

— Caught between two worlds:
How first generation college
students navigate the
campus setting

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Learning Outcomes

- Participants who work with first generation students will learn the challenges that this population face
- Participants will learn the intersectionality between first generation status, socioeconomic status, and students of color
- Participants who identify as first generation may share their own experience



Positionality



On the handout, please answer the following question:

What knowledge did you have access to that helped you navigate the college campus setting?

Definitions

- First generation college student (FG)
 - Parents' highest level of education is a high school diploma or less (Nuñez, 1989)
 - **Those whose parents have not achieved a bachelor's degree (Olson, 2014).**
- Non-first generation students - those whose parents completed a BA degree
- Campus setting – any aspect involved in attending a post-secondary institution, including application to an institution

Do you consider yourself a first generation student?

Yes

No

I'm not
sure

“An invisible, often
unrecognized external
component of a students’
life”

-Nelson, et al. 2006, p. 119 (as cited in Olson, 2014)

Sense of Belonging & Navigating Two Worlds

- Imposter Syndrome (Clance & Imes, 1978)
 - “Attributing academic achievement outcomes to one’s efforts more strongly predicted academic adjustment among first-generation students than it did for their peers”
 - (Aspelmeier, Love, McGill, Elliott, & Pierce, 2012, p. 780).
- Two worlds
 - The world they grew up in, family
 - Higher education & academia
 - (Gardner & Holley, 2011)

Within Group Diversity - Latinx

- Latinx students account for over one third of first generation students
 - (Martinez, 2018)
- Bicultural
 - Two worlds
 - (Longwell-Grice et al, 2016; Stebleton and Soria, 2012)
 - Degrees or families
 - College student vs. Own identities
 - Maintaining family relationships

Within Group Diversity - Low-SES

- Low-SES students have less financial capital
- FGCS were 72% more likely to leave higher education when their families income was between \$20,000 and \$34,999 than students with family incomes of \$50,000 or higher
 - (Ishitani, 2016)
- FG students report parent's combined income as less than \$100,000 significantly more often than non-FG
 - (Raque-Bogdan & Lucas, 2016)

White First Generation College Students

- White students have capital that is valued or recognized by white spaces – which can mediate the process
- Still continue to enroll in public universities
 - (Lightweis, 2014)
- The barriers may not seem or be perceived as substantial to white FGCS as they do to FGCS of color.

Community Cultural Wealth



Yosso, T. J. (2005)

Social Capital

- Relying on friendships or academic advisors
- Building mentorships
- Advice for:
 - Choosing classes
 - Putting schedules together
 - How to use meal plans



Resistance Capital

- Self-esteem
 - Aspelmeier, Love, McGill, Elliott, and Pierce (2012)
- Self-motivation
 - Ecklund (2013)
- Self-advocacy
 - Byrd and MacDonald (2005) and Gardner and Holley (2011)
- All key factors –
FG support themselves



Linguistic Capital

- Language
 - 1/3 FG students are Latinx (Martinez, 2018)
 - Many FG students are bilingual
- “Code-switch” between home and school



Aspirational Capital

- Motivation bigger than self
 - Collectivistic
 - Bring honor, gain respect or status
- Personal and career motivations
- Most 12th graders expect to attend college, however only ½ of FG expect to earn a bachelor's degree
 - (Engle, 2007)



Navigational Capital

- Knowledge of the campus environment and campus values
 - (McCarron and Inkela, 2006)
- General functioning of the higher education setting
 - (Deangelo, 2010)



Familial Capital

- Siblings in college
- Value of work
 - (Engle, 2007; Fallon, 1997)
- Family influence on college decisions
 - Geographically
 - Type of institution





On the handout

What capital did you describe in your answer to the first question?

“The added stresses and pressures resulting from the first-generation status fostered a stressful juxtaposition: to gain economic capital, they must also gain more social and cultural capital through the acquisition of a doctoral degree. In turn, the acquisition of capital resulted in a physical and intellectual distance from their families.”

-Gardner & Holley, 2011, p. 88



Cultural Wealth

- Cultural wealth is the accumulated capital
- Cultural wealth in comparison to financial wealth



Pair and Share

Turn to a neighbor and answer the following questions

How might you learn if a student you're working with identifies as a FG student or not?

What ways can you specifically utilize or encourage the use of capital in your programs, classrooms, day-to-day work?

How might you learn if a student you're working with identifies as FG?

Top

How can you utilize or encourage forms of capital within your work?

Top

References

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Questions/Comments/Concerns

