving this population. A survey was sent to project directors of 10 organizations that specifically offer college access resources and programming for immigrant students in the state. The authors identified several barriers, including the model minority stereotype, limited social capital, and institutionalized biases against immigrants. The project directors recommend a number of opportunities, such as providing transportation so that parents and students can attend events, holistic programming that addresses first-generation identity, and culturally relevant materials, perhaps even delivered with a representative from the community serving as a mediator between the organization and the family.

MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE

First-generation characters featured in contemporary television shows, films, and other forms of popular culture generally reflect the broad diversity of the first-generation population itself. These include dynamic representations of race and ethnicity, including under-represented first-generation subpopulations such as Asian Americans and white students.

Unsurprisingly, most of these narratives uphold the Horatio Alger myth, which stresses rugged individuality, perseverance, upward mobility, and hope, especially within a U.S. context. First-generation students (or graduates) are depicted as heroic as they seek some type of tangible success or goal, such as college admission. "First-gen-ness" in these texts often is expressed in characteristics and not explicitly described or mentioned in the plot itself.

Documentaries that tackle the first-gen experience tend to be didactic and focused on a particular aspect of the college journey, usually a college acceptance. Many of these stories follow a small group of diverse first-generation students over the course of a year as they typically compete for a prize in a competition against more privileged peers. The upside to this formula is that the admissions process and mitigating external factors (e.g., family unemployment) are made visible to the viewer; the drawback is that the stories often end before the college experience itself begins, with only

summary text indicating "where [the students] are now." Given the popularity and accessibility of these documentaries, it would be useful to have some that follow students throughout their college careers, particularly nontraditional students such as transfers and returning adults.

In contrast, narrative films span the first-generation college spectrum in terms of student experience and tone. For instance, several of the movies included in this section represent an adult's first-gen identity beyond college and into their career. As is true of memoirs and other printed texts, class conflict and interethnic tensions are popular themes; however, expansive genres like science fiction, fantasy, or animation allow for more creativity and even humor.

There is a long history of first-generation students being admitted to college on popular television shows ranging from *The Waltons* to *Dawson's Creek* and *The O.C.* Their more modern counterparts focus more directly and explicitly on the first-gen experience by featuring major storylines and not just a brief story arc or

special episode. These more recent narratives also address the intersections of identity, such as race, class, and sexuality. Many of the first-gen characters in these shows experience dualism and code-switching between two worlds.

Regardless of genre, most of these television shows depict a broad spectrum of first-generation experiences, while often focusing on the lingering impact of being first-generation *adults*. As first-generation professionals, many of these characters continue to struggle with family expectations. It is noteworthy that first-generation identity typically comes to the forefront when a primary character engages with young people, especially their own children, who have greater resources and advantages comparatively.

The majority of these projects focus either on precollege or postcollege experiences, so there is a need for more representation of first-generation students *in college*. Also, Latinx characters are under-represented in these depictions.

Documentaries

A Walk in My Shoes: First-Generation College Students (2014)

This is the third installment of a documentary series produced by Kansas State University School of Education. This particular short film focuses on eight first-generation students attending Kansas State. Run time: 57 min 02 secs

College Behind Bars (2019)

A four-part series produced for PBS, this documentary focuses on men and women inmates who pursue college degrees through the Bard College prison education program. The majority of the students identify as first-generation students. Director: Lynn Novick. Run time: part one: 57 min 53 secs; part two: 56 min 52 secs; part three: 57 min 33 secs; part four: 57 mins 29 secs

First Generation (2011)

Narrated by Blair Underwood, this film follows four low-income, first-generation high school students in the Central Valley region of California as they apply for college. Directors: Adam Fenderson and Jaye Fenderson. Run time: 1 hr 35 min

No Look Pass (2011)

This film follows Emily Tay, a first-generation Burmese American from Los Angeles, as she graduates from Harvard University and pursues a professional basketball career in Europe. Additionally, she struggles to come out to her parents as a lesbian. Director: Melissa Johnson. Run time: 1 hr 27 min

Personal Statement (2018)

This film follows three high school seniors in Brooklyn as they work as peer college counselors while simultaneously applying to college themselves. The film focuses on the barriers that low-income or first-generation students face. Directors: Juliane Dressner and Edwin Martinez. Run time: 1 hr 27 min

Pressure Cooker (2008)

This documentary follows students of color enrolled in an intensive culinary arts high school course in Philadelphia as they prepare for a national competition and also apply for college. Directors: Jennifer Grausean and Mark Becker. Run time: 99 min

Step (2017)

This film follows four Black high school students—all first-generation—in Baltimore as they prepare for a national step competition and also apply for college. Director: Amanda Lipitz. Run time: 83 min

Unlikely (2019)

This film explores the various external factors that impact student success and contribute to college dropout, such as outstanding debt, caretaking responsibilities, and work obligations, especially for students from first-generation and low-income households. Features NBA player and philanthropist LeBron James and Starbucks founder Howard Schultz (a first-generation graduate). Directors: Adam Fenderson and Jaye Fenderson. Run time: 99 min

Narrative Films

Bilal's Stand (2010)

Bilal, a Black Muslim living in Detroit, must choose between going to college or maintaining the family business. His plan is to enroll at the University of Michigan via an ice-carving scholarship and must contend with family members who question this pathway. This film is based on the real-life experiences of writer-director Sultan Sharrief, who funded the project through the university.

Black Panther (2018)

Central to this storyline is the tension between T'Challa/Black Panther, raised in Wakanda, and his cousin, N'Jadaka/Erik Killmonger, who is orphaned in the United States. T'Challa has more economic resources, social capital, and familial capital; conversely, Killmonger grew up without both of his parents in a poor or working-class area of Oakland, California. It can be argued that there is considerable sympathy toward

Killmonger although he also is T'Challa's antagonist. In fact, he embodies considerable first-generation qualities, such as resilience, perseverance, and resourcefulness. Killmonger is depicted as angry and resentful toward T'Challa, yet the film is sympathetic toward his Black liberationist philosophy. Further, his intelligence and military skills are highlighted, including his education at the U.S. Naval Academy and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Candy Jar (2018)

This lighthearted romantic comedy focuses on two ambitious high school students (Bennett and Lona) who must put aside their competitiveness in order to form a united debate team. Bennett's mother identifies as first-generation and is now determined to give her son all of the privileges that she did not have. Meanwhile, Lona will be the first in her family to attend college and is focused on attending Harvard University.

Crazy Rich Asians (2018)

This romantic comedy is based on a novel by Kevin Kwan. Rachel, a Chinese American economics professor raised in the United States, learns that her popular and handsome Chinese boyfriend, Nick, is from a wealthy family in Singapore and is expected to take over the family business. The bulk of the film centers around class conflict and also interethnic clashes among Asian Americans and Asians. Additionally, Rachel experiences imposter syndrome as she compares her first-generation and working-class background to Nick's family and upbringing.

Monsters University (2013)

In this prequel to the popular animated film **Monsters, Inc.,** we learn how Mike and Sulley became scarers—and friends—while in college. Sulley comes from a lineage of scarers, whereas Mike is the first in his family to pursue this field and must work hard at the major, unlike Sulley who has more privileges. Much of the film depicts Mike and Sulley's attempts to join a fraternity and fit in at school.

Queen & Slim (2019)

Among other themes, this film explores class conflict within the Black community. Queen is an ambitious attorney who goes on a Tinder date with the more reserved and humble Slim. Following a fateful and fatal encounter with a white police officer, the two go on the lam and must learn to reconcile their differences and work together as a team. After the duo travels to New Orleans, we learn that Queen comes from a working-class background and has been estranged from her family, including her uncle, a pimp, who paid for her college education.

Shaft (2019)

Set in the 2010s, this film focuses on three generations of Shaft men. JJ, the grandson of legendary detective John Shaft, breaks away from family tradition by going to college (MIT) and becoming a cybersecurity expert. His formal education is a source of tension (and comedy) within the family as his father believes that JJ is not tough enough to work alongside him during a case. Other themes include racial authenticity and masculinity.

Spare Parts (2015)

This film is based on the true story of a group of Latinx students who attend an underfunded public high school in Arizona. Despite their lack of resources, the young men (three of whom are undocumented) go on to win first place in a robotics competition against the privileged and better resourced MIT team.

Strive (2019)

This story is partly based on the experiences of coscreenwriter Sha-Risse Smith. The protagonist is Kalani, a high school senior living in a tough Harlem neighborhood. Despite extenuating external factors, Kalani desires to attend Yale University with the help of her guidance counselor.

Zootopia (2016)

Ambitious bunny and eldest child Judy Hopps is the first in her family to go to the police academy and also is class

valedictorian. At the beginning of this animated movie, Judy leaves behind her family and small town to become a police officer in the urban Zootopia. She is relegated to parking duty because her superiors doubt her abilities as a rabbit.

Television Shows

The Big Bang Theory (2007–2019)
This sitcom focuses on the friendships of four scientists who work at Caltech University in Pasadena, California. One of them, Sheldon Cooper, has a genius IQ and regularly discusses how different he felt from his working-class family, who were often confounded and annoyed by his intelligence. Despite these tensions, Sheldon's mother, who makes periodic appearances on the show, is protective and supportive of her son. A spin-off series, *Young Sheldon*, focuses on Sheldon's childhood in rural Texas, where he attended high school at age 9.

Black-ish (2014–present)
This show is narrated by Andre Johnson, a married first-generation professional and father living in an upper-middle-class Los Angeles suburb. Many episodes derive from Dre's concerns that he has spoiled his children, who grew up with more privileges than he had as a youth. As his eldest children, Zoey and Junior, prepare for college, we learn more about Dre's college experience at Howard University. The Netflix show *Black AF* (2020) is a variation on this theme and is also created by Kenya Barris, himself a first-generation graduate.

BoJack Horseman (2014–2020)
Series regulars Princess Carolyn and Diane Nguyen have episodes dedicated to their backgrounds, where it is revealed that they are the first in their families to attend college. Princess Carolyn grew up in a small Southern town. While in high school, she helped her mother clean houses until she gained admission to UCLA. In season one, we learn that Diane is the only one of her siblings (none of whom left their hometown) to attend college, and her brothers think that Diane is stuck up and thinks she is better than they are.

The Bold Type (2017–present)
This show follows the careers and personal lives of three millennials who work for a fictional publication in New York City. A number of episodes are dedicated to Sutton Brady, who not only hails from a small town but also is the first generation of her family to go to college. She often experiences tensions when she returns home for visits.

Boomerang (2019–present)
This comedic sequel to the 1992 movie *Boomerang* focuses on a group of millennials who work in marketing, and two of them are following in the footsteps of their successful parents. Ari, on the other hand, is a first-generation graduate who also is exploring his sexual identity.

Cheerleader Generation on Lifetime (2019)
This one-season series is a follow-up to Cheerleader Nation (2006) and documents a season spent with Ryan O'Connor, head coach of the University of Mississippi cheerleading squad. One of the cheerleaders, Kevin, is first-generation student who must balance being on the squad with working and maintaining a required GPA. Kevin describes school as "safe" for him, compared to his hometown in Mississippi, and feels pressure to do well because he is the first in his family to go to college.

Community (2009–2015)
Set at a community college in Colorado, this sitcom focuses on the relationships formed between racially diverse study group members. One of the students, Abed, is from a Pakistani/White American background and is raised by his single father, who permits Abed to take courses in order to take over the family eatery business. Over time, Abed realizes that he is passionate about film, which causes tension between the two of them.

Cristela (2014–2015)
The main character in this sitcom, Cristela, returns to live at home with family members after completing law school and taking an unpaid internship. Cristela's working-class family

struggles to understand why she cannot obtain a paid or "real" job, while her mother pressures her to settle down and get married.

Dear White People (2017–present)

This series, based on a movie (2014) and a book (2014) by the same name, dramatizes the experiences of Black students attending a fictionalized Ivy League university. Several episodes focus on ambitious Coco Conners, the first in her family to attend college thanks to the support of a mentor.

Friday Night Lights (2006–2011)

During season three, the show focuses on the college application process of four first-to-college students: Tyra Collette, Tim Riggins, Matt Saracen, and Brian "Smash" Williams. Each of the students has a different path toward college and struggles with wanting to stay near family in their small, rural town in Texas versus pursuing their individual dreams elsewhere. Additionally, Tim, Smash, and Matt are high school football players. This series also is based on a feature film (2004) and best-selling book by H. G. Bissinger (1990).

Grown-ish (2017–present)

Several characters on this show, a spin-off of *Black-ish*, are first-generation students, including Aaron, twin sisters Sky and Jazz (on athletic scholarships), and Vivek (whose parents were not educated in the United States). One lingering storyline over the course of the first three seasons is Aaron's struggle to pay for school and his accumulated student loan debt.

How to Get Away With Murder (2014–2020)

Series protagonist Annalise Keating is a Black queer criminal law professor from humble beginnings. Keating, whose birth name is Anna Mae Harkness, attended the University of Tennessee and then Harvard University Law School. Several episodes address Annalise's backstory and the imposter syndrome that she often feels.

Jane the Virgin (2006–2010)

This series is based on a Venezuelan telenovela, *Juana la Virgen*, about the dramatic life events of a Venezuelan American woman. Jane is the first in her family to complete college and graduate school. Several episodes show her determination to finish her degree and to balance school while working and being a single mother. The show takes place in Miami, Florida.

Kim's Convenience (2016–2021)

Set in Toronto, Canada, the show focuses on the Kim family, who own a convenience store (although Umma and Appa each earned college degrees in Korea). Daughter Janet attends a local art institute and regularly experiences challenges as a result of living at home. She often is frustrated because her parents don't understand why she chose to attend art school instead of pursuing something more practical. Janet's older brother, Jung, is known to have a troubled past. The show is based on a 2011 play by Ins Choi.

Last Chance U on Netflix (2016–2020)

For five seasons, this original docuseries focused on competitive football programs at three different community colleges. The majority of the players are the first in their families to attend college, and many experience culture shock, homesickness, or academic difficulty. The first four seasons are set in rural Kansas, while the fifth and final season takes place in Oakland, California. The show also highlights the home environments and support systems of individual players. *Last Chance U: Basketball* premiered in 2021.

Ozark (2017–present)

While the Byrde family is the focus of this crime drama, one significant subplot involves Wyatt Langmore, a smart but financially insecure young man as he applies for college and considers leaving his small town in the Ozarks behind.

Shameless on Showtime (2011–present)
The series depicts the poor, dysfunctional family of Frank Gallagher, a single father raising six children in Chicago. Phillip (or "Lip") is the strongest academic performer in the family, who also engages in self-destructive behavior like drinking alcohol, having unprotected sex, and fighting while in high school. Seasons three through five focus on his experiences at Chicago Polytechnic, a local college that he chose because he received a full scholarship and so that he could be close to home.

Sons of Anarchy (2008–2014)
While focusing on the character Jax Teller, this show follows the lives of an outlaw motorcycle club in Central Valley, California. In the series pilot, Jax's high school sweetheart, Tara Knowles, returns to live and work in their small town after moving away for college and medical school. A talented surgeon, Tara struggles throughout the series to balance her working-class past and relationship with Jax with her professional career and upwardly mobile aspirations.

Mayans M.C. (2018–present)
This spin-off of *Sons of Anarchy* focuses on Ezekiel "EZ" Reyes, who briefly attended Stanford University before being sentenced to prison and then joining a motorcycle club.

Resident Advisors (2015)
This short series on Hulu focuses on five college Resident Advisors, all with varying backgrounds including age, race, and sex. The comedy builds on college stereotypes including partying, sex, drugs, alcohol, and working while in college. The story arc for one character, Sam Parker, shows how he must work multiple jobs as a first-generation student in order to put himself through college. The show also depicts the tension between students from affluent families compared to working-class families and how students depend on certain resources in order to make it through college.

Miscellaneous
Hamilton (2015)
As imagined by writer and musician Lin-Manuel Miranda, Alexander Hamilton is an orphaned immigrant who comes to the United States (New York) to attend college and to reinvent himself. His foil, Aaron Burr, both is privileged and comes from a more reputable background. Hamilton looks up to General George Washington as a mentor and also struggles to balance his individual ambition with the larger cause of the American Revolution.

"I've been in movement work since I was 16 years old. Black Lives Matter becomes an important part of the story, but it's not the only part of the story."

Patrisse Khan-Cullors, author of *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir*

MEMOIRS AND FICTION

Alongside the increased visibility of first-generation students in research studies and university programs is a corresponding surge in novels, personal essays, memoirs, and other publications that centralize or highlight this identity. For instance, in 2018, Michelle Obama's memoir *Becoming* was the best-selling book of the year, and her experiences as a first-generation student at Princeton University are a critical aspect of the text, not an aside or an omission. Such narratives capture familiar themes—class struggles and family tensions—but also provide rich and nuanced depictions of the experience. This is particularly true of works that are part of a series by the same author.

To be included on this list, either the author mentions being first in the family to attend college or the book contains some critical aspect of the first-generation experience—even if it is implied, such as when Lisa Brennan Jobs, daughter of Apple founder Steve Jobs, describes in her memoir navigating the college application process with little parental involvement.

Summary of Memoirs and Fiction
Very few straight white men are at the center of first-generation narratives; rather, this subgenre of literature is dominated by people of color (especially women) and individuals who identify as LGBTQ+. Additionally, a fair number of stories depict rural areas. Perhaps most significantly, first-generation students or graduates are the main characters and not secondary players or sidekicks.

their passions and life purpose. As students, these characters typically feel guilty for advancing beyond their families. These themes are useful for helping first-generation students explore career options and for understanding a common experience among first-generation professionals.

It is noteworthy that some of these publications are part of a single author book series (e.g., the work of Francisco Jimenez or Janet Mock). These authors highlight a specific time in their lives, such as adolescence or their college years, in one text. That narrow focus allows for more time spent on one aspect of life; readers also can witness a character's growth over time, as they would in a case study or a longitudinal study.

Future Studies and Research

Given the diversity of authors represented and the rich themes explored, we hope to see more narratives, memoirs, autobiographies, and fiction centralize the *college* experience; in other words, many of the works to date end just before college begins or jumps ahead to life postgraduation. Because there already exists a considerable body of published works, there is a need for accompanying critical scholarship that more fully situates these texts within a literary or cultural studies milieu. Further, there is value in revisiting texts published before 2008, particularly canonical ones, that contain first-generation narratives but may not have been regarded as such at the time of their publication.[1]

In addition to focusing on the experiences of first-generation students or professionals, the texts here address complex contemporary themes, such as LGBTQ+ identities, immigration, Black Lives Matter, the penal justice system, and racism more generally. These narratives reflect the complexity of the identities and remind practitioners and readers that we cannot think of "first-generation" as a stand-alone identity.

Generally, the narratives tend to follow a similar pattern or trajectory—that is, the main character, usually from a poor or working-class background, achieves success by enrolling at a highly selective public school or, more commonly, an elite private or Ivy League school. The narratives also typically foreground class conflicts. It is a common trope, for instance, for characters or protagonists who are first-generation students to fall in love with someone of a higher social class (and different race), and one of the subplots may involve how the lovers resolve their differences— or not. Additionally, the main characters often face tensions within their own families and feel torn between family obligations and school responsibilities; they also tend to struggle with identifying

We invite practitioners and instructors to incorporate these works into their programming and courses, particularly to fill in gaps in research. For instance, practitioners can refer to these texts in the absence of scholarship on Asian American and Black first-generation students.

Finally, as is the case with scholarship and media focus, there is too great a focus on Ivy League institutions. More works are needed from authors who did not attend these elite schools.

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[1] See, for example, *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), *Hunger of Memory* (1982), *A Lesson Before Dying* (1994), *An American Story* (2001).

References – Fiction

Bacho, P. (2010). *Leaving Yesler.* **Pleasure Boat Studio.**
This young adult (YA) novel and coming-of-age story takes place during the Vietnam War. Eighteen-year-old Bobby, the Black and Puerto Rican protagonist, lives in a Seattle housing project where he takes care of his elderly Filipino stepfather while also working and preparing to attend community college. Right before school begins, Bobby begins to see visions of his deceased mother and older brother, who help him make decisions about his future.

Bardugo, L. (2019). *Ninth house.* **FlatIron Books.**
This is the first "adult" novel by YA writer Leigh Bardugo. Like the popular film *The Skulls* (2000), this book features a white, first-generation, working-class protagonist who is on scholarship at Yale University and must navigate the school's notorious secret societies. This dark fantasy text also directly addresses imposter syndrome and the challenges of attending an unfamiliar institution that has hidden rituals and traditions.

Capo Crucet, J. (2009). *How to leave Hialeah.* **University of Iowa Press.**
Included in this collection of short stories set in Miami, Florida, are working-class Cuban American characters who are first-generation students or graduates. They balance family responsibilities with their own personal and professional goals.

Capo Crucet, J. (2015). *Make your home among strangers.* **St. Martin's.**
Crucet's debut novel is loosely based on her own experiences. Lizet, the protagonist, is a first-generation student reared in a working-class area of Miami and attends a fictitious private university in the Northeastern United States. The novel chronicles only Lizet's first year at the school as she attempts to understand and navigate the institution while also remaining connected with her family back at home. She is confounded when a professor accuses her of academic plagiarism and requires that she use the school's academic support services. Lizet initially turns down a paid summer internship in California because she believes that she is needed at home; however, she eventually accepts despite disappointing her family.

Chao, G. (2019). *American panda.* **Simon Pulse.**
In this semi-autobiographical YA novel, the heroine, Mei, is the 17-year-old daughter of Taiwanese immigrants who want her to become a doctor. Now a freshman at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Mei realizes that she hates biology; her true passion is dance. She also develops a crush on a fellow student, who is Japanese American. Other themes include body shaming, intergenerational conflict, and overcoming stereotypes.

De la Cruz, M. (2017). *Something in between.* **Harlequin Teen.**
In this YA novel, the protagonist, a daughter of Filipino immigrants, learns that she is undocumented shortly after receiving a prestigious scholarship. She also falls in love with the son of a Congress member who is fighting against an immigration reform bill.

Granfors, E. (2013). *The piñata-maker's daughter.* **Word Joy.**
This book is the first in a trilogy known as the Marisol series. Set in Southern California during the mid-1980s, this volume chronicles the college experience of Carmen Principia, the daughter of Mexican immigrants. Carmen struggles with fitting in at school with her traditional Mexican upbringing.

Johnson, T. G. (2015). *Welcome to Braggsville: A novel.* **William Morrow.**
The main character in this satire is D'aron Davenport, a white, working-class man from the rural South, who attends the University of California, Berkeley. Initially feeling out of place, he forms friendships with three other marginalized students who all enroll in the same American History course. During their sophomore year, the four friends take a road trip to visit D'aron's hometown—to witness a longstanding Civil War reenactment and to educate the townspeople on the legacy of slavery. Disaster ensues.

