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”
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”

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


Questions/Comments/Concerns