Jones, T. (2019). *An American marriage.* **Algonquin Books.**
This novel explores the criminal justice system and its bias toward Black men; it also tackles class conflicts within the Black community. Celestial and Roy meet in college and later marry, but their different backgrounds become a source of tension, especially after Roy is wrongfully accused and convicted of raping a white woman. Roy is a working-class, first-generation graduate.

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Meyers, P. (2009). *American rust.* **Spiegel & Grau.**
Set in the 2000s in rural Pennsylvania, this novel focuses on two promising working-class high school graduates with college aspirations who, for various reasons, end up remaining in their hometown. The sister of one of the characters does flee to college (Yale), where she feels alienated due to her social class and first-generation status.

Nguyen, B. M. (2014). *Pioneer girl.* **Penguin Random House.**
After completing her PhD, Lee Lien returns home to Chicago and works in her family's Vietnamese restaurant as she struggles to please her family and determine where her true passions lie. Lee distracts herself with an obsession with author Laura Ingalls Wilder; that fixation leads her on a road trip.

Porter, J. (2013, August 3). Reflections on the road to Harvard. *The New York Times.*
The author gives a first-person account of his journey from a low-performing high school in Mississippi to his first year at Harvard. He describes his achievements in high school as well as his ideas for improving the likelihood that students from underprivileged backgrounds can succeed at elite colleges.

Reid, K. (2019). *Such a fun age.* **G. P. Putnam's Sons.**
This book addresses racial profiling, "class passing," and interracial conflict. It focuses on the tense relationship between a Black first-generation graduate in need of steady employment and her upper-middle-class white employer who also comes from a working-class background.

Revoyr, N. (2019). *A student of history.* **Akashic Books.**
The main character of this novel is Rick Nagano, a Japanese American graduate student in the history program at the University of Southern California. Rick is the first in his family to graduate from college. Struggling with writer's block, Rick feels ashamed that he is progressing slowly in school and that he cannot contribute more financially to his family. To earn extra money, he accepts a job as a research assistant to a white, wealthy heiress to an oil fortune. A mystery unfolds as he grows closer to "Mrs. W—," and Rick is drawn into a world of privilege far different from his racially mixed, blue-collar upbringing.

Rooney, S. (2018). *Normal people.* **Hogarth.**
This award-winning novel is praised for the way that it captures the lives of millennials. The protagonists, Connell and Marianne, meet and fall in love while they are still in high school. The book follows their on-again/off-again romance while both attend Trinity College Dublin. Initially, Connell, who comes from a working-class background, struggles to find his place at the university and in Dublin, which is a larger, more metropolitan area than his small hometown. Other themes include mental health and wellness. *Normal People* was made into a television series on Hulu in 2020.

Roth, P. (2008). *Indignation.* **Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.**
Set in 1951 during the Korean War, this novel is narrated by Marcus, who is a second-generation butcher and the first of his family (which is Jewish) to go to college. During his sophomore year, Marcus transfers to Winesburg College in Ohio to get away from his father, who has become anxious about his son's future. He also becomes involved with a wealthy Christian classmate who is the daughter of an elected official. The novel was made into a film in 2016.

Sanchez, E. (2017). *I am not your perfect Mexican daughter.* **Knopf Books.**
Recommended for YAs, this coming-of-age story follows Julia Reyes, the 15-year-old daughter of Mexican immigrants. Julia's parents have always been overprotective of her; however, when her 22-year-old sister, Olga, is tragically killed in a bus accident, they strip away what little freedom Julia has. Determined to create a path for herself, Julia decides to apply for college away from home—despite receiving messages that a good daughter stays close by.

Tanabe, K. (2016). *The gilded years.* **Washington Square.**
This historical fiction is based on the real life of Anita Hemmings, a Black woman who was fair enough to pass for white and attend Vassar College, graduating in the class of 1897. Anita is the daughter of a janitor and a descendant of enslaved Africans. She is courted by a white male student at Harvard and is in constant threat of her Black identity being exposed.

Yoon, N. (2016). *The sun is also a star.* **Delacorte.**
The main characters in this YA novel, Natasha and Daniel, randomly meet in New York City and fall in love over the course of one day. Daniel, the dutiful son of Korean American immigrants, is on his way to an interview with Yale University admissions. Meanwhile, Natasha, also to be the first in her family to go to college, is on a mission to prevent her family from being deported to Jamaica. They come to realize their many similarities.

Zoboi, I. (2018). *Pride: A pride & prejudice remix.* **Balzer + Bray.**
This is a modern-day version of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Zuri is the Afro-Latina protagonist in this novel, which takes place in Brooklyn, New York. Although she is initially miffed about the wealthy Black family who moves into her neighborhood, she eventually finds common ground with one of the sons. The Benitez family is working class, and one of the daughters, Janae, attends college; Zuri is applying to college.

References - Memoirs and Nonfiction

Brennan-Jobs, L. (2019). *Small fry: A memoir.* **Grove Press.**
The author is the eldest child of Apple founder Steve Jobs, who notoriously dropped out of college after one semester and whose mother also does not have a college degree. By the time Lisa Brennan-Jobs was in high school, her father was wealthy but erratically involved in her education. In the final chapters of this memoir, Brennan-Jobs describes her difficulty applying to college without parental guidance.

Brown, J. B. (2013). *The boys in the boat.* **Viking.**
The Boys in the Boat tells the epic story of the University of Washington's 1936 eight-oar crew team and its quest for Olympic gold. The team—composed of the sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers from the American West—went on to defeat more privileged opponents, eventually triumphing over a German team.

Capo Crucet, J. C. (2019). *My time among the Whites: An unfinished education.* **Picador Books.**
This is Capo Crucet's first published nonfiction work describing her experience with racism, particularly in school. The first chapter

details her transition to college during her freshman year, focusing specifically on her family's confusion about new student orientation. Subsequent chapters also contain first-generation themes, especially the author's identity as a first-generation faculty member.

Christopher, R. (2009). *A carpenter's daughter: A working-class woman in higher education.* **Sense.**
The author, a faculty member in English and women's studies, uses herself as a case study and intertwines her personal memoir with commentary on social class in the United States. The book covers her graduate school experiences as well.

Collins, M. (2010). *Blue collar, blue scrubs: The making of a surgeon.* **Macmillan.**
In this prequel to his memoir about his residency (*Hot Lights, Cold Steel* [2005]), Collins, an orthopedic surgeon, reflects on his life after college and through medical school at Loyola University School of Medicine. Upon graduating from the University of Notre Dame, the author worked in construction before deciding to pursue a medical career. Although he argues that his blue-collar background makes him a more empathetic physician, Collins also expresses his frustration with the rote memorization in medical school and advocates for a more holistic curriculum.

Cullors, P. (2018). *When they call you a terrorist: A Black Lives Matter memoir.* **St. Martin's.**
Cullors, one of the founders of the Black Lives Matter movement, describes her upbringing in a working-class, multiethnic Southern California neighborhood and her various experiences with police violence. The author also is a first-generation graduate from UCLA where she earned degrees in religion and philosophy. The book also touches on gender and sexuality themes.

Erving, J. (2013). *Dr. J: My life above the rim and behind closed doors.* **Harper.**
This is the memoir of Julius "Dr. J" Erving, the NBA Hall of Fame player who retired from the Philadelphia 76ers franchise. Part one focuses on his youth and aspiration to go to college so that he can rise (this theme appears frequently) out of his circumstances as a working-class youth growing up just outside of New York City. In fact,

it doesn't even occur to Erving that basketball can be a legitimate profession, and he has much anxiety about the decision to leave the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, as he had promised his mother that he would earn a college degree. First-generation themes resurface in part three, after he is married with children, and he reflects upon the decisions that he makes as a parent whose children had many more opportunities than he did.

Grande, R. (2018). *A dream called home.* Atria Books.
Set in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the third memoir from this author focuses on her experiences as an undergraduate at the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC) and then as a working adult and single mother in Los Angeles. Formerly an undocumented resident, Grande is hopeful but also anxious when she transfers from community college to a 4-year university. By the time Grande leaves community college for UCSC, her main sources of emotional support are a professor and a boyfriend who had been accepted to another college. At first, the author feels out of place on the nearly all-white campus, but gradually she finds a place among other Latinx students and in the university's creative writing program. *A Dream Called Home* captures the lasting impact that immigration, parental abandonment, and intergenerational trauma have on children—well into their adulthood.

Guerrero, D. (2016). *In the country we love.* St. Martin's.
Actress Diane Guerrero (*Jane the Virgin* and *Orange Is the New Black*) chronicles her experience living in the United States after her parents were detained and deported for entering the country illegally. The author remained in Boston, living among family and friends, until she entered Regis College, where she struggled with anxiety and depression. Most of the memoir focuses on Guerrero's teenage years, just before she enters college.

Hart, C. (2013). *High price: A neuroscientist's journey of self-discovery that challenges everything you know about drugs and society.* Harper Collins.
One of the author's goals in this memoir is to challenge misconceptions about illegal drug use and to demonstrate that drug addiction is reflective of a broken society. To make this case, Hart describes his own experiences growing up in a poor Black community in Miami, Florida. After high school, he served in the Air Force, which became his path to higher education. In the first chapters of the book, Hart describes his upbringing, time in the military, and years in college and graduate school. He later discusses some of the challenges he faced as he navigated between the worlds of academia—he eventually earns a doctorate—and his family back in Miami. He highlights the challenge of learning white cultural norms and language, and then returning to his family and feeling alienated and unable to connect.

Harts, M. (2019). *The memo: What women of color need to know to secure a seat at the table.* Seal.
Career expert and influencer Minda Harts, a first-generation graduate, offers professional advice specifically for women of color in professional fields. Harts shares advice and strategies that she wishes she had received when she was furthering her own career.

Hernandez, J. (2012). *Reaching for the stars: The inspiring story of a migrant farmworker turned astronaut.* Center Story.
Son of Mexican immigrants, Hernandez is one of few Latinx astronauts for NASA. He and his family were migrant farmworkers in the Stockton, California, area, and Hernandez did not learn English until he was 12 years old. With support from an Upward Bound program, he successfully enrolled in and completed a degree at the University of Pacific before attending graduate school for engineering. This book is often recommended for youth.

Hobbs, J. (2014). *The short and tragic life of Robert Peace: A brilliant young man who left Newark for the Ivy League.* Scribner.
This biography of Robert Peace is written by one of his roommates at Yale University. Peace (African American) was raised by a single mother and grew up in Newark, New Jersey. He earned a full scholarship to Yale, where he studied molecular biochemistry and biophysics. Robert thrived at college but kept his home life separate. Hobbs (white) comes to learn that his roommate is a marijuana dealer on campus and also sells back in his home neighborhood. After graduation, Peace teaches at a Catholic high school and is murdered at age 30. The book has been optioned into a film, which will be directed by award-winning actor Chiwetel Ejiofor.

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Jimenez, F. (2008). *Reaching out.* **Houghton Mifflin.**
The second in a biographical triology series intended for YAs, this book by author Francisco Jimenez describes his experiences at Santa Clara University as he deals with the guilt of leaving his family behind.

Lenfenstey, K. (Ed.). (2016). *Every student has a story: Personal narratives from first-generation college students.* **CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.**
This collection of personal essays was written by participants in a TRIO program at Indiana University–Purdue University in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Topics include negotiating family dynamics, maintaining mental health and wellness, and choosing a college major.

Leon, J. D. (Ed.). (2014). *Wise Latinas: Writers on higher education.* **University of Nebraska Press.**
Inspired by a quote from Chief Justice Sonia Sotomayor, this book is a collection of essays about higher education, written by women throughout the Latin American diaspora. The writers, most of whom also identify as first-generation students, discuss a range of experiences throughout the academic pipeline. Many of the essays address family relations.

Mock, J. (2017). *Surpassing certainty: What my twenties taught me* **(also known as** *A twentysomething memoir***). Atria Books.**
Janet Mock's second book focuses on her undergraduate and graduate experiences at the University of Hawaii and New York University, respectively. To pay for college, Mock works as a stripper until she meets her first husband, who is also the first lover to whom she discloses her transgender identity. She pursues a journalism degree and describes the isolation she feels away from her family and her native Hawaiian home.

Obama, M. (2018). *Becoming.* **Crown Publishing Group.**
Obama's memoir spans from her childhood days through her time as First Lady. A considerable amount of the narrative is dedicated to her experience as a first-generation student at Princeton University. Obama describes having imposter syndrome even though her older brother also attended Princeton.

Phelps, C. (2013). *Runaway girl: Escaping life on the streets.* **Penguin Books.**
This memoir details the cycle of physical and sexual abuse that the author experienced throughout her teenage years, beginning at age 12. Growing up in the Fresno, California, area, Phelps was seduced and kidnapped into the sex-trafficking industry after running away from home. Thanks to the support and advocacy of a math teacher, she would go on to obtain a degree in mathematics from Fresno State University and eventually earn professional degrees from UCLA. Phelps founded Runaway Girl, a company that increases awareness of child sex trafficking and provides career opportunities for runaway youth. The documentary film *Carissa* (2008) is about Phelps's life.

Quinones-Hinojosa, A. (2011). *Becoming Dr. Q: My journey from migrant farm worker to brain surgeon.* **University of California Press.**
This autobiography tells the journey of a migrant farm worker who became one of the most distinguished surgeons in modern times. Sectioned into three parts—"Stargazing," "Harvesting," and "Becoming Dr. Q"—the book follows Quinones-Hinojosa from his impoverished childhood in Mexico to crossing the U.S. border, to becoming an American citizen and gifted student at University of California, Berkeley and later at Harvard Medical School.

Smarsh, S. (2018). *Heartland: A memoir of working hard and being broke in the richest country on Earth.* **Scribner Books.**
In this book, Smarsh, a journalist, contextualizes her personal narrative within a broader historical context; she addresses how Reaganomics affected U.S. farmers and her family specifically. She also critiques the limited opportunities available for Midwestern women, especially single mothers. The book mainly focuses on Smarsh's precollege experiences, but she does briefly describe her college experience as a TRIO student at the University of Kansas, noting the importance of the McNair Scholars Program in her academic and professional trajectory.

Sotomayor, S. (2013). *My beloved world.* **Knopf.**
Written by the first Latinx U.S. Supreme Court Justice, this memoir devotes considerable pages to her K–12 schooling as well her

time as an undergraduate at Princeton University and at Yale Law School.

Stanton, M. (2019). *Body leaping backward: Memoir of a delinquent girl.* **Houghton Mifflin.**
In this coming-of-age memoir set during the 1970s, the author details her descent into petty crimes and drug abuse. Although she was reared in a middle-class household, Stanton, after her parents' divorce, becomes a habitual drug user throughout high school. To gain financial stability, Maureen's mother puts herself through college. The author includes a list of crimes and misdemeanors that she and her siblings committed but were never charged for, to make a statement about racial injustice in the penal system.

Tweedy, D. (2015). *Black man in a white coat: A doctor's reflections on race and medicine.* **Picador Paper.**
A first-generation graduate, Tweedy discusses his experiences in medical school, including the numerous racial microaggressions he faced from faculty. The author also describes the intersections between race, poverty, and public health.

Vance, J. (2016). *Hillbilly elegy: A memoir of a family and culture in crisis.* **Harper.**
Often regarded as a post-Trump text, *Hillbilly Elegy* is a family history about poverty and the so-called hillbilly culture in the Midwest, specifically in rural Ohio. After completing high school, Vance enlisted in the Marine Corps and eventually completed a bachelor's degree from the Ohio State University. His time at Yale Law School, he writes, was particularly alienating as a working-class college graduate. The book was adapted into a film for Netflix in 2020.

Welteroth, E. (2019). *More than enough.* **Viking.**
Welteroth is the youngest person and the second African American to be editor-in-chief of *Teen Vogue* magazine. This book documents the journey to that role and the reasons for her sudden departure from it. She describes growing up in a middle-class suburb in Northern California and the poor guidance she received in high school as she considered her college options, noting that not a single staff member encouraged her to apply to competitive schools despite her strong academic background.

Westover, T. (2018). *Educated: A memoir.* **Random House.**
Westover was reared in rural Idaho by survivalist parents who were suspicious of government, hospitals, and formal schooling. Studying independently but with the support of an older brother, Westover is admitted to Brigham Young University (BYU) with a scholarship. She describes her experience as a BYU student who struggled to balance studying and working to pay for her expenses while also being physically and emotionally abused by a different older brother. Westover elaborates on the alienation and imposter syndrome she feels in graduate school as she works toward a PhD. Other themes include domestic violence and mental health. *Educated* is a popular selection for university Common Book programs and has received many awards.

PARENTS AND FAMILIES

With the landing of so-called helicopter parents on campuses, colleges and universities are now more keenly aware of the role that families can play in students' success. To that end, a growing number of institutions are finding ways to partner with parents, guardians, and even siblings in ways that can enhance the higher education experience for the whole family. The increased visibility of first-generation students often requires colleges and universities to be mindful of parents and families who have limited institutional capital and prior knowledge. Indeed, the very definition of a *first-generation student* rests on the parents' (or caregivers') completion of a college degree; thus, parents' backgrounds are inextricably tethered to their children and vice versa.

Overall, the literature has noted a push and pull between first-generation students and their families. The push comes in the form of encouragement and support for students to enroll in college and to follow their dreams; the pull comes in the form of the families' resistance to the transition and subsequent transformation that their student will go through. For many families, their college graduate will seem different and may assume a new role in the family.

Common themes in the research on parents and families include defining and refining what is meant by *familial support*. Who is considered *family*? Does this definition include guardians, foster parents, relatives, and siblings who offer guidance through the college experience? What is *support*? Does it include financial, emotional, and social support? Many researchers and practitioners reference "family achievement guilt" or a sense of "other," coupled with pride and high expectations for academic achievement and college success. Because a student's family defines first-generation status, the role of family is—rightly—a distinct area of study.

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Summary of Research

Differences in parental support of first-generation students and continuing-generation students is evident from the literature. Most notably, families of first-generation students often do not give "procedural" or "college knowledge" support because, quite frankly, it is hard to give advice about something you don't know. Some researchers see this lack of support as a "wedge" between the student and the higher education institution. That said, the research on families has underscored the importance of their emotional support. The main takeaway is that parents and families matter, and they generally have a positive impact on their students; in fact, parental encouragement often is a form of capital for first-generation students.

Additional scholarship examines how parental influence shapes college-going behaviors, particularly as students transition to college during their first year in school. Accordingly, much of the literature looks at first-generation students while they are still in high school or in their first year of a 4-year institution. Another

theme is the intersection of identities and families. For example, Latinx families are often a focus of studies on the family, but is such research conflating cultural identities with first-generation status? Studies also explore socioeconomic status and family involvement, with an emphasis on low socioeconomic status.

Opportunities for Future Research

As more institutions begin to work intentionally with parents and families, it will be critical to identify best practices and to share the outcomes of any assessments. For example, practitioners should consider levels of engagement for first-generation students' families, including to what extent they are involved, when they participate in the college experience, and the nature of that involvement.

Family Dynamics

Many first-generation students have described themselves as the golden child (or alternatively, the scapegoat) in the family; yet, little or no formal research on this perception exists. Also, currently there is no extant literature on how gender and birth order may impact student/parent dynamics. The assumption is that a helicopter parent is well resourced and able to navigate on behalf of the student. Possible future research questions are: Are there significant differences between parents who have some higher education experience and those who have none at all? And what are the unique experiences of students whose parents received a degree outside of the United States?

Not every student, however, receives support from their parents and families; therefore, it is valuable to identify how students manage under such circumstances—that is, when family members are apathetic or even antagonistic toward the student for pursuing higher education. Still, further exploration, with students and parents, is necessary to shed light on the impact of parenting approaches and student success as well as

the evolving dynamics of the family once their first-generation student is off to college.

Outside Looking In

Given that much of the current literature focuses on students, it would also be useful to get the perspectives of parents and siblings on their student's academic journey (specifically) and higher education (broadly). Such research could include how the family perceives high-impact practices such as internships and study abroad opportunities. Much can be gained from focusing on institution type, such as a community college compared with a 4-year institution or a research-intensive university compared with liberal arts college.

Intersection of Identities

As noted above, the intersection of identity for first-generation students crosses into the research on parents and families. One opportunity for further study is the family effect that occurs when a student moves from a low-income or working-class status to a middle-class status. What are the cultural differences that influence their experiences, and how do additional identities, such as race, affect them?

Institutional Programming

With the prevalence of first-generation student family programs, support mechanisms, and celebrations, future research can address the assumptions made in these kinds of institutional programs—and assess the effect of these strategies. One research question could be: How does a first-generation student family program affect the type and depth of support that these families give to their students? The attendant study could then identify best practices for parent and family programs that enhance the student experience.

References

Barry, L. M., Hudley, C., Cho, S., & Kelly, M. (2008). College students' perceptions of parental support: Differences and similarities by first-generation status. *Southeastern Teacher Education Journal, 1*(1), 101–108.
This study sought to explore how first-generation and continuing-generation students perceive parental support. Data were collected from four universities across the country. Participants, all of whom were incoming freshmen, completed a web-based survey (*n* = 1,539). First-generation students had lower reports of receiving from their parents specific guidance and instrumental assistance concerning college expectations. But first-generation and continuing-generation students did not differ in their perceptions of social and emotional support. These findings challenge previous studies that establish that first-generation students receive less parental support than do their peers. The authors recommend that institutions provide alternative means for these students to obtain instrumental assistance.

Blackwell, E., & Pinder, P. J. (2014). What are the motivational factors of first-generation minority college students who overcome their family histories to pursue higher education? *College Student Journal, 48*(1), 45–56.
Using a qualitative study, the authors wanted to uncover the motivational factors of first-generation minority college women who overcame their family histories to pursue higher education. Three women who were the first in their families to attend college participated in semistructured interviews; two women who were third-generation college students served as a comparison group and participated in a telephone survey. Three motivating factors for the first-generation women emerged from the data: (a) Participants revealed a love for reading from an early age; (b) participants felt different from their siblings at an early age; and (c) all participants desired a better life for themselves.

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Also, findings indicate that the parents and families of the first-generation women were supportive of their educational experiences and pursuit of higher education. They also suggest that it would be beneficial for higher education practitioners to develop ways to engage and value the families of first-generation students and their rich family histories.

Bryan, E., & Simmons, L. A. (2009). Family involvement: Impacts on post-secondary educational success for first-generation Appalachian college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(4), 391–406. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0081

This qualitative study explored the role that family and other factors have in influencing the success of first-generation students in Appalachia. It involved the participation of 10 students obtained by use of a convenience sample. Each student sat for an in-person interview consisting of open-ended questions. The study findings revealed that participants were indeed affected by family, and seven themes emerged from the data. These themes highlight students' close connection with family and community—as well as the complexity of navigating home and school simultaneously. The researchers make a case for increased programming to help decrease or mediate the wedge that higher education can create between students and families. Intentional education and engagement with students and families may enhance family communication and connection with the institution. #identity #ruralstudents

Cantu, A. (2019, August 15). To help first-generation students succeed, colleges enlist their parents. *Hechinger Report.*

This comprehensive article describes various ways that institutions across the United States are reaching out to parents and families of first-generation students. Examples include online support groups for the first-generation student population, online video courses, and parent and family receptions on campus.

Covarrubias R., Valle, I., Laiduc, G., & Azmitia, M. (2018). You never become fully independent. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 34*(4), 381–410. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558418788402

This study explores the "cultural mismatch" between first-generation students' family norms of interdependence and colleges' norms of independence. Researchers interviewed 34 first-generation students at a West Coast university to help shed light on how first-generation students "demonstrate soft and hard forms of independence" (p. 385). Qualitative data analysis revealed the following themes for family support: (a) providing emotional support and advocacy, (b) being a language and financial broker, (c) giving financial support, (d) providing physical support, (e) sibling caregiving, and (f) offering advice. The study also found several themes within the categories of hard and soft independence. The researchers concluded that even though first-generation students' developed independence, they still felt tied to their families because of their obligations to support them or to find ways to keep from burdening them as they navigate college.

Covarrubias, R., & Fryberg, S. A. (2015). Movin' on up (to college): First-generation college students' experiences with family achievement guilt. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 21*(3), 420–429.** https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037844

These two studies examine family achievement guilt among first-generation and Latino students compared to their continuing-generation and white peers. In study one, participants (*n* = 53) completed questionnaires. The results revealed that Latino first-generation students in particular reported more family achievement guilt compared to their counterparts. In the second study, participants (*n* = 58) were asked to reflect on a time when they helped a family member who was struggling with a problem. Predictably, first-generation students reported higher guilt than continuing-generation students; and students of color reported more guilt than Whites. The authors recommend that services and

programs that target first-generation students should help those students alleviate family achievement guilt; and they also suggest more faculty and student life education about this phenomenon.

Covarrubias, R., Jones, J. M., & Johnson, R. (2018). Parent conversations about college matter for first-generation college students' academic self-concepts and grades. *Diversity Discourse, 1*(5), 1-10.
This study explored the link between parent conversations about college and first-generation students' concept of self. Researchers conducted two studies (*n* = 102; *n* =169). For Study 1, participants completed a survey of 24 questions that were adapted from Reynolds's (1988) Academic Self-Concept Scale; researchers used GPA for the semester in which participants completed the survey. For Study 2, students answered a condensed version of the Academic Self-Concept Scale and questions about conversations they had had with their parents. Findings included that first-generation students had lower academic self-confidence and fewer conversations with parents about academics. First-generation students who had more conversations about college had higher academic self-confidence and higher grades. Follow-up interviews of seven participants focused on deepening the understanding of parent communication with first-generation students and continuing-generation students. Researchers noted that first-generation students received more emotional support and continuing-generation students received more specific academic advice (e.g., how to edit a paper) from parents.

Downs, A., Martin, J., Fossum, M., Martinez, S., Solorio, M., & Martinez, H. (2008). Parents teaching parents: A career and college knowledge program for Latino families. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 7*(3), 227–240. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348430802100295
This study described the process of creating, implementing, and evaluating a parent-to-parent program for Latinos that gave career and college knowledge instruction for families in a small, rural community in Washington state. The researchers cocreated the program with selected families in the service area and held a 6-week formal career and college knowledge course twice during the 2005–2006 academic year. They used pre- and post-surveys to indicate changes in participants' knowledge. Both students and parents reported that they increased their knowledge of the college admissions process and choosing a career. Also, participants were very satisfied with the outcomes of the program. Researchers observed that the parent volunteers who presented the information became more comfortable facilitating and leading the program. Recommendations for future programs include ensuring that parent volunteers collaborate on the content and delivery of the course; programs are convenient for families and anticipate needs such as meals and childcare; and programs are culturally relevant and include a variety of translated materials. #socialcapital #culturalcapital #collegeknowledge #parentsandfamilies #latinx

Garriott, P. O., Navarro, R. L., & Flores, L. Y. (2017). First-generation college students' persistence intentions in engineering majors. *Journal of Career Assessment, 25*(1), 93–106. https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072716657533
This study, using the social cognitive career theory, focused on first-generation students in a STEM field. Researchers hypothesized that parental support would significantly predict four learning outcomes and these outcomes would predict self-efficacy and persistence. The 130 participants from a Hispanic-Serving Institution completed the Career Support Scale, the Learning Experience Questionnaire, Lent's 10-item engineering outcome expectations measure, Lent's engineering self-efficacy scale, and a 4-item engineering goals scale. The researchers found that parental support was a significant predictor of engineering-related verbal

persuasion and vicarious learning but did not predict engineering-related performance. Findings also showed that performance accomplishments and physiological arousal are key to first-generation students' self-efficacy. #career #parentsandfamilies

Gofen, A. (2009). Family capital: How first-generation higher education students break the intergenerational cycle. *Family Relations, 58*(1), 104–120. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2008.00538.x
This international study sought to discover what factors contributed to Israeli first-generation students pursuing a college education. Using grounded theory methodology, the researcher employed a qualitative study in which 50 Israeli students from Hebrew University, including undergraduate and graduate students, participated in semistructured interviews. All participants were from rural areas or urban neighborhoods. The findings showed that all participants identified family as the primary reason they made it to college. Family practices and habits emerged as significant factors for the participants, as were these overarching categories: (a) attitudes toward education, (b) interpersonal relationships, and (c) family values. This study highlights the positive impact of family on first-generation students. Through the introduction of family capital as a concept and valuable resource, this study encourages a shift in how parents and family members of first-generation students are perceived in higher education.

Kiyama, J. M. (2011). Family lessons and funds of knowledge: College-going paths in Mexican American families. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 10*(1), 23–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2011.531656
This article discusses a study that examined what funds of knowledge are present in Mexican American families and how these families use those funds to contribute to college attendance. Participants of this study (including six families) also took part in a Parent Outreach

Program facilitated by a large research institution. Study findings detailed examples of the funds of knowledge demonstrated by participants. First, daily educational practices within these households were presented. Second, extended family and social networks were extremely important to participants. Third, preexisting family college knowledge was valuable to participating families, as demonstrated through parents modeling studious behavior and sharing knowledge with other parents. Findings suggest that it would be beneficial for practitioners and educators to help families understand not only how everyday practices with their children can lead to positive educational gains but also that families should reinforce and support all funds of knowledge. #college-going, #families, #funds of knowledge, #outreach, #parents #Latinx

Legutko, R. S. (2008). A decade's difference: Research revisited on family influence of rural high school students' postsecondary decisions. *The Rural Educator, 29*(2), 4–7. https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v29i2.467
In 1995, data collected from 285 high school seniors from rural Pennsylvania were used to determine the influence of family (including parents and siblings) on postsecondary decisions. Ten years later, researchers applied those same methods to another sample of rural students from the same counties (*n* = 254) and compared the data. The results showed that irrespective of family influence, significantly more students in 2005 were planning to attend college than their peers a decade prior. Additionally, students with both parents having only a high school diploma were much more likely to attend college than that same cohort in prior years. The authors theorize that in this community, parents and families viewed college as a viable pathway for class mobility and subsequently encouraged their students to attend postsecondary institutions.

Miller, M. A. (2008). The privileges of the parents. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 40*(1), 6–7. https://doi.org/10.3200/chng.40.1.6-7
In this editorial, Miller first describes the differential educational outcomes between children whose parents have advanced degrees and those whose parents have not completed college. She argues that these outcomes affect students during their college years as well, noting that "a college education has benefits that ripple down through generations." Miller calls on colleges and universities to first identify these students in the application pool and then to fill in the gaps for these students, such as easing their transition to university and encouraging their participation in high-impact practices such as study abroad and learning communities.

Moreno, R. (2019). The guilt of success: Looking at Latino first-generation college students' experience of leaving home. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 20*(2), 213–231. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192719849756
This article examined the experiences of six graduate students and any guilt they may have felt as undergraduates pursuing a "better life." Moreno sought to better understand how guilt played a role in their journeys through higher education and their academic success. Using Piorkowski's framework on survivor guilt, the concept of first-generation students feeling as if they succeeded and their community did not, built the context for this study. Through a qualitative study and narrative approach, this study used counter-stories to impart each individual participant's story. Moreno found that guilt was a significant influence on these first-generation students, with many describing their sense of guilt beginning at the transition period from high school to college. Mixed feelings of helplessness and selfishness were themes from their narratives; these students remained connected to their families but still felt a sense of remorse for being away at college.

Implications include programming that brings in the family or at the very least connects with the families of students to provide more information on the first-generation student experience. Future research can expand the knowledge base on this sense of guilt, how it affects these students, and how it relates to other aspects such as academic success and policy creation.

Nichols, L., & Islas, Á. (2016). Pushing and pulling emerging adults through college: College generational status and the influence of parents and others in the first year. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 31*(1), 59–95. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558415586255
This study explored the influence of parents on first-year students who were interested in a premedical academic track. The researchers employed a mixed-methods comparison design to investigate differences between first-generation and continuing-generation students. The researchers surveyed many students on their first day of biology class to ultimately isolate those with a high interest in premed to move on to the next phase of the study. Forty-four participants—21 first-generation and 23 continuing-generation students—from a selective residential private university were interviewed. The first-generation students were more racially and ethnically diverse than the continuing-generation students. Findings revealed that parents were the most accessed form of social capital for both first-generation students and continuing-generation students. Parents of first-generation students *pushed* students through college with their support; conversely, parents of continuing-generation students *pulled* students through college with their own college knowledge, experience, and connections. This study revealed differences in students' language used to discuss academics and faculty, as well as in how students engaged with the institution. The authors recognize that parents of first-generation students served as a primary form of social capital for students. Marked differences between the parenting styles of

parents of first-generation and continuing-generation students can have varying impacts on how students engage and succeed on a premedical track— and overall—in college. #parents; #social capital

O'Shea, S. (2014). Filling up silences: First-in-family students, capital and university talk in the home. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 34*(2), 139–155. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2014.980342
This study focused on adult learners who were the first in the family to attend an Australian university. Using Bourdieu's (1977) social and cultural capital theories, the researcher interviewed 25 first-generation students about the following topics: initial experiences of university, reactions from family and friends, family perceptions of university, and experiences "being" a university student. O'Shea provided transcripts and analysis of two representative students; after a narrative analysis of these students' stories, she offered the following conclusions: First-generation students' educational trajectory is nonlinear and they were able to "fill the silences" with conversations about their college experiences.

O'Shea, S., May, J., Stone, C., & Delahunty, J. (2015). Breaking the barriers: Supporting and engaging first-in-family learners and their families. *Final Project Report.* http://firstinfamily.com.au
This report on first-generation students at Australian universities sought to examine the experiences of first-generation students and their families and build a website to serve as a resource for them (www.firstinfamily.com.au). Researchers collected 173 surveys from students and 40 surveys from family members. The researchers then interviewed 101 students and several family members. Findings revealed the following themes: feeling out of place in the university, lack of confidence, myths about college, adjustment issues, and gratitude for the opportunity. These findings shaped the First in Family website.

Palbusa, J. A., & Gauvain, M. (2017). Parent–student communication about college and freshman grades in first-generation and non–first-generation students. *Journal of College Student Development, 58*(1), 107–112. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0007
Here, researchers investigated parent–student communication about college. First-year college students at a large public university (*n* = 201; 58.4% first-generation) participated in an online survey about these communication experiences. Participants were asked about the frequency of their communication with parents about college and their perceptions of the helpfulness and quality of emotional and instrumental support in these interactions. Non–first-generation and first-generation students did not differ in the frequency of this communication; however, non–first-generation students reported that conversations with their parents about college were more helpful and of better quality. Additionally, higher quality of communication positively predicted GPA. Although first-generation students typically do not receive as much college information from their parents, these students benefit from parents' emotional support as they prepare for college. In addition, first-generation students are more likely to report that the reason they went to college was because their parents encouraged it. The study underscores the value of parents in promoting college attendance. It is important for secondary schools and higher education institutions to explore strategies to support enhanced parent–student communication regarding the transition to and persistence in college.

Plikuhn, M., & Knoester, M. (2015). *The Working Classes and Higher Education: Inequality of Access, Opportunity and Outcome.* **174-194. Routledge.**
This chapter explores the experiences of 40 graduate students who were first-generation students to determine how and why they were academically successful and how their families influenced their outcomes. The authors note that parents and families shape their students'

social and cultural views as well as their educational aspirations. For this qualitative study, the researchers interviewed 40 first-generation students who had completed an advanced degree; students reflected on their experiences growing up and the influences their family had on their education. Findings included themes of encouragement and discouragement for going to college, social mobility, culture shock, and social isolation. Additionally, participants described "role strain," which led them to share less with their families, and the use of code switching.

Roksa, J., & Kinsley, P. (2019). The role of family support in facilitating academic success of low-income students. *Research in Higher Education, 60*(4), 415–436. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-018-9517-z

Are specific forms of family support related to different academic outcomes for low-income students? To what extent do student engagement and psychosocial adjustment account for the relationship between family support and academic outcomes? These questions were the focus of this study. The researchers used data from the Wisconsin Financial Aid study; first-time, first-year participants were selected from 10 Wisconsin 2- and 4-year institutions (*n* = 728). Students were surveyed about their perceptions of family support. When students reported receiving more emotional support from their families, they were more likely to have a 3.0 GPA or higher; more likely to accumulate 24 credit hours; and more likely to persist through the second year of college. Moreover, neither first-generation status nor expected family contribution (EFC) was related to any outcomes. Additionally, family emotional support was strongly related to students' psychological well-being and sense of belonging. The findings reveal the importance of (a) comparing low-income students with other low-income students (rather than with their more affluent counterparts) and (b) recognizing that family support is an important contributor to low-income students' academic success. The authors also recommend creating parent and family programs that engage populations across class backgrounds. Future research might focus on low-income students who also are students of color.

Rondini, A. C. (2016). Healing the hidden injuries of class? Redemption narratives, aspirational proxies, and parents of low-income, first-generation college students. *Sociological Forum, 31*(1), 96–116. https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12228

This qualitative study explored how parents of low-income first-generation students reconciled their own lived experience, including low socioeconomic status and disadvantage, with their dreams of success for their college-aged children. Rondini interviewed 30 participants: 16 students and 14 parents. Two primary themes emerged from the data. First, both students and parents shared examples of how parents often accessed the story of their own mistakes to motivate students to persist on a positive academic path. Although some of the parents' "mistakes" came out of financial need, parents chronicled the lessons of their past to ensure that their children did not experience the economic hardships that they had endured. Second, students' academic success and accomplishments were viewed as a proxy for parents' success—that is, a win for the students is a win for their parents. Data revealed that low-income first-generation students embody their parents' deferred dreams and the students represent socioeconomic mobility that their parents had once hoped for themselves. For some of the parents, the students were perceived as the best part of them, and students were proud to represent their entire family well. This study shows that the experiences, identities, storytelling, and pain of parents of low-income first-generation students significantly affect students' trajectories. The inclusion of parents in this study adds a perspective that is rarely shown in research, but it is encouraged.

Rowan-Kenyon, H., Bell, A. D., & Perna, L. W. (2008). Contextual influences on parental involvement in college going: Variations by socioeconomic class. *The Journal of Higher Education, 79*(5), 564–586. https:// doi.org/10.1353/jhe.0.0020

This study examined how parental involvement affects students' college attendance. The authors utilized data from descriptive case studies of 15 high schools across five different states. Teachers, counselors, students, and parents were included in the study for a total of 596 participants. Schools fell into the categories of low achieving/socioeconomic, average achieving/ socioeconomic, or high achieving/socioeconomic. Although this study did not call out the first-generation student/family population, it did highlight some issues and experiences often connected to first-generation students and families in existing research, such as the tensions that first-generation students face in terms of being part of a low-income family while also striving for upward mobility. The findings highlight the need for further research on the impact of educational systems—and barriers within these systems—on parental involvement.

Sy, S. R., Fong, K., Carter, R., Boehme, J., & Alpert, A. (2011). Parent support and stress among first-generation and continuing-generation female students during the transition to college. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 13*(3), 383–398. https://doi.org/10.2190/ cs.13.3.g

This study investigated the relationship between parental support and stress in students as it related to their college transition. The authors undertook a quantitative comparison study of female freshmen first-generation students and continuing-generation students with a total of 339 participants. Each participant completed an online survey measuring informational and emotional parent support and level of stress. Findings revealed that first-generation students had lower levels of both informational and emotional support compared with those of the continuing-generation students. No difference in stress and GPA within the two populations of students was found. Further, the researchers discovered a negative correlation between parent emotional support and stress for both groups of students. Although no significant correlation between parent informational support and stress was found, a negative trend was observed for the first-generation students. The study makes a case for parents to have a more inclusive role in their student's transition to college. Intentionally engaging, educating, and informing first-generation families may have a positive impact on the emotional and informational support they provide to students. Secondary schools and higher education institutions can benefit from partnering, to smooth the transition to college for first-generation students and their families.

Trevino, N. N., & DeFreitas, S. C. (2014). The relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic achievement for first-generation Latino college students. *Social Psychology of Education, 17*(2), 293–306. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-013-9245-3

The authors explored extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation and how the long-term effects of extrinsic motivation can have negative consequences on education. The parameters included observing how strong family environments of Hispanic first-generation students helped their intrinsic motivation, because many first-generation students may come from lower income backgrounds and are more inclined to help out the family. The artifact is a literature review conducted in this article. The researchers found that parental involvement can help students with their academic achievement starting at a young age and that parental support helps lower students' stress.

Vasquez-Salgado, Y., Greenfield, P. M., & Burgos-Cienfuegos, R. (2015). Exploring home-school value conflicts: Implications for academic achievement and well-being among Latino first-generation college students. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 30*(3), 271–305. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558414561297
The researchers studied the influence of a collectivistic/familistic home culture on the individualistic behaviors of college success. They focused on Latino, first-year, first-generation students and their immigrant families, and expected that students would experience internal conflict because of competing values and priorities. The researchers operationalized inner conflict through "the existence of stimuli that function as triggers to reinstate rumination or reflection of the conflicts after they occurred" (p. 275). The study focused on four research questions related to how Latino first-generation students experience the individualistic and collectivistic demands, what types of conflict arise, and how those conflicts affect students. Of the 18 recruited participants, data from 14 students were used for the final analysis. As part of semistructured group interviews, students were given a home–school conflict scenario about competing demands to study versus participate in a family event. Students discussed their responses to the scenario and then participated in a group interview about their own experiences. Qualitative data analysis concluded that Latino first-generation students do experience internal conflict from the competing values and demands of their home and school. One interesting finding was that these students' grades often suffer not only because they prioritize family obligations over academic tasks, but also because when they do focus on their academic work, they find it difficult to concentrate on the task at hand, which contributes to lower performance. The researchers also suggest that those Latino students who live far away from their families tend to have decreased academic achievement.

Wang, T. R. (2014). "I'm the only person from where I'm from to go to college": Understanding the memorable messages first-generation college students receive from parents. *Journal of Family Communication, 14*(3), 270–290. https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2014.908195
Here, Wang explored the messages that first-generation students received from their parents regarding the ideal role parents should have in the lives of college students. The research question was explored from the memorable messages research framework and a socialization lens. The study involved semistructured, responsive interviews with 30 first-generation students at a public Midwestern institution. Five memorable message themes emerged from data: (a) remembering family, (b) focusing on family, (c) counting on family, (d) not worrying about family, and (e) setting a good example. These messages were the ones that stuck with the study participants or otherwise proved to be significant in their lives throughout their college experience. This study serves as a reminder of the positive impact that parent communication can have on first-generation students' drive and success in college.

Westbrook, S. B., & Scott, J. A. (2012). The influence of parents on the persistence decisions of first-generation college students. *Focus on Colleges, Universities & Schools, 6*(1), 1–9.
This quantitative study aimed to explore the role parents play in first-generation student self-efficacy. The researchers used three survey instruments: Version S3 of Cambell's (2001) Inventory of Parental Influence (IPI), Sherer (2000) Self-Efficacy Scale (SES), and a locally created demographic survey. The IPI provided scores on five family processes: parental help, parental pressure, psychological support, parental press for intellectual development, and monitoring/supervision. The researchers combined scores from the five factors to determine the overall level of parental influence perceived by the subjects.

From a pool of more than 6,000 potential participants from institutions in Texas, 93 subjects participated. Fifty were continuing-generation students and 43 were first-generation students. Findings showed no significant relationship between parental influence and perceived self-efficacy. On the SES, 65 percent of first-generation students reported high levels of self-efficacy. On the IPI, most first-generation students reported moderate levels of support (55%) and parental pressure (85%), but low levels of help (55%) and monitoring/supervision (72.5%). The researchers indicate that parental programming that aims to improve self-efficacy may not be needed, but they suggest a mentoring program involving academically successful upperclassmen as an opportunity to support first-generation students.

Wang, T. R. (2012). Understanding the memorable messages first-generation college students receive from on-campus mentors. *Communication Education, 61*(4), 335–357. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2012.691978
The researcher interviewed 30 first-generation students to examine the messages they received from their on-campus mentors about the college experience and family support. Themes of the messages included pursuing academic success, valuing school, increasing future potential, making decisions, and offering support and encouragement. In addition, three family memorable messages themes emerged, including comparing and contrasting, counting on family, and recognizing the importance of family.

Ziemniak, A. (2011). The contribution of family members to first-generation college student success. *AHEPPP Journal, 2*(1), 12–26. https://aheppp.memberclicks.net/assets/Journals/2011-aheppp-volume-2-1.pdf
This study utilizes Gofen's (2009) family capital framework to explore the contributions that family members have on first-generation students' persistence in higher education. Though many studies discuss parents and families of first-generation students in a negative light, the author explored the ways in which families give support. Study participants included 11 first-generation students, nine family members whom the students identified as having significantly contributed to their persistence in higher education, and two administrators whom the students identified as having made positive contributions. Significant to this study was the perspective of different family members, including parents and siblings. Overall, the family members had positive attitudes toward education and viewed it as an opportunity for greater success. The findings support the need for higher education practitioners to explore and perhaps change how they engage families of first-generation students, including those whose primary language is not English. Informing and educating families about the institution and the student experience would benefit students, families, and the institution. #family, #family capital, #parents

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

Introduction

"It's not *what* you know, but *who* you know" is a common saying that underscores the importance of social networks for personal and professional success; however, in this section, the aphorism needs to be revised to reflect more accurately what is often missing for first-generation students: "It's *what* you know, *who* you know, and *what you do with both*." College is a cultural ecosystem with its own values, language, and norms. Just as a traveler visiting an unfamiliar land finds both pleasant surprises and perplexing barriers, a lack of cultural capital—in other words, "college knowledge"—can create stumbling blocks for first-generation students.

Likewise, a lack of social capital in an academic setting can starkly contrast with the ability of non-first-generation students to glide through a system that works best when other people help along the way. For example, if students don't realize that the FAFSA must be completed each year to determine financial aid eligibility—nor have someone who could help them complete it correctly—they can face a cascade of issues that could result in their being unable to pay for college.
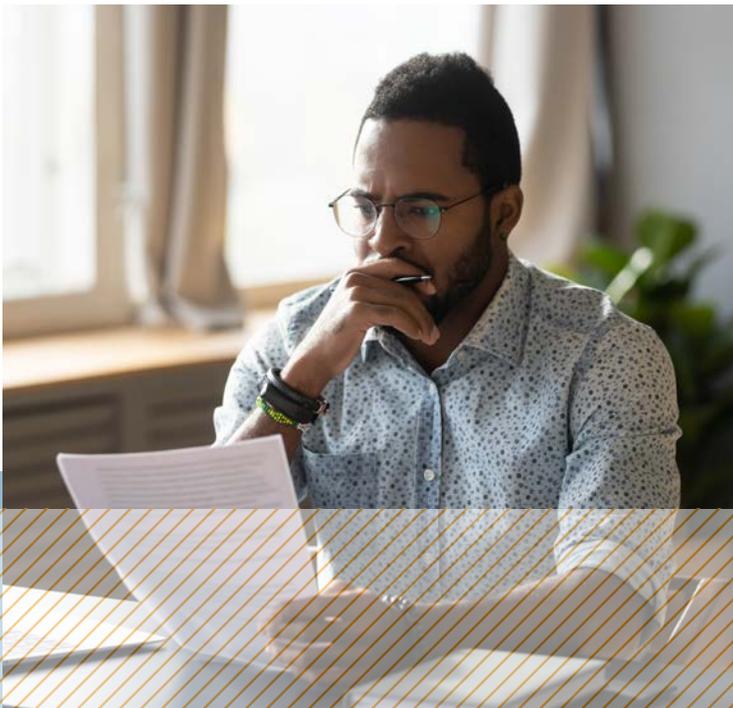
The term *cultural capital* is problematic for the study of first-generation students in part because it values a middle-class or upper-middle-class value system; assumes that the culture is monolithic; and fails to challenge the dominance of such a culture. Yosso's (2005) work on critical race theory and communities of color underscores the importance of questioning the definitions and norming of social and cultural capital as it relates to first-generation students. Yosso argues that there is a variety of capital that is relevant to explore, including familial, linguistic, and navigational, and this broader perspective would be well-served for first-generation student research. However, Yosso's seminal work needs to be challenged because it conflates first-generation students with low-income students and students of color. Just as Yosso's

work pointed to a richer understanding of cultural diversity, we should strive to disentangle first-generation students' experiences from the predetermined lenses of cultural capital research.

Summary of Research

Most of the research in this section employs a social capital framework as the lens through which first-generation students are studied, and much of the social and cultural capital that first-generation students possess is tied to their families. Although researchers acknowledge that first-generation students arrive at college with existing forms of social and cultural capital, that resource is often not enough to help them transition and *thrive*—at least not initially. The research points to the fact that first-generation students with internal drive and motivation still need the intentional support from their institutions to narrow or close gaps they may have. One of the many findings that this research notes is the

importance of mentoring and interactions with faculty and staff as ways to build cultural and social capital.

Bourdieu's social reproduction theory is an oft-used framework for these studies, and most of the research centers on analyzing qualitative data. In some cases, the studies compared the social and cultural capital of first-generation students with that of continuing-generation students, noting that the latter have more capital and thus are more likely to succeed in college. Some of the studies very narrowly define *cultural capital* or limit it to an exposure to upper-middle-class values, setting up contrasts between the "haves and have-nots" (Dumais & Ward, 2010; Lederman, 2013). Consequently, the current research tends to focus on working-class students without acknowledging the various intersections of identity. Most notably, several studies specifically and intentionally focus on white students but don't at all address Whiteness or race. One study even says such choice is to "focus the scope of the research," implying that selecting participants of different racial backgrounds makes things too messy, yet there is no theoretical framework or any discussion of how the white race plays a part of the first-generation student experience (DeRosa & Dolby, 2014).

Suggestions for Future Research

One of the drawbacks to a social and cultural capital approach is the tendency to oversimplify the experience of first-generation students, because it sets up an "in-group/out-group" delineation that glosses over the complexity and rough edges of social issues. For example, studies that identified a lack of cultural capital passed on by parents assumed that first-generation students could not use alternative methods, including social and institutional

support, to fill in the gaps. One way to expand the scope of future research—and perhaps acknowledge the complexities of first-generation student experiences—is to move beyond some of the conceptual frameworks that have been used repeatedly in this field. There is more to the social and cultural experience than just the community cultural wealth model (Yosso, 2005) or Bourdieu's (1984) framework.

Further, researchers and practitioners should adopt a strengths-based approach when viewing the capital that first-generation students bring with them to college, which might include identifying *how* students successfully navigate institutions despite social and cultural capital shortfalls. Researchers also need to situate social and cultural capital studies of first-generation students within the classroom and focus on the college experience after the first year. For example, how do first-generation students build their social and cultural capital by their third and fourth years, and are they able to level the playing field? Finally, more qualitative research in the form of student narratives, as well as more quantitative research that includes demographic and survey data, is encouraged.

References

Almeida, D. J., Byrne, A. M., Smith, R. M., & Ruiz, S. (2019). How relevant is grit? The importance of social capital in first-generation college students' academic success. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice.* **https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025119854688**
Using social network and attribute analysis, this study examined the relationship between grit and social capital, as well as the impact both of these factors have on the college success of first-generation students. Participants included 156 first-generation students, all in their junior or senior years at a private, religiously affiliated university in the Southwest. Aspects of social capital, including informational network support and social support, were examined along with grit scores. Additionally, researchers surveyed participants using the Grit Scale (Duckworth et al., 2007) and the Social Support Scale (Russell & Cutrona, 1984).

The findings indicate that grit was not a significant predictor of success (measured by GPA) for the first-generation students in the study; rather, access to social capital was found to be a significator predictor for the cumulative GPAs for first-generation students. Also noteworthy were the differences in the GPAs of commuter first-generation students who reported having at least five faculty and staff members in their information support network. Those commuter first-generation student participants with fewer faculty and staff in their information support network had "an expected decrease of 0.13 in GPA" (p. 14). The findings also indicate a relationship between grit and aspects of social capital— specifically, first-generation students who had higher GPAs also had larger peer information support groups compared with those of participants with lower GPAs. The researchers suggest that the intertwining of grit mindset/use of grit and use of resources in the social network of first-generation students are important for these students to succeed.

Atherton, M. C. (2014). Academic preparedness of first-generation college students: Different perspectives. *Journal of College Student Development, 55*(8), 824–829. **https://muse.jhu.edu/article/561674/pdf**
This research in brief provides an overview of a quantitative study that stems from a sample of the large national survey The Cooperative Institutional Research Program, which used social capital theory as a way to explore first-generation students' academic preparedness. The author hypothesized that first-generation students are less academically prepared than continuing-generation students, based on objective academic measures and by assessment. The data were collected from a large West Coast institution in the United States. Although first-generation students were found to have SAT scores and high school GPAs lower than those of continuing-generation students, findings also indicated that first-generation students generally were unaware how lower SAT scores and GPAs relate to academic outcomes. The author explains that this lack of awareness and understanding stems from a lack of social capital, often leading to academic frustration and struggle

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during the early stages of college. Precollege programs and first-year programs are suggested as interventions that are proven to help students transition to college and gain a better grasp of the effort required to do well there.

Clemens, R. (2016). Transitioning from high school to college: Examining the sources and influences of social capital for a first-generation Latina student. *The Qualitative trio Report, 21*(11), 2044–2072.
The paper follows Camilla, a 19-year-old Latinx woman from El Salvador, as she progresses through different stages in education from childhood, through high school, and to her first year of college at a 4-year university. Over a 9-month period, Clemens conducted semistructured interviews, made observations, and collected supporting documents including social media posts and emails. The researcher wrote field notes and memos, developing codes for interpreting themes simultaneously. A social capital theoretical lens framed Camilla's access to resources, relationships, and the individuals who had an impact on her transition from high school to college. Camilla shared how her previous experiences helped her adapt to a new setting in college and how her family played a vital role. Implications for students and families include managing how changing dynamics in relationships can affect communication and the bond between the student and their family members during their transition to college. The counternarrative also describes how Camilla's experiences—and those of students similar to her—can inform public policy and reframe the first-generation student narrative from that of a deficit mindset to one of an asset-based framework.

Coffman, S. (2011). A social constructionist view of issues confronting first-generation college students. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning: Special Issue: Faculty and First-Generation College Students; Bridging the Classroom Gap Together, 2011*(127), 81–90. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.459
Drawing on student interviews at a university in the U.S. Northwest, Coffman argues that a student's culture affects

college attendance and success. The researcher adopted a social constructionist framework to survey first-generation students. Key themes came from coding the qualitative data in the interviews: race and first-generation student status, lower educational aspirations, poor choices, social class and first-generation student status, academic preparation, strong social network, upward social mobility, and meaningful work. The author concludes that more needs to be done to help mitigate the negative social influences that first-generation students experience.

DeRosa, E., & Dolby, N. (2014). "I don't think the university knows me": Institutional culture and lower-income, first-generation college students. *InterActions, 10*(2). Retrieved from: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0kj6m6r8
Using Bourdieu's (2007) theory of social capital, the researchers constructed a phenomenological study of the common experiences of first-generation students at a Midwestern university. Participants were recruited from the campus's TRIO program; screening questions determined whether those students were first-generation students. Then, researchers isolated white first-generation students from the other potential participants in an effort to focus the scope of the research; this separation resulted in six participants (two male, four female), who answered questions in semistructured interviews about precollege experiences, family support, and social class. The researchers analyzed the qualitative data by identifying the following themes: experiences with administration, faculty, peer relationship, and social class. Findings showed that first-generation students did not feel welcome or connected to the university; rather, they felt as if they were treated as "a number." The data also reflected participants' belief that the institution did not support students who were not able to afford certain aspects of the experience (e.g., orientation) or who needed to work. When asked about peer connections, participants described feeling left out or stigmatized because of their apparent lower income status. The results point to a need for institutions to

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review any policies that could negatively affect first-generation students, train faculty and staff on social class issues that may affect the college experience, and commit to admitting more diverse students.

Dumais, S. A., & Ward, A. (2010). Cultural capital and first-generation college success. *Poetics, 38*(3), 245–265. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2009.11.011
This study uses longitudinal data from 1988, as well as follow-up surveys completed by students who graduated 8 years prior, to explore cultural capital as it affects first-generation students' success. The authors define "cultural capital both as high arts participation rewarded by those in power, and as purposeful interactions with key gatekeepers to access information and resources" (p. 245); they also include parents' and students' navigation of the college application process as cultural capital. Research questions tackled how cultural capital affects enrollment, degree attainment, and GPA at a 4-year institution: Do these elements vary by first-generation student status? The researchers concluded that cultural capital—as they have operationalized it—matters less as students advance through college. Although they concluded that "arts-based" and "strategy-based" cultural capital affects first-generation students' attendance rates, it does not have an impact on GPAs at graduation.

Ellery, K., & Baxen, J. (2016). "I always knew I would go to university": A social realist account of student agency. *South African Journal of Higher Education, 29*(1), 92–108. https://doi.org/10.20853/29-1-453
This study examined the socioeconomic background of one particular student, Thando, and his journey to college in the context of the South African higher education system, which has been affected by apartheid. Using Archer's three-stage frame, the researchers analyzed Thando's college experience. They note that Thando's experience navigating social and cultural challenges did not keep him from attending and succeeding in college. They found Thando to be a successful "autonomous reflexive" who accumulates capital for the purpose of social mobility. The

authors conclude that institutions of higher education need to encourage agency in their academic programs so that more first-generation students can benefit from the support.

Espinoza, R., Alcantar, C. M., & Hernandez, E. (2016). Working-class minority students' pathways to higher education. *The working classes and higher education: Inequality of access, opportunity, and outcome,* 30–45.
This chapter stems from a larger research study that explored the role of pivotal moments in the success of working-class minority students throughout the education pipeline. A *pivotal moment* refers to when a teacher, professor, or other mentor makes a concerted effort to support a working-class minority student, thereby transmitting academic and social capital. The authors focus specifically on how information is transferred to the student and how students use the newly acquired knowledge to become successful. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 140 first-generation high school, community college, university, and graduate students, along with teachers, professors, administrators, counselors, and academic coordinators. The findings suggest that pivotal moments can compensate for social and racial-ethnic disadvantages. The authors recommend that schools and universities train educators, including professional staff, to create environments that lead to transformative moments and that foster a college-going culture.

Greenwald, R. A. (2012, November 11). Think of first-generation students as pioneers not problems. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* https://www.chronicle.com/article/Think-of-First-Generation/135710
Reflecting on his own experience as a first-generation student, the author describes first-generation students by what they lack: social capital, self-regulation, and college knowledge. However, the author argues that first-generation students are "pioneers" and should be respected for their successful "border crossings." The final call-to-action is for first-generation students to "stand up" and make themselves known and for institutions to serve first-generation students better by providing workshops and

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support around hidden curriculum and skills development.
Hora, M. T., Wolfgram, M., & Chen, Z. (2019). *Closing the doors of opportunity: How financial, sociocultural, and institutional barriers intersect to inhibit participation in college internships.* **WCER Working Paper No. 2019-8.** http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/publications/working-papers
This mixed-methods study explored the barriers to internship participation faced by students from five different institutions in different states, including a community college and an HBCU. Researchers obtained the data from a survey (*n* = 1,549), a focus group, and an interview (*n* = 100), and analyzed them using a chi-square test, logistic regression, and inductive theme identification techniques. Drawing on social and cultural capital theory, the researchers ultimately were interested in how institutions can make internship opportunities more equitable to more students. The study found that the most common reason that students did not participate in an internship was their need to work at their current paid job. The students had additional reasons, such as having a heavy course load or not having sufficient internship opportunities. The researchers also found that low-income students and first-generation students were much more likely than their peers not to participate in internships due to a need to work. The authors note that these students, compared with their continuing-generation peers, will likely be at a disadvantage if employers highly value internships. The authors recommend that colleges and universities make work-study available for on- and off-campus employment and that they offer subsidies for unpaid internships in addition to online internships.

Kouyoumdjian, C., Guzmán, B. L., Garcia, N. M., & Talavera-Bustillos, V. (2017). A community cultural wealth examination of sources of support and challenges among Latino first- and second-generation college students at a Hispanic serving institution. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 16*(1), 61–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192715619995
This study examined the experiences of first- and second-generation Latino students at an HSI and outlined the support systems and barriers they faced. The goal was to compare

first- and second-generation students' ability to navigate higher education, specifically among Latino students—they have the highest dropout rates for ethnic minorities in the country yet also boast higher graduation rates at HSIs. The researchers used a community cultural wealth paradigm to analyze the capital these Latino students possessed and used for success through a mixed-methods approach. Data were collected as part of a larger study on adolescent sexual health conducted by a Southern California HSI with a total of 114 participants. Grounded theory was used to develop categories from open-ended responses, with the differences parsed for first- and second-generation students. Challenges for both groups included work/financial hardships and budget cuts, which affected their access to financial aid impeded their progress to degree completion. In line with previous research, family was a prominent theme as sources of support but also as a pressure on the students to make their families proud. Implications for researchers include further examination of second-generation college students and how they have different needs from first-generation students in some contexts. Implications for programming include better understanding the nuances of second-generation students and how having one parent with a college degree may not offset some of the challenges that are typically associated with first-generation students.

Lane, L., & Taber, N. (2012). Experiences with cultural capital in education: Exploring the educational life stories of first-generation post-secondary students. *The Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, 24*(2), 1–15.
This research examined the educational history of three female first-generation students to understand their educational experiences with cultural capital. All participants were white and attended college in Ontario, Canada. They were asked open-ended questions during two different interview sessions that lasted 1.5 to 2 hours each. Researchers thematically analyzed the interviews to identify how the themes connected to students' lived experiences and how the participants' stories connected to one another. Five themes emerged:

familial capital, institutional capital, economic capital, social capital, and represented cultural capital. All three participants' educational decisions were influenced by parental support, and it was noted that students particularly valued their parents' emotional support. Each participant described a time when she were discouraged by a high school staff member, and each used her own knowledge of institutional culture to overcome systemic barriers. The participants associated university prestige with White Western norms, preppy attire, and the elite institutions in the United States to which they aspired. This study highlights the importance of media representations in college choice. The authors note that although these women found ways to navigate their institution, they experienced significant tension and conflict throughout their educational journeys. The authors call for more student-centered research.

Lederman, D. (2013, November 5). **Building students' "cultural capital." Inside Higher Ed.** https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/11/05/can-colleges-build-students-cultural-capital-and-should-they
This article discusses the outcomes of a meeting of the Council of Independent Colleges' chief academic officers in which they explored how they could build in their first-generation students' cultural capital—narrowly defined as behaviors such as reading books and attending arts and music events. The article includes suggestions from a variety of institutions to increase participation in cultural events and in reading common texts.

Luedke, C. L. (2017). **Person first, student second: Staff and administrators of color supporting students of color authentically in higher education.** *Journal of College Student Development, 58*(1), 37–52. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0002
This qualitative study focused on the social capital gained through first-generation students' relationships with mentors of color at an institution. Using Bourdieu's social reproduction theory, Luedke narrowed the focus to the social capital developed in mentoring relations as well as the cultural capital that such relationships can provide. Through interviews with 24 students of color from two Midwestern PWIs, the researcher found that mentors of color were more likely to provide holistic student support because they could take into account the students' personal and family concerns and provide "complete honesty." Additionally, data analysis revealed that mentors of color valued prior experiences and allowed students to share their background capital, which allowed for the additional acquisition of cultural capital.

Mobley, C., & Brawner, C. E. (2019). **"Life prepared me well for succeeding": The enactment of community cultural wealth, experiential capital, and transfer student capital by first-generation engineering transfer students.** *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 43*(5), 353–369. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2018.1484823
This qualitative study explored the experiences of 15 first-generation community college transfer students majoring in engineering. Using the theoretical frameworks of theory of community cultural wealth, experiential capital, and transfer student capital, the researchers analyzed semistructured interview data of 86 participants between fall 2011 and spring 2013; the data centered on how specific forms of capital, particularly relevant to first-generation transfer students, shape student decisions and experiences. The study focused on strengths associated with the variety of capital that the first-generation students had. Researchers found that these forms of capital (familial, aspirational, navigational/transfer, social, and experiential) intersected and interacted with one another to contribute to positive outcomes for first-generation students. Interestingly, the study participants connected with other students more for their transfer student identity than for their first-generation student or engineering identities.

Moschetti, R. V., & Hudley, C. (2008). **Measuring social capital among first-generation and non-first-generation, working-class, White males.** *Journal of College Admissions Winter 2008, 198,* 25–30.
The study looked at the social capital among White, male,

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working-class students by measuring the number and quality of interactions between students and faculty and staff. Via a web-based questionnaire that addressed college experiences, academic support, and social networks, participants were asked to rate the frequency of their interactions with faculty, students, and advisors; indicate their requests for help from faculty, students, and advisors; self-report their GPA; and indicate their optimism for the future. The researchers found that the participants were more likely to feel optimistic about the future if they also sought help with coursework or emotional support. The implications of this research include the need to further study this underrepresented population and to consider the barriers they may face culturally or timewise to accessing resources at the institution that could help them succeed.

Moschetti, R. V., & Hudley, C. (2015). Social capital and academic motivation among first-generation community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 39*(3), 235–251. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2013.819304
Using social capital theory as the framework, this article focuses on low-income, white community college students because, the authors argue, there is little research on white first-generation students' needs. They also posit that social capital creates a unique challenge for first-generation students in that having social capital helps students with the transition to college—and yet first-generation students cannot transition as smoothly because they lack the requisite networks and knowledge. The authors used purposeful sampling to identify students to interview (*n* = 20); they used the grounded theory approach as they analyzed data for themes pertaining to students' perceptions of both formal and information social relationships. The research questions included the following: "How do white working-class, first-generation, community college students manage academic and social integration, and what institutional or interpersonal agents do they identify as assisting them in this process? What do students perceive to be the most difficult aspects of their transition? What factors did they identify as being the most valuable in making a successful transition?"

Four core themes emerged from the data analysis: institutional support, personal characteristics, family support, and financial resources. The findings suggest areas in which institutions could provide additional support and programs. Specifically, first-generation students indicated a dearth in institutional support, while family support was focused only on social and emotional needs. Additionally, first-generation students saw their successes and failures as dependent on personal traits, rather than on systemic factors, and found that work–school balance was difficult to maintain.

Nainby, K. (2009). Opportunities and challenges in a university-level program for first-generation students. In T. Heinz Housel & V. L. Harvey (Eds.), *The invisibility factor: Administrators and faculty reach out to first-generation college students.* **Brown Walker Press.**
The author, a faculty member and first-generation graduate, describes the components of the Faculty Mentor Program (FMP) at California State University Stanislaus. The program pairs faculty mentors with first-generation students who are so-called educationally disadvantaged. The mentors are expected to offer one-on-one meetings, discuss time management and goal setting, and—the focus of this paper—offer cultural experiences (e.g., trips to the theater). The author argues that the FMP is successful on several accounts, especially because students are exposed to various cultural events that increase their engagement with the campus, which helps mitigate their sense of isolation. That said, more financial support is needed.

O'Keefe, M., & Djeukeng, B. (2010). Social capital and first-generation students: A sociological perspective. *Journal of Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives in Education, 3*(1), 1–8.
Through a review of current literature, this article discusses the impact of social capital on first-generation students . The author defines *social capital* as "the collection of social skills and relationships that can influence college admissions, retention, graduation, and post-graduation behaviors" (O'Keefe & Djeukeng, 2010). The authors frame first-generation students'

social capital in terms of deficit, and they argue that first-generation students are at a disadvantage because of a lack of social capital. The article concludes with suggestions for institutions to help first-generation students, including maintaining low student–advisor ratios.

O'Shea, S. (2015). Arriving, surviving, and succeeding: First-in-family women and their experiences of transitioning into the first year of university. *Journal of College Student Development, 56*(5), 499–517. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2015.0053
The study focused on the early college experience of students who identified as both female and first-generation at an institution in Australia. Throughout the participants' (*n* = 17) first year, they participated in semistructured interviews informed by theoretical work on cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Yosso, 2005). O'Shea analyzed participant narratives to identify common themes, including arriving, surviving, and succeeding. The findings suggest that the initial transition to college was a challenging experience for participants because of the absence of familial support and understanding; however, as they persisted, participants exhibited aspirational capital. Specifically, participants remarked on feelings of increased confidence as they became familiar with academic expectations, campus resources (e.g., the library and how to access it), and their ability to navigate the institution.

O'Shea, S. (2016). Avoiding the manufacture of "sameness": First-in-family students, cultural capital and the higher education environment. *Higher Education, 72*(1), 59–78. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9938-y
This study employed a strengths-based perspective, specifically Yosso's community cultural wealth framework, to identify how first-generation students transitioned into university. The research was conducted at a regional university in Australia and involved in-depth interviews with 23 students who identified as being first-generation. Their ages ranged from 17 to 64 years old, with most participants over age 30. Further, all participants presented as Anglo-Australian, and a critical

mass were also working class or otherwise economically disadvantaged. The findings highlighted aspirational, resistant, and familial capital, and O'Shea found that students' experiences in higher education were shaped by a range of variables including (but not limited to) age, gender, social class, and ethnicity. In the conclusion, the author stresses that these students were not blank slates when they arrived at university; rather, they drew upon existing capital resources, applying them in innovative ways to support this transition. Additionally, the narratives of older female participants reveal how university attendance can provide an opportunity for students to redefine prescribed gender roles.

Peabody, M. (2013). A critical analysis of the identification and treatment of first-generation college students: A social capital approach. *Kentucky Journal of Higher Education Policy and Practice, 2*(1), 1–13.
The author first gives an overview of common characteristics shared by first-generation students, noting that this population, unlike continuing-generation students, typically arrives at campus with less institutional knowledge and understanding of how campus bureaucracies work. Peabody contends that to help first-generation students succeed, institutions should provide programming and opportunities that seek to integrate these students into campus life. In particular, social capital theories can be useful in creating programs that help first-generation students remain in and thrive at school.

Purswell, K. E., Yazedjian, A., & Toews, M. L. (2008). Students' intentions and social support as predictors of self-reported academic behaviors: A comparison of first- and continuing-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 10*(2), 191–206. https://doi.org/10.2190/cs.10.2.e
The theoretical framework of this study included the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and that of social capital (Coleman, 1988). Data came from a larger longitudinal study that examined the adjustment and academic success of college

freshmen at a public, 4-year university in central Texas. The researchers used two surveys for the fall 2004 cohort of college freshmen; the first yielded 945 responses, and the second, a year later, yielded 333. The second survey included items about actual performance of specific academic behaviors and a 13-item Parents as Sources of Support subscale from Kenny's (1987) Parental Attachment Questionnaire. Findings suggested that parental and peer support were less salient for first-generation students in predicting the extent to which they performed academic behaviors; intention was the only significant variable in the regression model for first-generation students. These findings also upheld social capital theory in that support from friends and family did not play a statistically significant part in predicting the academic behaviors of first-generation students; however, social support from either parents or peers was important for the other two groups of students. Furthermore, because this study found that parental support was predictive of the academic behaviors of the second and third groups, it may be that having parents with at least some college experience is enough to provide the social capital needed to navigate the transition to college and the college environment.

Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., Martinez-Aleman, A. M., & Savitz-Romer, M. (2018). *Technology and engagement: Making technology work for first-generation college students.* **Rutgers University Press.**
This book seeks to encourage faculty and administrators to consider how technology and social media can help leverage equity and foster community for first-generation students. Data and observations are drawn from the authors' experiences with students attending Millbrook University (pseudonym), a highly selective PWI in New England. The authors describe the ways that first-generation students can access capital using technology inside and outside of the classroom.

Wells, R. (2008). The effects of social and cultural capital on student persistence: Are community colleges more meritocratic? *Community College Review, 36*(1), 25–46. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552108319604
Using National Educational Longitudinal Study data (1988–1994), this study examined the effect of social and cultural capital on persistence from first-generation students' first to second years of college. The study also looked at how these effects may differ between community colleges and 4-year institutions. Findings showed that social and cultural capital have a positive effect on student persistence; however, the most notable finding is that low-capital students in community colleges appear to be more successful in persisting into the second year than do their low-capital peers who begin at 4-year institutions.

STUDENT SUCCESS

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, the term *student success* has gained popularity to describe the purpose of a variety of academic and student services. But what does student success mean, especially for understanding the literature on first-generation students? For institutions, the most important evidence of student success is graduation, but the term also encompasses retention (We kept them here!) and persistence (And they progressed!). For some, student success even includes resilience and grit (They have the skills to get to graduation!). Often, these buzzwords hide the negative lens of the research on first-generation students by focusing on what they lack: an ability to overcome obstacles, a commitment to their degree, and an ability to complete. Redford and Hoyer (2017) concluded the same in their review of data from the National Center for Education Statistics. They found that first-generation students were less likely to graduate and less likely to be able to afford to complete.[1]

What constitutes student success is a wide-ranging set of activities whose purpose is to ensure that students ultimately graduate in a timely manner. Explicitly, and sometimes even implicitly, marginalized, underrepresented, and "at-risk" students are often the target of such efforts, and first-generation students are no exception. Case in point is the grandmother of student success efforts: TRIO, a program that serves first-generation and low-income students with a multitude of services. "Student success" positions have surged and are now housed in student services as well as academic affairs and at all levels of the institution. However, most of these positions and programs are often marginalized themselves from

[1] Redford, J., & Hoyer, K. M. (2017). *First-generation and continuing-generation college students: A comparison of high school and postsecondary experiences.* National Center for Education Statistics.

institutional goals, objectives, and support. This is unfortunate, since much of the literature indicates that policies and practices that support the success of first-generation students also benefit non-first-generation students.

For first-generation students, a significant barrier to student success is lack of engagement in institutional support services. This reticence generally originates from a combination of historically poor support from other major institutions throughout their lives, fears around the potential repercussions of asking for help, and a lack of awareness about the existence of university resources and services. It is not surprising that many of the studies published between 2008 and 2012 predicted bleak outcomes for first-generation students. We also note that although there is a critical mass of research that looks at high school experiences as predictors of success, this section focuses on postsecondary education.

Summary of Research

This section begins with a list of current landscape analyses that provide a broad overview of first-generation student data and analysis of outcomes. Starting with these sources before delving into specific studies on student success topics offers a "balcony" view of the work to date. The data sets for these landscape analyses are also used in other, more focused research on first-generation students. Generally speaking, research pertaining to first-generation student success is steeped in persistence and retention—by far the largest category in this section. In order to understand the success of first-generation students, most of these studies focus on the experience of *first-year* students. The most popular methodology was to compare outcomes of first-generation students (e.g., GPA or retention) to their continuing-generation peers. With few

exceptions, most of these studies deemed first-generation students to be "less successful." Many research questions explored first-generation students' decisions to attend college in the first place and sought to identify the factors that got them there, as opposed to understanding the first-generation student experience itself. Given this framework, it is not surprising that many studies recommend greater K–12 outreach to prospective first-generation students. Unsurprisingly, the research points to financial strain as a significant negative impact on students' ability to focus on academics, complete an academic term, and, eventually, graduate.

Some studies identified notable areas where first-generation students have made gains, including but not limited to campus libraries and service learning courses. Using an asset-based lens, some of the literature stresses that first-generation students bring funds of knowledge to institutions, and some even argue that the university is inadequate at meeting these students' needs. In fact, a few studies claim that institutions may be actively *contributing* to student anxiety and unwellness. In some cases, first-generation students were found to be more resilient than continuing-generation students. University jargon is also identified as a common barrier for first-generation students and their parents or caregivers. To augment the success of first-generation students, especially outside of the

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classroom, university staff need to be proactive in reaching out to students, as opposed to waiting for students to find services. A number of studies report that first-generation students (all students, really) are best served when resources, such as the library, are integrated into the curriculum rather than designed to be auxiliary to coursework. Additionally, faculty and staff need to be taught good mentoring strategies that will best meet student needs.

Suggestions for Future Research

As first-generation programming and services evolve to include more asset-based approaches to serving students, so must the student success literature. In particular, there is a great need for research studies that offer alternative definitions of *success* that do not presume that first-generation students are disadvantaged compared to their continuing-generation peers. Research might include more qualitative-based studies that center student voices, such as self-authorship, and also incorporate critical race theory, feminism, and queer theories. We acknowledge that a number of long-standing student success programs have achieved important and meaningful outcomes, particularly but not limited to TRIO programs, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), and the like; the practitioners within and directors of these programs should consider researching and writing about their outcomes.

Because student success can depend on school size and mission, institution type may be called out or included in the research on student success. To that end, one of the studies in this section recommends a further exploration into regional differences as well, noting that many research studies focus on institutions located in the Northeast United States while Southern schools

are understudied. Finally, there is more work to be done on first-generation student success at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), tribal colleges, faith-based schools, and others, and not just those attending secular or Predominantly White Institutions.

While it is generally known that high-impact practices (HIPs) significantly shape the experiences of undergraduates, surprisingly little research explores their impact on first-generation students. Areas of fruitful exploration include service learning, First-Year Seminars, internships, and study abroad. Studies on mental health and wellness as well as the use of social media (personal use and institutional use) are other areas of need. Similarly, a closer look at student employment—both on and off campus—is warranted. Again, researchers should not presume that working while in college is inherently detrimental to first-generation students.

Overall, student success literature would benefit from a recognition that first-generation students are a heterogenous population. This could include projects that explore the first-generation experience beyond the first year to include sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Although there are considerable intersections between first-generation students and transfer students, particularly from community colleges, the literature on this subpopulation is abysmal. Further, tremendous opportunity exists for promising practices and reflections on graduate student success outside of the classroom, such as mental health support, requisite assistantships, and professional development opportunities.

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References – Landscape Analyses

Cataldi, E. F., Bennett, C. T., & Chen, X. (2018). *First-generation students: College access, persistence, and postbachelor's outcomes* (Stats in Brief. NCES 2018-421). National Center for Education Statistics.
This brief paper on the first-generation student data from the National Center for Education Statistics examines various characteristics of first-generation students, including personal, enrollment, academic, and career. The study's aim is to answer how first-generation students fare compared to their non-first-generation student counterparts in college enrollment, college persistence, and college graduation.

Peabody, M., Hutchens, N. H., Lewis, W., & Deffendall, M. (2011). *First-generation college students at the University of Kentucky.* Policy Analysis Center for Kentucky Education. https://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=packe
In this white paper, the authors explore common characteristics of first-generation students nationally and propose promising practices that can be used specifically at the University of Kentucky to best support this population and to close retention and graduation rates. Support programs like the Robinson Scholars and First Scholars have seen considerable success. It is recommended that the university improve its data collection, explore support beyond the first-year for first-generation students, and create a one-stop shop for this population.

Spiegler, T., & Bednarek, A. (2013). First-generation students: What we ask, what we know and what it means: An international review of the state of research. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 23*(4), 318–337. https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2013.815441
This article provides a review of the international literature on first-generation students. Over 70 articles were reviewed to determine common issues identified for first-generation students such as precollege characteristics, experiences, and academic outcomes. The authors discovered two issues with the research: inconsistency in the definition of first-generation student across countries and universities, and the focus on personal issues instead of structural issues regarding first-generation students.

Student Affairs Forum. (2016). *Transforming the first-generation college student experience: 17 strategies for enhancing student success.* Education Advisory Board.
This four-part essay is meant to provide practitioners with concrete ways to engage the first-generation student experience on a macro level. Topics include empowering students to better navigate the college experience, highlighting positive identity-based messaging, rethinking student involvement, and front-loading career development information and services. A tool kit of specific activities and resources targeted toward career development is also provided.

Ward, L., Siegel, M., & Davenport, Z. (2012). F*irst-generation college students: Understanding and improving the experience from recruitment to commencement.* Jossey-Bass.
The authors provide an overview of first-generation student characteristics as well as their experiences to and through college. Focusing a chapter on culture, class, race, and ethnicity, the book asks readers to consider how cultural capital affects first-generation student outcomes. The authors provide broad suggestions for improving the campus climate and institutional policies and processes so that first-generation students will feel more integrated and supported.

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Whitley, S., Benson, G., & Wesaw, A. (2018). *First-generation student success: A landscape analysis of programs and services at four-year institutions.* Center for First-generation Student Success, NASPA–Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, and Entangled Solutions. **https://firstgen.naspa.org/2018-landscape-analysis**

This report summarizes findings from a two-phase mixed-methods research study of how institutions throughout the United States are serving first-generation students. Phase 1 included interviews with faculty, administrators, students, and thought leaders; Phase 2 involved a nationwide survey of 371 faculty, administrators, and thought leaders. Among the several recommendations are (a) to establish a common definition of first-generation identity early, (b) to dismantle silos in favor of a comprehensive support network, (c) to foster an asset-based approach to serving students, and (d) to mobilize for institutional, not just programmatic, change.

References - Faith and Religion

Asplund, L. K. (2009). Understanding the role of faith in decisions to persist in college for first-generation Black male students. *Christian Perspectives in Education, 3*(1), 1–14.

This phenomenological study aimed to understand the experiences of three Black male first-generation students at a Black Christian university and the factors that led to their success. The researcher asked questions related to their precollege experiences, their sources of support while in college, and their current struggles. Christian faith emerged as a primary theme; that is, the student's faith or the faith of family members helped them overcome obstacles. These students also had significant emotional support from home. The researchers recommend more studies that focus on students in the Southern United States.

Rood, R. E. (2009). Driven to achieve: First-generation students' narrated experience at a private Christian college. *Christian Higher Education, 8*(3), 225–254. **https://doi.org/10.1080/15363750802708494**

The researchers of this study conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with 43 junior year and 50 senior year first-generation students at a private Christian college in the Northeast United States to determine what factors influenced their experience. Three themes emerged: faculty, family, and faith. Faculty were one of the important reasons students said they stayed at the college and found themselves integrated into the campus community. Family, including parents as well as spouses of married students, also played an important role in the aspirations and motivations of students. Nonetheless, the mixed results of the role of faith on the students' success was a surprise finding because these first-generation students chose to attend a faith-based institution. Additionally, first-generation identity did not emerge as an important part of the students' identity formation.

References - Academic Advising

Buissink-Smith, N., Spronken-Smith, R., & Walker, R. (2010). You're doing what? Students' experiences of advice from a New Zealand university. *Higher Education Research & Development, 29*(4), 357–371. **https://doi.org/10.1080/07294361003601891**

This case study was created based on survey results of 191 students attending a New Zealand university. Students were asked about the advice they had been given and their awareness of campus support for their needs. Student responses were analyzed by demographic variables including first-generation, part-time, and international status. Results indicated that students received information about the university from institutional publications, family, and support staff. The study concluded that advisors

need to be more aware of the specific needs of different types of students and that career advising may need to be more holistic in nature.

Fernandez, M. J., Trenor, J. M., Zerda, K. S., & Cortes, C. (2008). *First generation college students in engineering: A qualitative investigation of barriers to academic plans* [Conference presentation]. **38th Annual Frontiers in Education Conference, 2008.** Using social cognitive theory as the framework for the study, the researchers conducted semistructured interviews of eight students in an engineering program at the University of Houston, where 30% of first-year engineering students identified as first-generation student. The authors' research question was, "What barriers do first-generation college students perceive for their engineering academic and career plans?" After coding transcripts in NVivo, 59 a priori and emergent themes revealed that students experience barriers to recruitment and retention. The six most important themes are lack of understanding of admissions; financial issues; difficulty in engineering courses; insufficient role models in engineering; conflicts with work, home, and school; and parents' lack of understanding of demands of a degree. The authors concluded their study with recommendations for more outreach to high school students, additional advising for college students about balancing their obligations, and improved information to parents and families.

Stieha, V. (2010). Expectations and experiences: The voice of a first-generation first-year college student and the question of persistence. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education 23*(2), 237–249. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390903362342 This phenomenological study illuminates the individual experience of a first-generation student, Alli, who was in her first year of college. Through a

series of conversations, the researcher describes Alli's feelings of self-doubt that challenge her desire to become involved and engaged at the institution. Moreover, she describes the conflict Alli feels as she voices her fear of losing her family relationships and, subsequently, makes decisions to protect those relationships at the cost of her own academic and cocurricular engagement. While the personal narrative of Alli cannot be generalized, the author suggests that it is important to consider the range of influences on first-generation student success. To that end, practitioners and scholars should consult disaggregated data to better understand nuanced experiences of first-generation students. Additionally, given the significance of family and family relationships in Alli's experience, the influence of these relationships should be studied in greater depth and accounted for in student persistence models and theories.

Swecker, H. K., Fifolt, M., & Searby, L. (2013). Academic advising and first-generation college students: A quantitative study on student retention. *NACADA Journal, 33*(1), 46–53. https://doi.org/10.12930/nacada-13-192 This quantitative study sought to determine the effect on enrollment status and academic standing for first-generation students at a large, public research institution in the Southeast United States in which 30% of the incoming freshman class was first-generation. The researchers used a sample of 363 historical records for a multiple logistic regression to determine the relationship between the number of meetings with an academic advisor and retention of first-generation students, as represented by enrollment status and academic standing. The records included student academic fact sheets and tracking of student–advisor face-to-face interactions. While the researchers did not compare first-generation student results with non-first-

generation student, findings from this study suggest that for every meeting with an academic advisor, the odds that a first-generation student will be retained increase by 13%.

References - Belonging

Blaney, J. M., & Stout, J. G. (2017, March). Examining the relationship between introductory computing course experiences, self-efficacy, and belonging among first-generation college women. In *Proceedings of the 2017 ACM SIGCSE Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education* **(pp. 69–74).** https://doi.org/10.1145/3017680.3017751
The authors of this study examined the relationship between the experiences in an introductory computing course and students' beliefs of self-efficacy and sense of belonging in the discipline of computing. As part of their analysis, the researchers, who focused on differences by gender and college generation status, found that a relationship between some introductory computing course experiences and self-efficacy and sense of belonging was strongest among first-generation women. The most intriguing result was that interactions with instructors was positively correlated to first-generation student women's self-efficacy.

Means, D. R., & Pyne, K. B. (2017). Finding my way: Perceptions of institutional support and belonging in low-income, first-generation, first-year college students. *Journal of College Student Development,* *58*(6), 907–924. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0071
This qualitative case study follows 10 low-income first-generation students who participated in a comprehensive college access program through their first year of college. The study sought to identify the institutional support structures that increased the students' sense of belonging and helped them navigate their respective

campuses. The participants, who completed three semistructured interviews, represented a variety of races and ethnicities and also attended various types of institutions (including private and public schools). Findings demonstrated that many of the support structures that the students identified as contributing to their sense of belonging—for example, residential communities, faculty relationships, academic support services—at times also contributed to their marginalization on campus. The authors stress that for low-income first-generation students, sense of belonging is not static. Additionally, the study found that messages about college belonging occur prior to college enrollment, such as those that come from peers or high school teachers. Finally, the essay ends with a call to action for institutional support structures, particularly residential life and campus organizations, to embrace their ability to disrupt discrimination and marginalization that students, especially students of color, may experience.

Williams, S., & Ferrari, J. (2015). Identification among first-generation citizen students and first-generation college students: An exploration of school sense of community. *Journal of Community Psychology,* *43*(3), 377–387. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21685
The purpose of this study was to compare the school sense of community (SSOC) of first-generation students versus continuing-generation students and first-generation U.S. citizens versus their non-first-generation U.S. citizens. Over 3,000 students attending a large, urban faith-based university completed the SSOC inventory. Results found that students who were first-generation U.S. citizens and first-generation students (the group with the highest SSOC scores) reported significantly higher levels of SSOC than students who were first-generation U.S. citizens and non-first-generation

student. The authors acknowledge a number of limitations to the study, such as the exclusion of key variables like gender and socioeconomic status.

References - Financial Literacy

Furquim, F., Glasener, K. M., Oster, M., McCall, B. P., & DesJardins, S. L. (2017). Navigating the financial aid process: Borrowing outcomes among first-generation and non-first-generation students. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 671*(1), 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716217698119

The authors in this piece explore differences in borrowing behavior across students' generational status and draw upon basic tenets of demand theory to explain students' borrowing choices. The data set for this analysis includes incoming new and transfer students at a large Midwestern public university system (*n* = 130,891); about 34% of the students were first-generation. The authors find that first-generation students are more likely to apply for financial aid, borrow, and take out larger loans than their peers. The researchers hypothesize that first-generation students and their families, many of whom also are low income or working class, may have different access to various forms of credit that may result in a greater reliance on federal and state loans. The authors suggest that financial aid practitioners need better tools to improve Expected Family Contribution (EFC) forecasts and to better inform families about its meaning and what their options are. It may also be possible to structure financial aid packages in ways that minimize the need for student loans.

Eitel, S. J., & Martin, J. (2009). First-generation female college students' financial literacy: Real and perceived barriers to degree completion. *College Student Journal, 3*(2), 616–630.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect that financial literacy has on first-generation

student female students by identifying financial literacy needs, exploring any differences in perceived and actual financial literacy needs, and examining the perceived barriers to support for degree attainment. The researchers, who used a two-phase sequential mixed-methods approach, analyzed results from a Jump$tart survey. They found that participants were not financially literate and did not see the value in improving their financial literacy as defined by the university. The results also suggested that age, ethnicity, and student classification were predictors of financial literacy skills.

Lee, J., & Mueller, J. A. (2014). Student loan debt literacy: A comparison of first-generation and continuing-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 55*(7), 714–719. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2014.0074

This study sought to determine if student loan debt literacy differs by generation status (first- generation and continuing-generation). The data for this study was collected from a sample of 156 first-year students at a midsize, public institution in the mid-Atlantic region; over half of participants (*n* = 81) were categorized as first-generation. The researchers used Porter's (1999) Debt Management Survey to measure student loan debt literacy. The results suggest that there is a significant difference between first-generation and continuing-generation students in their respective decisions to use loans. For instance, compared to their peers, first-generation students (a) rely more heavily on student loans, (b) are more likely to believe they can afford higher education only by incurring debt, and (c) are more likely to scrutinize the decision to incur debt. The authors recommend that first-generation students, along with their parents and guardians, may benefit from a more direct and intentional approach to student loan debt literacy education. The findings from this study further suggest

that *all* college students, regardless of generation status, believe themselves to be ill-equipped to incur student loan debt responsibly. Therefore, to benefit all students (and first-generation students in particular), it is recommended that higher education administrators, parents, and students themselves make student loan debt literacy a priority.

Martinez, E. F., Bilges, D. C., Shabazz, S. T., Miller, R., & Morote, E.-S. (2012). To work or not to work: Student employment, resiliency, and institutional engagement of low-income, first-generation college students. *Journal of Student Financial Aid, 42*(1), 28–39.
This study explored how working impacts resiliency and institutional engagement among low-income first-generation students. The dependent variable indicated whether a student participated in work-study, worked off campus, or was employed both in a work-study and off-campus job. Participants included 52 low-income first-generation students participating in a Student Support Services program at a private, 4-year, not-for-profit, nonselective college in New York. Findings from the analysis indicated a significant relationship for resiliency and employment type. For instance, students who had only on-campus, work-study jobs (compared to off-campus or off-campus/work-study employment) reported significantly lower levels of resilience. Additionally, the post hoc test concluded that students who engaged in off-campus employment exhibited more resiliency than work-study students. The authors acknowledge that, due to steady increases in college tuition and expenses, students are much more likely to work off campus. By working their way through school, these students may indeed cultivate more resilience while also being engaged with the college and/or university community. It is important for faculty and administrators to provide support and guidance to these students through mentorships, tutoring, and campus programs.

References - High-Impact Practices
Finley, A., & McNair, T. (2013). *Assessing underserved students' engagement in high-impact practices.* **American Association of Colleges and Universities.**
In this two-part study, researchers found that first-generation students participated in fewer HIPs than did their continuing-generation counterparts. The appendix includes recommendations for how campuses can address equity gaps within HIPs, including a review of culturally inclusive practices.

Sanchez, G. J. (2012). **Intensive study abroad for first-generation college students.** *Peer Review, 14*(3).
The author, vice dean for diversity and strategic initiatives at the University of Southern California, describes the Topping Scholars study abroad opportunity, which is dedicated to first-generation students. Included is specific information about supporting first-generation students and their families about this opportunity, including (a) a workshop for families and parents about the trip, and (b) a college-sponsored blog where students could upload photographs and contribute narratives, especially for their families back home. Sanchez even held office hours aboard the flight with each individual student. Student participants also submitted research papers, and the author notes that having "several high-impact practices wrapped into one academic experience" contributed to the program's overall success.

References - Libraries and Information Literacy
Arch, A., & Gilman, I. (2019). First principles: Designing services for first-generation students. *College & Research Libraries, 80*(7), 996–1012. **https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.80.7.996**
The study explored the needs and concerns of first-generation students by obtaining input from secondary school college counselors on students' expectations of college life. In addition, the authors explored library services and resources geared

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toward first-generation students. Two surveys were utilized to collect data. Themes emerging from the counselor survey were academics, social and cultural, home and family, navigating college, financial, and mentoring and advising. Based on study findings, the authors offer suggestions for library services specific to first-generation students, including integrating information literacy into existing first-generation programs, such as orientation and summer bridge; developing diverse and empathic faculty and staff, including diverse and inclusive spaces reflective of students from diverse backgrounds; educating families on library resources and spaces; making the library spaces more easily accessible; financial literacy training; and collaborating with mentoring and advising programs for education about the library and offering the library as a space for these meetings. This study provides many examples and opportunities for libraries to become student-ready and to take an active role in meaningfully engaging and supporting first-generation students in ways that can positively impact their concerns and the challenges anticipated by secondary school counselors. Academic libraries should assess services and resources geared toward first-generation students and perhaps explore the effectiveness of the communication and marketing of such services with the first-generation student population to help ensure reduction of library anxiety.

Barrett, L., Ghezzi, R., & Satterfield, J. (2015). Jay Gatsby goes to college: Engaging at-risk students. *Reference and User Services Quarterly, 55*(1), 11–17. https://www.jstor.org/stable/refuseserq.55.1.11
This article describes Dartmouth's First Year Student Enrichment Program, which includes an 8-day pre-orientation and a yearlong student-led mentorship program. This article describes the library orientation that is part of the 8-day portion of the program. Because the first-year writing classes use *The Great Gatsby* as a foundational theme, students who participated in the library orientation were given the opportunity to explore themes of the book and events of the 1920s through different types of resources that the library offers. The article concludes with an example of survey results in which first-generation students say they learned a lot from the orientation.

Borrelli, S., Su, C., Selden, S., & Munip, L. (2017). Investigating first-generation students' perceptions of library personnel. *Performance Management and Metrics, 20*(1), 27–36. https://doi.org/10.1108/pmm-07-2018-0018
Drawing on qualitative data collected from focus groups, this study focused on investigating first-generation student perceptions of library staff at Penn State University. Specifically, the study centered on research questions about the role of library staff, changes in perceptions of library staff over time (Do their perceptions change?), and specific experiences that influenced any changes. A total of five major findings are described, including (a) low awareness of available services, (b) time constraints (participants described personal demands on their time that resulted in limited time to become familiar with or use the library services), (c) limitations of orientations and instructional interventions, (d) limited interactions with personnel, and (e) evolving awareness of services (upper-division participants described becoming more aware of services over time at the university; pp. 30–32). Based on the aforementioned findings, future research might involve learning more about library usage and student success (e.g., Is there a correlation between library usage among first-year, first-generation and greater retention or higher GPAs?). Additionally, the authors suggest conducting more research focused on determining how and when students become familiar with library services as well as any influence of peers on that introduction to the library.

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Brinkman, S., Gibson, K., & Presnell, J. (2013). When the helicopters are silent: The information seeking strategies of first-generation college students. *Association of College and Research Libraries*, **643–650.**

The purpose of this study was to learn more about how first-generation students develop information-seeking behaviors for academic and nonacademic information and how the library functions in that process. Four focus groups of 15 women and two men from a range of majors and classes were interviewed, and the results were analyzed using consensual qualitative research and cross-analysis. The researchers noted that responses fell into four domains and 16 core ideas: financial issues, relationships with family, college support systems, and "information seeking is overwhelming." First-generation students reported that their families were not helpful in providing academic advice but were generally supportive and encouraging. They also indicated that their informal networks were better for accessing information about college and life in general. In fact, students did not perceive the library as helpful to their needs, and it often was a source of anxiety. The authors recommend that staff be made aware of library jargon, that institutions diversify library staff, and that library staff be more involved in programs that serve first-generation students. #culturalcapital #parentsandfamilies

Ilett, D. (2019). A critical review of LIS literature on first-generation students. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy, 19*(1), 177–196. https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2019.0009

This review offers a critical analysis of the library and information science (LIS) literature on first-generation students from the last 40 years. This literature demonstrates an interest in understanding the needs of first-generation students to serve them better, but most studies are grounded in a deficit model of education that focuses on what first-generation students lack instead of what they have. This review identifies four predominant themes in the literature: first-generation students as outsiders, as a problem, as reluctant library users, and as capable students. It then suggests possible avenues of future research, such as using a "funds of knowledge" approach to build on the learning and skills that students bring from their families and communities.

Ilett, D. (2019). First-generation students' information literacy in everyday contexts. *Journal of Information Literacy, 13*(2), 73–91. https://doi.org/10.11645/13.2.2675

The aim of this study was to explore what first-generation students already know and are able to do with information in other areas of their lives outside of a prescriptive school context. The author, who also identifies as first-generation student, interviewed six first-generation students at a midsize university in the United States in order to answer the following research question: How do first-generation students engage with information in their everyday lives? All students self-identified as the first in their family to earn a 4-year degree, and all were full-time students who participated in the school's student support services program. Participants displayed experience engaging with information within three principal contexts: their households, careers, and communities, including their racial, ethnic, and sexual identities. The author makes several recommendations, including that (a) librarians and staff must avoid using library jargon when working with any student, (b) library staff should increase awareness about negative assumptions about first-generation students, and (c) library and information literacy curricula could draw more explicitly on students' bank of knowledge.

Logan, F., & Pickard, E. (2012). First-generation college students: A sketch of their research process. In L. M. Duke & A. D. Asher (Eds.), *College libraries and student culture: What we now know* (pp. 109–125). American Library Association.
The participants in this study included 18 first-year first-generation students attending the University of Illinois at Chicago. The researchers conducted interviews to learn about the students' educational history prior to college and about their current use and knowledge of the campus library. The authors found that participants had difficulty navigating the physical library, and they tended to go to TAs and course instructors for questions about the library instead of librarians themselves. The authors recommended that the librarians become more involved in new student orientation so that students have more opportunities to get to know these staff. The authors also suggested that the library offer free movies and book talks to make the space more welcoming.

Neurohr, K. A., & Bailey, L. E. (2017). First-generation undergraduate students and library spaces: A case study. In S. E. Montgomery (Ed.), *Assessing library space for learning* (pp.167–182). Rowman & Littlefield.
The purpose of this case study was to explore the role of the Edmon Low Library for 10 first-generation undergraduate students attending Oklahoma State University (OSU). Each of the participants had completed three or more semesters at OSU. The methodology included interviews with the students about their impressions of the library's physical features, such as the architecture, layout, and furnishings. Participants also took photographs of the library and discussed them with the researchers. Generally speaking, students have positive impressions of the library (described as "the heart of academics") and perceived it as a stable place

with spaces and resources for learning. For some of the students, the library represents an aspect of academic identity and belonging at the university. This scholarship adds to existing research on first-generation students by focusing on elements of spaces, such as objects and furnishings, that participants find meaningful and that contribute to fostering a sense of place at a college or university.

Parker, A. (2017). Academic libraries and vulnerable student populations: A new model of embedded librarianship for first-generation university students. *The Political Librarian 3, 1*(9), 26–31.
This case study explores the unique barriers, challenges, and needs of a cohort of 100 first-generation students at the University of Utah. The author, a librarian, proposed a new model of support where she actively participated as a staff member of the Beacon Scholars program. She not only attended the weekly classes but also facilitated class activities. Prior to this, librarians delivered a one-time lecture to these students, and those students rarely used library services. As a result of the embedded librarianship model, there was a significant increase of research consultations and student visits to the library. The author stresses the value of relationship-building by creating small communities of institutionalized support, particularly for first-generation students. Further, regarding student lack of participation in library or academic services, it is easy to confuse fear or anxiety around university systems with a lack of student motivation.

Pickard, E., & Logan, F. (2013). The research process and the library: First-generation college seniors vs. freshmen. *College & Research Libraries, 74*(4), 399–415. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl-348
This study, which follows up on earlier research conducted in the Ethnographic Research in Illinois

Academic Libraries project, examined the extent, if any, that information literacy increases as first-generation students progress from their first to their senior year at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The researchers found that senior first-generation students in the study were proficient at conducting searches for primary sources, they demonstrated an understanding of research as an iterative process, and they understood the amount of research necessary to adequately "cover" a topic.

References - Mental Health and Stress

Barry, L. M., Hudley, C., Kelly, M., & Cho, S. (2009). Differences in self-reported disclosure of college experiences by first-generation college student status. *Adolescence,* 44(173), 55–68.
This research study was conducted through a survey across four universities to determine the differences in self-reported disclosures of college experiences by first-generation student status. The researchers hypothesized that "college freshmen would differ in their self-reported disclosure of college experiences by first-generation status and that those differences would be evident across varying proximity of targets of disclosure" (p. 59). The web-based service asked demographic and other questions related to their college choice, high school experiences, and college experiences. Findings indicated that first-generation students disclosed their experiences to fewer family, classmates, and friends. This difference in disclosure could have negative effects on first-generation students' integration into the college community and their level of support. The researchers suggest that institutions provide opportunities for first-generation students to disclose their experiences with other first-generation students.

House, L. A., Neal, C., & Kolb, J. (2019). Supporting the mental health needs of first-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy,* 34(1):1-11 https://doi.org/10.1080/87568225.2019.1578940
This study sought to explore the differences that exist between first-generation students and non-first-generation students who seek mental health services at a college counseling center. The authors hypothesized that there would be notable differences in mental health concerns, social supports, academic distress, and financial distress. Data were obtained from inventories that participants completed during initial intake sessions. Study findings did not support the original hypotheses. In fact, data indicated that first-generation students are not plagued by more mental health concerns and that they are just as academically and psychologically prepared as their non-first-generation counterparts. The authors suggest that their deficit-based hypotheses were based on previous self-reports from students who sought services at the counseling center. However, study findings show that first-generation students matched their peers in academic achievement, social support, and family support. While findings did indicate that first-generation students experienced more academic distress, financial distress, and employment hours, they are succeeding and presenting with resilience even when facing challenges at the university. The authors recognized the importance of supporting the unique needs of first-generation students. They identified a need to further explore the role of intersectionality on the student experience to enhance support of all aspects of students' identity. It is important for counseling centers and institutions to utilize research as a tool to gain a better understanding of populations, dispel myths, and continue to find ways to enhance their support of first-generation students.

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Jenkins, S. R., Belanger, A., Connally, M. L., Boals, A., & Duron, K. M. (2013). First-generation undergraduate students' social support, depression, and life satisfaction. *Journal of College Counseling, 16*(2), 129–142. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1882.2013.00032.x

In this study, first-generation undergraduate students were compared with non-first-generation undergraduate students to investigate levels of social support, depression, and life satisfaction. The authors assumed that first-generation students would report less support, more posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression symptoms, and less life satisfaction than their peers. Participants were volunteers from undergraduate psychology courses at a large state university in the United States. They answered questions from four different measures using an online format. Based on this study, first-generation students reported less support from family, more PTSD symptoms, and less life satisfaction than their non-first-generation peers. However, first-generation students did not report more depression symptoms than their peers. Findings suggest a need for greater mental health support and resources at institutions with populations of first-generation students. Further, the authors suggest considering and assessing students for PTSD and depression when they present with characteristics or symptoms of learning disabilities and attention disorders. This study showed differences in the well-being among first-generation female and male participants, with first-generation male students having a higher level of well-being than their female first-generation peers and their non-first-generation counterparts. Future research on life stressors, generation status, and gender differences is warranted. Counselor awareness of potential sources of academic acculturative stress is important because counselors can take an active role in impacting students' social and cultural capital by supporting connection to other university resources.

Stebleton, M. J., Soria, K. M., & Huesman, R. L. (2014). First-generation students' sense of belonging, mental health, and use of counseling services at public research universities. *Journal of College Counseling, 17*(1), 6–20. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1882.2014.00044.x

Among the research questions posed in this study are: What might be the relationship between first-generation students' sense of belonging on campus and their mental health? And what is the role of college counselors in helping first-generation students to persist toward graduation? The researchers administered the Student Experience in the Research University survey to 145,150 students attending six different large public research institutions; ultimately, 58,017 students responded. Approximately 28% of the participants were identified as first-generation students. Data included in the study came from demographic items and core items focusing on students' satisfaction with their academic and social experiences. The study also examined student responses from the student life and development module as well as questions related to their mental health. It was found that non-first-generation students reported a greater sense of belonging on campus, on average, compared with first-generation students. Levels of mental health differed significantly across the two groups, with non-first-generation students reporting lower levels of depression/stress on average compared with first-generation students. Additionally, first-generation students indicated needing but not using services at a higher rate than non-first-generation students. The findings suggest it is vital that college counselors, especially at large research institutions, address the unique mental health issues that first-generation students often encounter. Also, it is important that counselors identify and engage in targeted outreach strategies to reach students, primarily first-generation students. The authors note that these

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results may be particular to students attending large universities, where it may be more difficult to make connections; they recommend that the study be replicated at smaller institutions.

Tate, K. A., Williams, C. W., & Harden, D. (2013). Finding purpose in pain: Using logotherapy as a method for addressing survivor guilt in first-generation college students. *Journal of College Counseling, 16*(1), 79–92. **https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1882.2013.00028.x**
Using logotherapy, a philosophical approach to finding meaning that is often used in therapy, this study explores survivor's guilt in first-generation students. The authors posit that first-generation students lack social and cultural capital and also struggle between two worlds with little or no support from family members. The article provides steps for using this counseling framework to help first-generation students who suffer from survivor's guilt so that they can process the experience rather than just "cope" with it. The logotherapy intervention suggested includes the following steps: (a) contextualizing the struggle, (b) discovering values, (c) applying values to create purpose, and (d) empowering beyond counseling. The first step orients the student to their first-generation student status: "Many students may not think overtly about being a first-generation student and may need to come to terms with the effect" (pp. 85–86). The second step assumes that students are working through conflict with their values, assuming that the family will not understand that the student must create new networks on campus. The last two steps call for first-generation students to begin to move forward through acceptance of their experience and to work past their survivor's guilt.

Wang, C.-C., & Castañeda-Sound, C. (2008). The role of generational status, self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, and perceived social support in college students' psychological well-being. *Journal of College Counseling, 11*(2), 101–118. **https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1882.2008.tb00028.x**
This study examined the influences of generational status, self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, and perceived social support on undergraduate college students' psychological well-being. A total of 367 students from a large, public university on the West Coast participated in this study; 128 (34.9%) identified themselves as first-generation students. Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The College Self-Efficacy Inventory was used to measure academic self-efficacy. Findings showed that first-generation students reported significantly more somatic symptoms and lower levels of academic self-efficacy than did non-first-generation students. Additionally, the authors found that positive self-concept has a profound impact on the well-being of first-generation students. This study highlights the importance of offering comprehensive service programs to first-generation students—to address their social functioning to create a sense of community and enhance their psychological well-being—not just academic support. Because family factors play an important role in helping first-generation students' psychological well-being, college counselors may consider targeted outreach to families via newsletters, campus visits, and small group discussions.

References - Mentoring and Support
Cheong, Y., Gauvain, M., & Palbusa, J. A. (2019). Communication with friends and the academic adjustment of first- and non-first-generation students in the first year of college. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 23*(2), 1–17. **https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1521025119834253**
This study explored whether communication with on-campus friends relates to academic self-efficacy,

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whether school connectedness mediates that relationship and academic self-efficacy, and whether there is a difference between first-generation and non-first-generation students in this regard. It consisted of participants ($n = 246$) from a large, diverse, Southwestern, Hispanic-Serving Institution in the United States. First-generation students represented more than half of the total participants. Study participants completed an online survey containing the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale and School Connectedness Scale; each survey item was rated using a Likert scale. Findings revealed that first-year students' communication with on-campus friends positively related to academic self-efficacy and school connectedness. First-generation students discussed concerns with on campus friends just as much as their non-first-generation counterparts. Unlike prior research, this study did not find that academic self-efficacy of first-generation students differed from that of other students. In this study, first-generation students reported more school connectedness than their peers. The authors recognize that this high level of school connectedness may be due to the type of institution, high percentage of first-generation students, and existing supportive programs. Findings may vary at other types of institutions, such as Predominantly White Institutions. This study reinforces the value of building on-campus relationships for enhanced connectedness and academic self-efficacy. Creating intentional and meaningful opportunities for first-generation students to develop and enhance on-campus social networks is a promising direction for higher education institutions.

Connolly, S. (2017). The impact of peer mentoring on the mentors. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education, 9*(2), 255–266. https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-10-2015-0078
Using a mixed-methods approach, this study focused on determining the impact of the peer-mentoring experience on mentors to determine outcomes on student retention and GPA as well as the ways in which the peer mentorship experience influenced perceptions of academic and leadership development. The peer mentor group identified for the study consisted solely of resident assistants (RAs); out of a total of 38 participants, 34 were first-generation students. Findings from the study indicated that participants perceived a connection between their experience as an RA and their personal academic growth—specific themes that emerged from the analysis of data included conflicting demands, excelling in a difficult role, time management, role modeling, and general leadership growth (pp. 259–262). Analysis of GPAs for the participants revealed that despite the demands on students in RA positions, there was no negative impact on their academic performance. Finally, retention and graduation rates for the participants in the study were significantly higher than those of their non-RA peers. Additional research is needed to examine the relationship between peer mentor experiences and student success while students are in leadership roles and after that experience (following graduation). In addition to the opportunities for further research, there are also implications for professional practice. First, practitioners should actively recruit (and train) first-generation students for academic and nonacademic peer mentoring roles. Practitioners should also consider opportunities within these experiences to connect peer mentors with faculty because although the participants in the current study reported personal growth in academic and leadership skills, they did not express any engagement with faculty in their RA role.

Demetriou, C., Meece, J., Eaker-Rich, D., & Powell, C. (2017). The activities, roles, and relationships of successful first-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 58*(1), 19–36. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0001

This qualitative study explores the experiences and relationships of successful first-generation students. The researchers used Bronfenbrenner's (1979)[2] bioecological systems theory as a framework to review 100 student cases at a large, public Research I institution in the Southeast United States. Out of 100, 16 case studies were used for the study. The participants described engaging in multiple roles (student, research assistant, and employee) and activities (student organizations, study abroad, community service, and work duties). The study identified seven "proximal processes" for the success of first-generation students: "(a) forming attachments to people and places, (b) developing academic skills, (c) setting goals, (d) coping with change and challenges, (e) finding purpose and meaning in learning, (f) developing autonomy, and (g) forming and solidifying social and occupational identities" (p. 32).

Gist-Mackey, A., Wiley, M. L., & Erba, J. (2018). "You're doing great. Keep doing what you're doing": Socially supportive communication during first-generation college students' socialization. *Communication Education, 67*(1), 52–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2017.1390590

This qualitative study at a large, predominantly White Midwest public university aimed to explore how first-generation students engage in and provide social support during socialization phases. An organizational assimilation model was used to explore first-generation students' transition to college by temporally analyzing multiple sources and types of socially supportive communication found in interviews with 28 first-generation students in their first semester at a 4-year university. The researchers collected data by conducting in-depth, in-person semistructured interviews. Themes that came from the analysis of interview data included the following: first-generation students often seek trusted sources of information, learn to navigate finances, find ways to engage peers, and lean on organizational experts. Researchers were also able to explore the "temporal and shifting nature" of socially supportive processes of communication within their socialization experiences. Before enrolling in college, first-generation students ask for support related to college knowledge or the processes of applying to and enrolling in college. This seeking of support is constant in the first semester of college, but it also includes emotional support. first-generation students report, too, that they take on a role of "pioneers and brokers," which allows them to have an impact on their family and peer groups.

Lowery-Hart, R., & Pacheco, G. (2011). Understanding the first-generation student experience in higher education through a relational dialectic perspective. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 2011*(127), 55–68. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.457

This study focuses on three dialectics (integration–separation, stability–change, and expression–privacy) to explore tensions that first-generation students may feel as they navigate college. Participants (*n* = 12) were first-generation students who were part of a University Success Academy program at a Southwest regional university in the United States. Four focus groups were conducted over 8 weeks. The findings revealed that students alternate between needing connection with their first-generation identity and needing to be a part of the larger campus culture. Most of the students understood their need to talk about their personal and social identities but often did not feel

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[2] Bronfenbrenner U. *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 1979.

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supported to do so. To combat this, institutions must focus on creating trusting relationships with first-generation students; send campus representatives to communities instead of asking parents and families to come to campus; create intentional opportunities for first-gens to integrate with their peers; and provide instructional training for faculty and teaching assistants to effectively develop relationships with first-generation students.

Luckett, K., & Luckett, L. (2009). The development of agency in first-generation learners in higher education: A social realist analysis. *Teaching in Higher Education, 14*(5), 469–481. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510903186618

This article focused on a formative evaluation of a mentoring program in a South African university that serves first-generation students. The program includes first-generation students from rural areas who are completing 12- or 6-month in-service training. The program targeted low-income undergraduate first-generation students for the purpose of helping them develop a sense of personal identity and agency, which should assist them in succeeding in college and developing a professional identity. The researchers evaluate the program through both quantitative and qualitative methods, which included a mentee and mentor survey, reflective writings, and interviews. Through an analysis of the coded qualitative data, the researchers found that mentees were not well satisfied (42%) with their mentors and desired more support with life skills. Additional conclusions by the researchers were that first-generation students were in the process of developing both their personal and social identities and were less likely to be developing a professional identity, which could mean that the mentor program may need to focus less on career-related development.

Mangan, K. (2015, May 18). The challenge of the first-generation student. *Chronicle of Higher Education.*

In this article, the author provides an overview of the higher education landscape by using the experience of one student to explore why it's important for institutions to identify and support first-generation students. The author notes that support for first-generation students often varies by institution type and notes that more effort and resources need to be directed toward 2- and 4-year institutions rather than small elite schools, especially pipeline interventions, such as College Advising Corps, that help first-generation students get to college.

Plaskett, S., Bali, D., Nakkula, M. J., & Harris, J. (2018). Peer mentoring to support first-generation low-income college students. *Phi Delta Kappan, 99*(7), 47–51.

The authors examined a peer mentoring program that pairs first-generation and low-income students based on their academic interests and proximity near each other; additionally, the underclassmen were selected because they were at risk of dropping out of school. Consistent with prior research on this topic, the researchers found that the best matches struck a balance between *instrumentality* and *relationality*. That is, the incoming students were most successful when their mentors didn't just help them meet their immediate needs but also bonded with them personally. Additionally, the best outcomes for mentees were those that demonstrated high levels of trust and when the mentor did not come across as an authority figure. The authors claim that peer mentors (especially those who also are first-generation students) can provide some of the most effective support systems for first-generation students and they should be introduced early into a student's academic career.

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Wang, T. R. (2012). Understanding the memorable messages first-generation college students receive from on-campus mentors. *Communication Education, 61*(4), 335–357. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2012.691978
Using qualitative methods, this study focused on the messages that first-generation students (*n* = 30) receive from their on-campus mentors. The author used the memorable messages framework (Knapp et al., 1981) and relational dialectics theory (RDT 2.0) to guide both the study and analysis of data. The author found that the mentors' advice about balancing academics with family responsibilities often were conflicting. The students discussed how they resolved this tension concerning being self-reliant versus seeking support. The author recommends closer consideration of these messages and thoughtful pairing of mentors with mentees.

Wittner, B., Powazny, S., & Kauffield, S. (2019). Supporting Rita: A social cognitive approach to (first-generation) students' retention. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 62*(2):253-63. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1521025119882358
Using social cognitive theory, this study tests whether social support is really more important to first-generation students than non-first-generation students in Germany. The researchers also tested whether social support has a buffering effect on the decision to drop out for first-generation students but not for non-first-generation students. They used data from an ongoing longitudinal study in a project, which aims to improve the quality of teaching in higher education. In this study, participants completed an online questionnaire at the beginning of their first academic semester and then again 3 months later, close to their first university exams. Participation was mandatory as a course requirement, but students could choose not to answer questions. The findings indicate a relationship between academic self-efficacy

beliefs and a positive outcome expectation in terms of vocational choice. The authors suggest providing students with important information about career counseling via both low threshold channels (social media, learning platforms, email) and presentations and counseling appointments. To increase students' perceived support and integration, mentoring or peer mentoring programs are important.

References - Noncognitives (Self-Esteem, Locus of Control, Resilience, Self-Efficacy, and Grit)
Aspelmeier, J. E., Love, M. M., McGill, L. A., Elliott, A. N., & Pierce, T. W. (2012). Self-esteem, locus of control, college adjustment, and GPA among first- and continuing-generation students: A moderator model of generational status. *Research in Higher Education, 53*(7), 755–781. https://doi:10.1007/s11162-011-9252-1
The authors of this study employed an online survey that included questions on self-esteem, locus of control, academic adjustment, and GPA to determine whether academic predictors affected college outcomes for both first-generation and continuing-generation students. The researchers hypothesized that self-esteem and locus of control would predict college adjustment and self-reported GPA but that differences between first-generation student and continuing-generation student academic predictors and outcomes would be very small. However, the authors expected that, for first-generation students, associations between academic predictors and college outcomes would be stronger. There were 322 respondents to the survey. The results included no significant differences between first-generation students and continuing-generation students for the items related to self-esteem and college adjustment or for GPA. However, the researchers found that higher self-esteem was more predictive of improved personal adjustment and internal locus of control was more predictive of academic achievement in first-generation students than in continuing-

generation students. The authors provided a variety of recommendations based on the results of the data analysis, including the suggestion that institutions consider providing psychological assessments and more cognitive-behavioral interventions to both identify at-risk first-generation students and to provide more appropriate support.

Azmiti, M., Sumabat-Estrada, G., Cheong, Y., & Covarrubias, R. (2018). "Dropping out is not an option": How educationally resilient first-generation students see the future. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 2018*(160), 89–100. https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.20240
In this paper, the researchers examined the challenges and resources that first-generation students encounter as they navigate college, with a specific focus on academic resilience. The research questions included (a) What challenges do first-gen students face in their transition to college? (b) What resources do they use to face those challenges? and (c) What is the link between educational resilience, resources, and persistence to graduation and career goals? Findings were drawn from a 6-year longitudinal study at a public state university in northern California. For this study, data were collected from individual interviews and surveys of 214 students. In the cross-sectional study, 361 participants completed an online survey that included open- and closed-ended questions. The researchers found that not feeling welcomed or not fitting in with the campus ethos was the best predictor of whether a student would drop out of school by the end of their first year at the university. White first-generation students particularly struggled with sense of belonging because many of the resources that target first-gen and low-income students were represented as serving students of color only. Students reported that their most common sources of belonging are peer groups, residential colleges, academic departments, and ethnic-based

student organizations. The study confirmed the findings of prior research with a similar focus on student resilience, and the authors recommended future studies that explore how college majors impact student resilience, career pathways, relationships, and overall well-being. #resilience #career

Majer, J. M. (2009). Self-efficacy and academic success among ethnically diverse first-generation community college students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 2*(4), 243–250. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017852
The author presents a longitudinal study of 96 first-generation students at Richard J. Daley College in Illinois. The researcher first administered the Beliefs in Educational Success Test for a baseline measure of self-efficacy and a sociodemographic survey. Attendance in a psychology class, attrition, and GPA were used as measures. Multiple regressions and binary logistic regression were used to determine the connection between self-efficacy and sociodemographic variables in relation to three educational outcomes. The results point to the greater the self-efficacy, the greater the educational outcomes. The author concludes that first-generation students would benefit from interventions that increased self-efficacy.

O'Neal, C. R., Espino, M. M., Goldthrite, A., Morin, M. F., Weston, L., Hernandez, P., & Fuhrmann, A. (2016). Grit under duress: Stress, strengths, and academic success among non-citizen and citizen Latina/o first-generation college students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 38*(4), 230–238. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986316660775
This study looked at noncitizen Latino students compared to a group of first-generation Latino citizens with specific insights into grit, stressors, and GPAs. This mixed-methods study was deployed with interviews with 21 noncitizens and 26 citizens after a quantitative

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online survey. The online survey measured items such as stress and depression from a larger sample. For noncitizens, multiple areas of stress emerged, including financial barriers and institutional barriers such as educating administrators about policies related to undocumented status. The ways in which depression, grit, and GPAs interact are also important considerations for policy makers, faculty, and other constituents in the treatment and opportunities for undocumented students compared to Latino first-generation students who are U.S. citizens.

Prospero, M., Russell, A. C., & Vohr-Gupta, S. (2012). Effects of motivation on educational attainment: Ethnic and developmental differences among first-generation students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 11*(1), 100–119. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1538192711435556
This study aimed to explore the motivational dimensions among first-generation students and determine if the dimensions predicted GPA and if they differed among high school and college first-generation students as well as among Hispanic and non-Hispanic first-generation students. The participants were 63 high school students (100% first-generation students) and 252 college students (78% first-generation students); they completed a survey that included demographic information as well as educational motivation questions adapted from the Academic Motivation Scale. Statistical analysis of the data indicated that younger first-generation students reported higher extrinsic and intrinsic motivation than older first-generation students. Additional results indicated that all three motivational dimensions affected academic performance significantly. For example, higher amotivation and extrinsic motivation was associated with lower GPAs for first-generation students. Through a comparison of means, Hispanic first-generation students were more responsive to "motivation that is internally goal

driven and pleasurable for its own sake" (p. 111) and that they have higher levels of intrinsic motivation than non-Hispanic first-generation students.

Ramos, B. (2019). Moving from access to success: How first-generation students of color can build resilience in higher education through mentorship. *The Vermont Connection, 40*(1), 55-61. https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/tvc/vol40/iss1/9
The author begins the article by sharing her own story of being a first-generation student of color at a university in California and how she was able to navigate with the help of a mentor. Ramos describes different aspects of mentoring and how they can help first-generation students who may not know how to handle different challenges in college. For example, she suggests that first-generation students often lack extensive knowledge about financial aid and could benefit from a mentor who can guide them through their options. She also notes that first-generation students may be less inclined to seek out help for depression or academic challenges, and she suggests that mentors could be instrumental in encouraging mentees to seek help. Her final thoughts include how an "ethic of care" can help first-generation students and students of color develop counternarratives that can help them develop resilience. She concludes with suggestions for holistic mentoring of first-generation students.

Virden, D., Godwin, A., Kirn, A., Benson, L., & Potvin, G. (2018). Understanding how engineering identity and belongingness predict grit for first-generation college students. *School of Engineering Education Graduate Series.* **The Collaborative Network for Engineering and Computing Diversity Conference: Crystal City, Virginia. April 29, 2018**
This study examines the relationship between first-generation students' engineering identity, belonging in engineering as a field and in the engineering

classroom, and grit. The researchers hypothesize that engineering identity and belongingness predict two forms of grit: persistence of effort and consistency of interest. During the first 2 weeks of class, almost 3,000 first-year, first-semester engineering students participated in a survey that was administered in their respective introductory to engineering courses at three participating land-grant institutions and one Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) in the United States. Of the overall 2,916 students who completed the survey, 72% ($n1$ = 2,092) were considered continuing-generation students, and 20% ($n2$ = 596) were first-generation students. Results revealed that engineering identity has a positive direct effect on students' sense of belongingness. Both engineering identity and belongingness have a positive direct effect on persistence of effort but were not significant predictors of consistency of interest. This study dispels the notion that grit is an innate trait. In light of these findings, the authors believe that students must first develop an interest in the subject, obtain recognition by others, and have internalized beliefs that they can understand and perform well in engineering to subsequently develop feelings of belonging.

Vuong, M., Brown-Welty, S., & Tracz, S. (2010). The effects of self-efficacy on academic success of first-generation college sophomore students. *Journal of College Student Development, 51*(1), 50–64. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1353/csd.0.0109
This article described the findings of a study that determined the effects of self-efficacy on the academic success of first-generation sophomore students enrolled at one of five California State University campuses. The findings of the study demonstrate a relationship between self-efficacy and academic success (measured by GPA and persistence) of all of the students (first- and continuing-generation) in the study. Furthermore, participant perceptions of their academic abilities also influenced their overall academic success. While the findings indicate that there were no differences in the self-efficacy of first-generation students compared to their continuing-generation peers, the researchers found differences in the academic variables as they were compared to each participant subgroup. Drawing from the findings of the study, the researchers suggest more "curricular practices that link students' ideas across courses and disciplines" (p. 62) as well as opportunities for students to develop a personal connection to the concept or idea and relating it to aspects of their own social and cultural identities.

References - Retention/Graduation/Persistence
Aymans, S. C., & Kauffeld, S. (2015). To leave or not to leave? Critical factors for university dropout among first-generation students. *Zeitschrift für Hochschulentwicklung, 10*(4), 23–43. https://zfhe.at/index.php/zfhe/article/view/847
This study compared first-generation and continuing-generation students in Germany to explore factors that contribute to student dropout. The data were collected from online questionnaires administered to students both prior to university entry and during the first semester. The first questionnaire was filled in by second- (or later) semester undergraduate students, while the second questionnaire was completed by university dropouts. There were 536 respondents from three German universities; 250 participants (46.6%) were first-generation students. Based on the results, the researchers were able to show that the probability of student dropout is predictable for both first-generation students and non-first-generation students. For instance, high self-efficacy and access to high-quality information about school contribute to the lower probability of dropout for non-first-generation students. In summary, findings asserted the crucial importance of providing aspiring students with high-quality information prior to enrollment.

Banks-Santilli, L. (2014). First-generation college students and their pursuit of the American Dream. *Journal of Case Studies in Education, 5,* **1–31.** In this case study of a small, liberal arts college, the author researched the "psychological concept of identity renegotiation" experiences of first-generation students at the institution, support from institution for first-generation students, and pedagogical changes by faculty to support first-generation students (p. 6). The author first surveyed 114 and then interviewed 68 first-generation students. The author's findings included students' acknowledgment of parental emotional support but pressure to succeed because parents didn't go to college; high school preparation that needs to be more aligned with college expectations; internal conflict with wanting to help family but not having the time; lack of preparation for college life; and advice to faculty to expose the hidden curriculum.

Brost, J., & Payne, K. (2011). First-generation issues: Learning outcomes of the dismissal testimony for academically dismissed students in the arts & sciences. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning, 2011*(127), pp. 69–79. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.458 In this study, researchers found that outcomes from institutional dismissal differed by first-generation status. The research questions were as follows: (a) Do first-generation students make up a significant percentage of academically dismissed students? (b) What factors lead to first-generation students' dismissals? And (c) What are the educational gains of requiring first-generation students to go through a written appeal process to be eligible to return to the university? Sixteen undergraduate students consented to be interviewed by phone or during an advising session and participated in a self-assessment survey. There were seven first-generation students in the sample and four students who elected not to identify as first-generation student but, the researchers note,

fit the characteristics of first-generation students. The survey questions were grouped together by learning outcome clusters: cognitive complexity, interpersonal and intrapersonal competence, and practical competency. The researchers found that in some areas first-generation students identified the importance of resources available to them or strategies they should employ, but they did not always have a clear plan for how to use them. For example, first-generation students demonstrated a recognition of the need for good time management skills, but they were not clear on how they would improve their own. The study concluded that more faculty and staff should reach out to students who are failing to ensure they know what their next steps are to improve their outcomes.

Cardoza, K. (2016, January 20). First-generation college students are not succeeding in college, and money isn't the problem. *The Washington Post.* https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/01/20/first-generation-college-students-are-not-succeeding-in-college-and-money-isnt-the-problem/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.d90e75f54a6c This brief article puts a face on the experience of some first-generation students. The author highlights societal issues such as poverty and homelessness and their impact on the lives of promising students. This piece emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the needs of the whole student. While first-generation students have an abundance of grit and potential, they are still impacted by life issues and ills of society. Money and scholarships cover tuition, but they do not address the social, emotional, and cultural realities impacting first-generation students. The author alludes to the importance of institutions addressing these issues, noting that many schools are not identifying first-generation students. When institutional data are utilized to support first-generation student success, colleges and universities are seeing these students

thrive. The author shares some successful strategies implemented by several universities, such as mentoring models, supportive outreach, and a first-generation student network. The author suggests that it is essential to attend to the holistic experiences of first-generation students; it can positively impact student outcomes, persistence, and retention.

Cataldi, E., Bennett, C., & Chen, X. (2018). _Stats in Brief: First-generation students' college access, persistence, and post-bachelor's outcomes._ U. S. Department of Education. 2018-421
This statistics brief uses data to inform readers of the connection between high school performance and postsecondary enrollment through career. Researchers compare first-generation students to non-first-generation students in terms of, for example, performance in high school, degree attainment, and labor market and graduate school enrollment.

D'Allegro, M. L., & Kerns, S. (2015). Is there such a thing as too much of a good thing when it comes to education? Re-examining first generation student success. _Journal of College Student Retention, 12_(3), 293–317. **https://doi.org/10.2190/cs.12.3.c**
The primary research question for this study is, How does the success of first-generation students differ from non-first generation students at less selective institutions with respect to precollege, college, and student success indicators? The participants were new students enrolled at Penn State Berks for fall semesters between 2000 and 2006 ($n =$ 5,281). Approximately half of the students are first-generation students. Three types of predictor variables were drawn for analysis: (a) student demographic information (i.e., gender, ethnicity, parent education level), (b) precollege data (i.e., mathematics SAT scores, critical reading SAT scores, English placement tests, and mathematics placement tests), and (c) college variables (i.e., student enrolled

in a major in first semester, student enrolled in a STEM major in first semester). The student success outcome variables were (a) first-semester GPA, (b) first-semester credits attempted, (c) first-semester credits earned, and (d) 1-year retention. The findings suggest that students achieve different levels of precollege and college success depending on their parents' or guardians' educational level. Additionally, and perhaps more significantly, college student success does not hinge solely on first-generation status and its effect on college proclivities and behaviors while in college but starts before the student is enrolled. The authors recommend engagement and intervention strategies that take place before students are considering college. They also note that further study is needed on students who do not report parent education level, particularly to determine if students do not know this information or may be ashamed to report.

D'amico, M. M., & Dika, S. (2013). Using data to predict first-gen students' success. _Journal of College Student Retention Research Theory and Practice, 15_(2), 173–192. **https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.15.2.c**
The authors compare first-generation students and non-first-generation students using first-year GPAs and retention rates for the second year. Variables considered for the research included financial, demographic, academic, and other factors. The findings uncovered a difference in certain areas based on identities such as race and residency. Findings show that the data collected at the time of admission should not be used to paint a full student success picture, but data on previous academic performance is integral for both populations. The authors suggest that admission and enrollment managers be involved in student success planning and that the data collected during the admission process be used to develop intervention methods.

Dumais, S. A., Rizzuto, T. E., Cleary, J., & Dowden, L. (2013). Stressors and supports for adult online learners: Comparing first- and continuing-generation college students. *American Journal of Distance Education, 27*(2), 100–110. **https://doi.org/10.1080/089 23647.2013.783265**
This study focuses on adult online learners who are also first-generation students, and it seeks to understand their academic self-confidence, use of school supports, and perceived barriers to success. Participants (*n* = 150) completed either a telephone- or web-based survey about their educational history, online learning experiences, work–family responsibilities, and employment attitudes and perceptions. Results showed that a higher percentage of first-generation students agreed that they returned to school for personal fulfillment reasons compared to their continuing-generation counterparts. First-generation students used student support services at a higher rate, especially curriculum guidance.

Forbus, P. R., Newbold, J. J., & Mehta, S. (2011). First-generation university students: Motivation, academic success, and satisfaction with the university experience. *International Journal of Education Research, 6*(2), 34–55.
This study began with exploratory research in the form of a focus group to establish different needs between first-generation students and non-first-generation students. The researchers determined nine hypotheses they wanted to test, all of which compared first-generation students to non-first-generation students. They used a 7-point Likert scale to quantify and score the data. For example, the first hypothesis stated that first-generation students were more likely to want to graduate from college as soon as they can compared to non-first-generation students. The other hypotheses posited that first-generation students were more likely to be driven to succeed and more

motivated to earn a degree. Exceptions were the sixth hypothesis, which stated that first-generation students were more likely to have lower GPAs, and the ninth hypothesis, which stated that first-generation students were less likely to be satisfied with their college experience. All hypotheses were accepted except the sixth: first-generation students had higher GPAs than their non-first-generation student comparison group, but the difference was not statistically significant.

Garriott, P. O., Hudyma, A., Keene, C., & Santiago, D. (2015). Social cognitive predictors of first- and non-first-generation college students' academic and life satisfaction. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 62*(2), 253–263. **https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/ cou0000066**
This study examined the utility of Lent's (2004) hypothesized model of normative well-being to predict the academic and life satisfaction of first-generation students and non-first-generation students. Lent's model proposes that global life satisfaction is predicted by individual personality characteristics, social-cognitive variables, as well as goal pursuit and progress in specific life domains. Participants were 414 college students recruited from two 4-year universities in the Rocky Mountain (26.8%, *n* = 111) and Midwestern (73.2%, *n* = 303) regions of the United States. Approximately 52% (*n* = 215) of the sample identified as first-generation student while 48% (*n* = 199) were non-first-generation students. Students completed surveys. Contrary to expectations, it was found that positive affect and self-efficacy did not predict academic satisfaction; outcome expectations did not predict academic progress; and academic progress did not predict life satisfaction. Results from this study suggest that the normative model of well-being may not be useful theoretical framework from which to predict the academic and life satisfaction of first-generation students and non-first-generation students. Given

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the number of positive relationships between environmental supports and other variables in the model, counselors may consider focusing on the availability of various supports for first-generation students and non-first-generation students as they adjust to the demands of college. Access to mentors, supportive friends and family, as well as helpful teachers may be useful to explore.

Garza, K., Bain, S., & Kupcynski, L. (2014). Resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence of college seniors in higher education. *Research in Higher Education*, **26.** This study examined the retention of Hispanic first-generation students by specifically looking at resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence in their senior year of college since this population is more likely than other ethnic minorities to be first-generation. The aim of the research was to identify the success characteristics for these students and how their results could benefit a population that, at the time, had shown larger rates of dropping out. The researchers used a mixed-methods approach to examine the differences between first-generation students and continuing-generation students. The quantitative portion of the study used multiple scales through SurveyMonkey including the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale and the New General Self-Efficacy Scale to assess resiliency, self-efficacy, persistence, and retention factors. The site of the study was a university in South Texas, and students were selected through random sampling. The qualitative portion of the study included interviews with questions focused on retention factors and university activities that supported both first-generation students and continuing-generation students. The study included a total of 160 students, of which 48 self-identified as Hispanic, and it found no significant results across ethnicities for college seniors. The researchers conducted interviews with eight students total, and the themes from

their results included family expectations for first-generation students and university support systems as influences on their college persistence. Implications for practitioners include beginning college preparations for Hispanic students at an earlier age in high school to counteract any risk factors associated with dropping out. Implications for future research include replicating the study at a different university setting and following first-year students to their senior year with comparisons to continuing-generation students.

Gibbons, M., Rhinehart, A., & Hardin, E. (2016). How first-generation college students adjust to college. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice, 20*(4), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025116682035
This study focused on how first-generation students adjust to college. Fifteen students attending a large public university in the Southeast United States participated in focus groups. Researchers used social cognitive career theory as a framework for understanding the barriers that students faced and the support systems that they used to persist. Consistent with similar studies, the findings demonstrated that the participants initially had difficulty adjusting to college but eventually gained satisfaction. Time management and goal setting were cited as common challenges. Two unexpected themes emerged: (a) Students felt both support and pressure from their family to achieve, and (b) students stressed the importance of self-care as a form of support. The researchers recommend that college preparation begin early; that college support programs and career services host targeted workshops about time management; and that programs also incorporate student parents and their families.

Havlik, S., Pulliam, N., Malott, K., & Steen, S. (2017). Strengths and struggles: First-generation college-goers persisting at one predominantly White institution, *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 22*(1), 1–23. **https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025117724551**
This study sought to explore and better understand the experiences of first-generation students attending a midsize, private Catholic PWI, including any strengths that allowed them to overcome challenges. Researchers used an interpretive phenomenological analytic methodology and also incorporated critical race theory and feminist theory to address intersectionality. Eighteen students participated in focus groups. Participants described feeling "othered" in relation to their first-generation status, socioeconomic background, and race/ethnicity by their peers and faculty. For instance, once they arrived on campus, participants realized that their peers knew things (like college terms) that they did not; they also reported not having financial means to participate in cocurricular activities. In response to these and other challenges, the students found sources of strength and motivation to persist. For instance, family members were a source of support and inspiration leading to persistence. The researchers recommend that campuses waive or significantly reduce fees for school-sponsored activities and that faculty be required to attend cultural sensitivity trainings.

Irlbeck, E., Adams, S., Akers, C., Burris, S., & Jones, S. (2014). First-generation college students: Motivations and support systems. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 55*(2), 154–166. **https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2014.02154**
This study used Astin's involvement theory and the inputs–environment–outcomes (IEO) model to examine the motivations and support systems of first-generation students enrolled in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at Texas Tech University (TTU). The 10 participants were interviewed to determine what factors led to their enrollment at TTU; to identify what programs the students used to aid in their success at school; to further explore what types of support systems the students depended upon; and, finally, to determine how satisfied the first-generation students were with their experiences at TTU. The findings of this study indicated that parental lack of information is a prevailing issue for first-generation students. Despite their support of their children's academic goals, parents are sometimes not able to assist them in adapting to and understanding important aspects of their new environments. The findings also indicate that agriscience high school teachers have a large impact on their first-generation students' future academic aspirations and their goal-setting abilities. The authors recommended that the university or College of Agriculture could send recruitment packages to teachers across the state so they could assist prospective students with admissions, scholarship applications, housing, and other information about the university to further facilitate their successful transition to college.

Ishitani, T. (2016). First-generation students' persistence at four-year institutions. *College and University, 91*(3), 22–32.
This article focuses on the persistence of first-generation students at 4-year institutions. The study expanded beyond just "enroll" and "not enroll" as measures for dropout rates and focused on period-specific effects. Results show that first-generation students tend to withdraw during their second year. The results indicate that institutions can do more to intervene and develop retention-based efforts to help first-generation students persist; these efforts should be centered around both academic and social integration.

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Jenkins, A., Miyazaki, Y., & Janosik, S. (2009). Predictors that distinguish first-generation college students from non-first-generation college students. *Journal of Multicultural, Gender and Minority Studies, 3*(1), 1–9.
The purpose of this work is to identify characteristics that distinguish first-generation students from their non-first-generation students peers in urban universities. The study also considered other demographic traits and identities that may contribute to these differences. The results of the study focus on institutions implementing early intervention efforts to best support first-generation students. The researchers highlight the importance of building the capacity of first-generation students through efforts that allow high school students to engage in college coursework before enrolling. The findings also challenge student affairs administrators to work to build more inclusive environments.

LaCount, S. (2018, June 10). Fresh insights on first-generation college students: A need to change the language of retention. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education.*
This brief piece challenges the notion of deficit thinking as it pertains to first-generation students. The author explores the results of a study from Campus Labs Student Strength Inventory. It explores the value first-generation students place on academics and the challenges they face around social comfort and feeling confident in certain situations. Practitioners are challenged to rethink their language and mindset pertaining to serving first-generation students.

Lightweis, S. (2014). The challenges, persistence, and success of White, working-class, first-generation college students. *College Student Journal, 48*(3), 461–467.
The author begins this essay with an overview of research on white, working-class first-generation students, pulling heavily from the work of Longwell-

Grice and Longwell-Grice (2008) and pointing out the reasons that first-generation students enroll in college and their attitudes and behaviors during college. The author then provides examples of first-generation student programming elements such as freshman-year activities and mentoring.

Markowitz, T. (2017, August 8). The barriers to success and upward mobility for first generation students and how to fix the problem. *Forbes.*
This opinion piece challenges the notion that the only barrier to success in higher education is finances. It instead discusses other barriers like psychosocial factors, internal guilt, and more. The author follows the journey of a first-generation student who faced obstacles and dropped out of school. The author highlights efforts and initiatives from various colleges and universities centered around better supporting first-generation students. #retention #support #op-ed

Martinez, J. A., Sher, K. J., Krull, J. L., & Wood, P. K. (2009). Blue-collar scholars?: Mediators and moderators of university attrition in first-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(1), 87–103. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0053
A sample of 3,720 first-time college students was surveyed the summer prior to entry to a large Midwestern public and research-extensive university. Participants were then assessed using an online survey at each successive semester for eight semesters over 4 years. First-generation students differed from their peers on a number of factors: They had lower ACT scores yet modestly higher high school class rank scores; they reported fewer aspirations to "party" in college than did their peers; and they reported higher aspirations to attend college to increase career opportunities. They also reported lower aspirations to find a mate in

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college. Additionally, first-generation students were more likely than their peers to work in college, to work part-time jobs at all times during college, and to have full-time jobs while in school. Given this range of findings, the authors recommend directed university efforts toward improving financial, academic, and job-related concerns for first-generation students and stress that first-gen identifiers (including resources, clubs, and activities) should be markers of success and pride at the institution.

Padgett, R. D., Johnson, M. P., & Pascarella, E. T. (2012). First-generation undergraduate students and the impacts of the first year of college: Additional evidence. *Journal of College Student Development, 53*(2), 243–266. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2012.0032
This study used information from Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education to examine longitudinal data of incoming first-year students at 19 four-year and two-year colleges and universities located in 11 different states from the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, and Pacific Coast regions of the United States. Study results included that first-generation students are "at a significant disadvantage across cognitive and psychosocial outcomes compared to students whose parents have at least some postsecondary education" (pp. 260–261). There is empirical evidence on the predictive nature of parental educational level across a broad spectrum of cognitive and psychosocial outcomes.

Pitman, T. (2013). Miraculous exceptions: What can autobiography tell us about why some disadvantaged students succeed in higher education? *Higher Education Research & Development, 32*(1), 30–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2012.750278
The purpose of this Australian study was to analyze the autobiographical accounts of three

college graduates to explore why they were able to succeed in higher education, becoming "miraculous exceptions." They were said to come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and not expected to pursue or succeed in college. Through critical reflection of autobiography research, each participant shared their stories but also experienced narrative learning—the learning that takes place during the storytelling. Participants' accounts showed the realization of one's own agency, the important role of guidance provided by parents and teachers, and the constancy of capital as important factors in their success. Experiences, ideas, and values instilled at early ages have a great influence on young people, as the participant accounts indicated; therefore, early engagement might be beneficial. The author suggested developing outreach programs for K–12 students from low SES backgrounds (and perhaps their parents) to promote the benefits of higher education. He noted that resources could be focused toward these efforts, as opposed to the efforts geared toward students who have already committed to higher education, such as foundation or bridge programs, which are common in colleges/universities. This idea seems to highlight the need for more partnerships between K–12 and higher education. Further, higher education institutions might consider increased connections with first-generation alumni to encourage them to share their autobiographical stories with current students while promoting their own learning through reflection.

Pratt, I. S., Harwood, H.B., Cavazos, J.T., & Ditzfeld, C.P., (2019). Should I stay or should I go? Retention in first-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 21*(1), 105–118. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025117690868
The purpose of this study was to compare trends in first-generation student retention with the trends

found on the campus of a large public university. Data were collected from an online survey distributed to first-year and transfer students. As in previous research, the authors' findings suggest that there are key factors that influence retention for first-generation students. These factors include financial insecurity, low academic confidence, and expecting difficulty in forming relationships with peers. While these factors influence retention for all students (first-generation and non-first-generation), first-generation students are more likely to experience multiple risk factors at the same time. Importantly, the authors emphasize that retention is the result of the educational environment provided. Universities can positively impact first-generation student experiences and retention through recognition of and valuing the students' lived experience, promoting collectivistic values such as collaborative learning and early intervention programming.

Radunzel, J. (2018). *They may be first but will they last? Retention and transfer behavior of first-generation students.* **ACT.** https://files.constantcontact.com/36ea01b3201/25bc66cb-32dc-4de4-b208-4f1456788100.pdf
This study examined the extent to which academic and nonacademic factors explain differences in student retention, transfer, and dropout rates between first-generation students and their continuing-generation peers. These factors include but are not limited to educational goals, financial resources, gender, and race/ethnicity. Data were obtained from 150,000 first-time ACT test takers between the years 2012 and 2014. Fifteen percent of the test takers were first-generation students beginning college at a 4-year institution, and 27% were first-generation students starting college at a 2-year institution. Results showed that first-generation students were more likely to drop out than their counterparts; additionally, first-generation

students attending a 4-year institution were more inclined to transfer to a 2-year school, while those attending a 2-year institution were less likely to transfer to a 4-year school.

Reed, M., Maodzwa-Taruvinga, M., Mdofirepi, E. S., & Moosa, R. (2018). Insights gained from a comparison of South African and Canadian first-generation students: The impact of resilience and resourcefulness on higher education success. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 49*(6), 964–982. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2018.1479185
In an effort to redress deficit approaches to first-generation students, the goal of this research was to determine if the development of resilience and resourcefulness in first-generation students is culturally specific. A total of 844 South African and Canadian students—a third of whom were first-generation—completed surveys measuring their resourcefulness and resiliency, and the results found that there were indeed differences among the groups. Generally, South African students appeared to be more resilient and less likely to attribute failure to external factors. The authors theorize that these traits likely developed from other experiences unrelated to the university.

Stebleton, M. J., & Soria, K. M. (2012). Breaking down barriers: Academic obstacles of first-generation students at research universities. *The Learning Assistance Review, 17*(2), 7–20.
This article describes the outcomes of a study that used data from the Student Experience in the Research University to determine the perceptions of academic obstacles of approximately 58,000 first-generation and non-first-generation students at six research universities. The findings from the study indicate significant differences in first-generation student responses related to job and

family responsibilities, weak skills in math and English, inadequate study skills, and feelings of stress and/or depression. Drawing on these findings, the authors offer several considerations for learning assistance professionals who are working with first-generation students, including being aware of opportunities for students to become academically and socially engaged, such as HIPs; understanding and acknowledging the obstacles of students who are not native English speakers and may therefore feel their English skills are weaker than their peers; engaging students who visit the learning center in conversations around their first-generation identities; developing relationships with students who identify as first-generation; and understanding mental health issues.

Stephens, N., Hamedani, M.G., & Destin, M. (2014). Closing the social-class achievement gap: A difference-education intervention improves first-generation students' academic performance and all students' college transition. *Psychological Science, 25*(4), 943–953. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0956797613518349

This study was conducted at a private U.S. university in which 168 students were recruited to participate in an hourlong panel discussion in which upperclassmen's stories were shared as an intervention to determine if a "difference-education" story would have a positive influence on first-generation student outcomes. The first condition provided stories in which students' backgrounds were highlighted as part of their success, and the second condition provided stories in which students' backgrounds were not included or tied to their ability. This novel intervention aimed to ameliorate the social capital gap for first-generation students. Participants were surveyed after the intervention and then again at the end of the semester, and their term GPAs were analyzed. The authors concluded,

"The results reveal that first-generation students in the difference-education condition more fully took advantage of college resources and that this behavioral change improved their academic performance" (p. 948). Additionally, those who participated in the difference-education intervention saw an improvement of their end-of-year GPAs.

Vega, D. (2016). "Why not me?": College enrollment and persistence of high-achieving first-generation Latino college students. *School Psychology Forum, 10*(3), 307–320.

This qualitative study focuses on the experiences of 10 Latino first-generation students at a Hispanic-serving institution in order to highlight their success stories. The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons these students attend college, what motivates them to persist, and how they build the necessary tools to succeed. The main themes covered include academic rigor, support networks, internal motivation, and responsibility as a first-generation student and how all these factors contribute to student success. The method for data collection used was an interpretative phenomenological approach—which is exploring major events in one's life (appropriate for the student population as the first to attend college). The results of this study found how interpersonal networks were important for these first-generation students to navigate systems they had no prior knowledge of (i.e., college-going process) as well as highlighted the motivations for them to attend college, including the belief they could improve their parents' circumstances through a college education. Implications are geared more toward school psychologists and their involvement with this student population in order to enhance these relationships for success in college. Special consideration is also given to collaborations between families and the schools to best support

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Latino first-generation students in their transition to college.

Verdín, D., & Godwin, A. F. (2015). First in the family: A comparison of first-generation and non-first-generation engineering college students. *Purdue University Purdue e-Pubs.* https://doi.org/10.1109/fie.2015.7344359

This study explores differences between first-generation and non-first-generation engineering students and asks the following research questions: "How are first-generation college students different when compared to non-first-generation college students on (a) family support and background factors, (b) math and science identity, and (c) career intentions?" (p. 3). Using data from the Sustainability and Gender in Engineering survey (2014), findings include that non-first-generation students were more likely than first-generation students to be academically prepared for college. However, first-generation students reported higher interest in math and science careers and in applying what they are learning to those careers than non-first-generation students. The survey data also indicated that families of first-generation students were less interested in math and science and less supportive of their students' academic needs. The authors conclude that the findings point to a need to work more closely with high school counselors to prepare first-generation students for the expectations and demands of engineering degrees and with first-generation student families to provide them with more information about the expectations for engineering students.

Wilbur, T. G., & Roscigno, V. J. (2016). First-generation disadvantage and college enrollment/completion. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World, 2*(16), 1–11. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2378023116664351

This study aims to fill in gaps in the sociology literature as it pertains to first-generation students by analyzing several waves of the Educational Longitudinal Study from 2002 to 2012. The researchers used the survey data of 10th graders in 2002 in the first wave; subsequent surveys in 2004, 2006, and 2012 aimed to follow students through high school and beyond. The researchers identified four areas of interest in the survey data: (a) college attendance and completion, (b) socioeconomic and first-generation status, (c) cultural capital and parental involvement, and (d) college experiences and stressors. As a student's socioeconomic status increased, the likelihood of their attending college increased as well. More specifically, those whose parents talked to them about going to college and taking the ACT/SAT saw an increase in college-going rates. However, there was a significant gap between first-generation and non-first-generation student completion rates. Additionally, first-generation students are likely to work in college and live at home, both of which have a negative effect on their completion rates. Participation in HIPs and extracurricular activities can positively affect college completion rates, but first-generation students are less likely to participate in them.

Woosley, S. A., & Shepler, D. K. (2011). Understanding the early integration experiences of first-generation college students. *College Student Journal, 45*(4), 700–714.

Focusing on predominantly white, Midwestern first-generation students at a 4-year university in the United States, this quantitative study used the Mapworks survey of over 3,000 first-year, first-time students at one institution. The authors identified 804 first-generation students in the survey data. The study proposed the following research questions: "Did variables identified by Tinto (1993) adequately describe first-generation student integration? If Tinto's variables were predictive of first-generation student integration, which variables were most valuable in predicting integration?" Four variables in

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the Mapworks survey were identified to operationalize Tinto's model: (a) social integration, (b) academic integration, (c) institutional satisfaction, and (d) homesick-related distress. The results of the data analysis supported the idea that early integration, which can have a positive effect on retention, may function much like the long-term process of the adjustment to college. Additionally, the results of the study indicate that first-generation students and non-first-generation students share similarities in their experiences. However, first-generation students' perceptions of the campus environment provided insight into their adjustment to life at a university.

References - Support Programs

Araujo, A., & Anastasiou, A. (2009). The role of generational status, program affiliation, and the cultural background in the performance of college students. In T. Heinz Housel & V. L. Harvey (Eds.), *The invisibility factor: Administrators and faculty reach out to first-generation college students.* **Brown Walker Press.**
The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of program affiliation and cultural background on the academic success of first-generation and continuing-generation students. The authors hypothesized that first-generation students would demonstrate significantly lower GPAs compared to their peers. Data were collected from students attending a private 4-year all-women's liberal arts college in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The sample group included 568 total students; 124 of them were first-generation students. The results suggest that students whose parents attended college generally have higher GPAs compared to their peers. An unexpected finding is that white first-generation students generally have higher GPAs than continuing-generation non-white students. The authors acknowledge that qualitative data would enrichen these findings.

Graham, L. (2011). Learning a new world: Reflections on being a first-generation college student and the influence of TRIO programs. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning: Special Issue: Faculty and First-Generation College Students: Bridging the Classroom Gap Together, 2011*(127), **33–38.** https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.455
This article is a personal account of a student's experience in a TRIO program and McNair Scholars. According to the author, Upward Bound allowed her to use an "assertive accommodation strategy" for success. TRIO programs also provided the author with the academic, social, and college knowledge to become an academic success.

Olive, T. (2008). Desire for higher education in first-generation Hispanic college students enrolled in an academic support program. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 39*(1), 81–110. https://doi.org/10.1163/156916208x311638
This study examined the motivations, specifically the academic motivations, of Hispanic students who seek higher education. It also sought to explore student success programs such as TRIO as effective academic intervention programming for first-generation students. The methods were a qualitative study with a phenomenological approach. The research was geared to find the meaning making for the students in the study; the researchers also conducted 1-hour interviews with participants to gather information on their lived experiences. Findings included how obtaining higher education was seen as a financial benefit for the student's family and as a means of increasing social and economic mobility. External motivation was also considered as a source of motivation for a student's desire to not disappoint their family while in college.

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Tough, P. (2014, May 15). Who Gets to Graduate? *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/magazine/who-gets-to-graduate.html

The piece explores the journey of a first-generation student through her challenging transition from high school to college. There is a deep dive into a support-based program at a large state school targeted at supporting first-generation students. The article explores how institutions can use a largely scaled program to add support measures for students to help build connections to resources.

Van Rensburg, J. V., & Kapp, R. (2014). "So I have to be positive, no matter how difficult it is": A longitudinal case study of a first-generation occupational therapy student. *South African Journal of Occupational Therapy, 44*(3), 29–33. http://hdl.handle.net/11427/29923

This article explores the journey of a South African first-generation student to college. The longitudinal study analyzes the student's experience through a series of interviews over 4 years. The findings support the impact that teaching and learning intervention programs can have on the success of first-generation students.

Wibrowski, C. R., Matthews, W. K., & Kitsantas, A. (2017). The role of a skills learning support program on first-generation college students' self-regulation, motivation, and academic achievement: A longitudinal study. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice, 19*(3), 317–332. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025116629152

The authors hypothesized that students who participated in the skills learning support program (SLSP) at a university in the Northeast United States would experience an increase in their academic self-regulation and motivation by the end of the first year. It also was expected that SLSP students would show similar or higher levels of achievement and graduation rates when compared with other freshman students admitted the same year. A total of 876 college freshmen participated in the study; of those, 137 participated in the SLSP, which served as the intervention for this group. The majority of these students were first-generation students from a variety of ethnic minority groups. Students responded to Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire items using a 7-point Likert-type scale, and data were collected over 4 years. The findings suggest that the SLSP support had a positive impact on students' academic self-regulation development, motivational beliefs, and academic outcomes. Students who enrolled in SLSP showed gains in motivation and self-regulatory skills during the first year of studies as well as higher GPAs in the first seven semesters. Participants also reported an increase in anxiety and performance-avoidance goal orientation. The researchers argue that support programs offered to incoming freshmen students should focus on academic support (including teaching study skills) and also the enhancement of students' social support systems and even financial support.

Winograd, G., & Rust, J. P. (2014). Stigma, awareness of support services, and academic help-seeking among historically underrepresented first-year college students. *Learning Assistance Review, 19*(2), 17–41.

This study surveyed 95 students at a midsize public 4-year comprehensive college in a small town in the Northeast United States about their experiences participating in support services while in college. The researchers' hypotheses included the following: (a) self-stigma for academic help-seeking would be predicted by greater academic need, a poorer sense of belonging, and more intense experiences of

stereotype threat; (b) greater awareness of academic support services on campus would be predicted by a greater sense of belonging, less intense experiences of stereotype threat, and higher levels of self-stigma for academic failure. A series of self-report scales were adapted from national, valid versions. The researchers used multiple regression analyses of the survey data and found that stereotype threat and self-stigma present challenges to adaptive academic help-seeking beliefs and behaviors. They also found that students who felt less supported by the university associated help-seeking with feelings of inadequacy. On the other hand, a greater sense of belonging on campus, participation in the Educational Opportunity Program, and awareness of campus support services minimize these barriers. Conclusions include the suggestion to reframe academic help-seeking as experiences from which every student can benefit and to create opportunities for successful peer mentors to share their own help-seeking experiences to reduce the stigma associated with asking for help.

Zinshteyn, M. (2016, March 13). How to help first-generation students succeed. *The Atlantic.* https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/how-to-help-first-generation-students-succeed/473502/
The article explores the implications of being the first in the family to attend college as it relates to the hidden curriculum. By telling the story of a first-generation student, the author discusses the critical role mentors play in support of these students. The author also explores the work of a scholarship program advisor in advocating and supporting first-generation students who are also students of color. The article explores the impact on graduation rates for institutions that commit to building culturally relevant programs that address the needs of first-generation students.

References - Transfer Students

Marine Nin, O. F., & Gutierrez Keeton, R. (2019). Challenges and realizations of first-generation students who navigated through transfer momentum points. Community College *Journal of Research and Practice* 44(4), 237–287. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2019.1585303
This study examined theexperiences of first-generation students in community college as they progressed through the steps to transfer to a 4-year institution. The goal of the study was to examine what persistence looked like from the students' perspectives. The researchers used a qualitative approach to conduct their research and used Bean and Eaton (2000) as a framework for student psychological processes at the college level. The research was conducted with students (n = 10) at a California community college. Findings included four major challenge themes (i.e., limited income, feeling isolated and alone, setbacks and obstacles, and lack of motivation in early college career). Many students needed to work full time to finance their education. Other students described difficulties with stopping out as well as difficulty staying focused while in their early semesters. Suggestions for students and their families include outreach early and often to discuss the financial realities of college and how students will navigate the financial aid process as well as other options for their education. Suggestions for future research include interviewing students at the community college at different milestones, such as completing coursework compared to completing an associate's degree, as well as throughout their time at the community college level.

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