Spring 4-2018

A Mixed-Method Comparative Analysis of First-Generation and Non-First-Generation Students in the Midwest

Juanika Q. Williams
Lindenwood University

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by

Juanika Q. Williams

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

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This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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Dr. John D. Long, Dissertation Chair   4.6.18
                                                                                             Date

_____   _____
Dr. Jackie Ramey Committee Member   4/6/18
                                                                                             Date

_____   _____
Dr. Kevin D. Winslow Committee Member   4/6/18
                                                                                             Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Juanika Q. Williams

Signature: _Juanika Williams_ Date: _4/6/18_

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my entire dissertation committee for their support and encouragement through this difficult process. To my chair Dr. John D. Long for his guidance and support; I would like to send a special thanks to one of my undergraduate professors Dr. Jayashree Balakrishna for her continued support and constant encouragement. To Dr. Ramey who would also encourage me while giving positive feedback; to Dr. Winslow who took the time to sit down with me to help me understand how to run and understand the statistical test.

Of course, this achievement would not be possible without my family. I want to thank my parents for instilling in me the importance of education and for their continued support throughout my journey, my Aunts Dana and Rivian for their support, and my favorite cousin Adrian who has been by my side and supporting throughout the entire time. When I would get discouraged he always knew what to say to encourage me. When I began to slack, he would also light the fire under me to get things completed. Finally, my incredible family, my husband William and daughter Ronney. Seeing them daily was a reminder just how important it was for me to complete my research.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to complete a mixed-methods comparative analysis of first-generation and non-first-generation students in the Midwest to determine potential differences between students' college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection, college experience, and deciding factors on attending college at private, public, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The Primary Researcher believed that a students' classifications (first-generation or non-first-generation) and the type of university that they chose to attend would yield different results in their overall college experiences. The Researcher conducted the study in different settings and did not compare by the type of university or the type of students who attended the universities. The previous research was conducted in different regions. The Primary Researcher was not able to find extensive then-current research on first-generation and non-first-generation students in the Midwest. The results found did not show that being a first-generation or a non-first-generation student at a Historically Black College and University, public, or private university made a difference. The Primary Researcher found that overall, first-generation students had a more positive perception of their college experience than their non-first-generation peers.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

As of this writing, research on first-generation students was less common as compared to continuing-generation students in the Midwest at private, public, or Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This paper explored if there was a difference between the two types of students in the three settings. First-generation college students were less likely than their counterparts to enroll in a postsecondary institution, and were less likely to persist until graduation once in college (Ward, Siegel, and Davenport, 2012). Due to the challenges that first-generation students faced, one study stated, "Only 8 percent of low-income (many of whom are first-generation) students will graduate college by age 25" (Riggs, 2014b, p. 5).

In 2010, a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education found that 50% of the college population consisted of first-generation students (Lynch, 2013, para. 4). The average period for first time, full-time undergraduates to obtain a degree was six years. Of the students who began a college career at a four-year university in 2008, by 2014, 60% received a degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 235). First-generation students were students for which neither parent achieved a baccalaureate degree (Ward et al., 2012). The report found that of first-generation students who had at least one parent earn a bachelor degree, 20% of first-generation college (FGC) students obtained a four-year degree within 10 years of completing their sophomore year of high school. This research contradicted the research conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2016) and Lynch (2013). Earlier research found that within

six years the average first time, first-generation student would earn a bachelor's degree (Smith, 2017, para. 2).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to complete a mixed-methods comparative analysis of first-generation and continuing-generation students in the Midwest to determine differences between students' college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection, college experience, and deciding factors on attending college at private, public, and HBCUs. The design of this study measured student perceptions of their college experiences, as well as college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection, and deciding factor for attending each college or university. This study also measured cultural congruity, self-efficacy, and competence.

The three components of congruity, self-efficacy, and competence identified how first year, first-generation college students perceived their experiences in college. Also examined was the question of how first year, first-generation students selected a university. The Researcher randomly selected participants from University 1 (HBCUs), University 2 (private university), and University 3 (public university). Participants completed a student perception survey and interview about their universities, as well as their overall college experiences. The retention rate was calculated from those who entered and completed each post-secondary institution. Having a college degree made an impact on a person's ability to improve his or her quality of life. According to one researcher, it was not possible to improve the social, economic status of first-generation college students without a degree (McCulloh, 2016). Two important factors in success of all students were cultural capital and social assets (Ward et al., 2012). First-generation

students were placed in the monolithic group based on their backgrounds, also known as their cultural capital (Garcia, 2015). Cultural capital referred to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society (Yosso, 2006, p.76).

Many variables could determine success. For this study, the Researcher measured success based on student perception and the number of participants who persisted from one semester to the next. The Researcher measured retention by the number of students who entered a university and returned to the university for the following year.

History of TRIO

TRIO refers to a number (initially three, as of this writing eight) of U.S. federal programs designed to increase access to higher education for economically disadvantaged students (Tracking Black, 2014). They were programs that provided evidence of their effectiveness in closing educational opportunity gaps in educational society (McElroy & Arnesto, 1998).

According to McElroy and Arnesto (1998), in August 1964 there was a war on poverty; President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act. TRIO was comprised of many programs created to help those classified as disadvantaged. Some of the programs that fell under TRIO were Upward Bound, Talent Search, Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Centers, Staff and Leadership Training Authority, The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and Upward Bound Math/Science Program (McElroy & Arnesto, 1998). The legislation of President Johnson gave rise to the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity and its special programs for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (McElroy & Arnesto, 1998). In June of 1969,

there was a continuing effort from the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity and

President Richard M. Nixon to help underachieving disadvantaged students.

Upward Bound began in June 1969 having been established in 1965 by the U.S.

Office of Economic Opportunity to help underachieving, low-income high school

students prepare for higher education (U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, 1971).

Researchers defined disadvantaged as students considered at high risk of being deprived

of proper educational training (McElroy & Arnesto, 1998). There were a large number of

participants selected to participate in TRIO Upward Bound, because they were well

below the federally-established poverty lines or were from families that received welfare

or lived in public housing. The program was composed of two components: the summer

session and the counseling and tutorial program throughout the school year. The summer

portion of the program consisted of an intense six-to eight-week curriculum. Both the

summer session and the academic session were designed to increase the participants'

motivation and academic performance and to help the students develop the ability for

critical thinking, adequate expression, and positive attitudes toward learning (U.S. Office

of Economic Opportunity, 1971).

The program divided the curriculum into a five-week session. The first week

involved activities designed to introduce students to lifelong career development. The

second week, activities were focused on self-assessment of skills and interests. The third

week, students learned how to obtain information about careers. The fourth week

focused on decision-making and overcoming obstacles to career development. The final

week focused on getting students ready, so that they would be able to enter the real

world. The students began to write resumes, complete job applications, and create a plan of action (Obrien, 2000).

Criteria for Upward Bound

Students selected for the program met several requirements. The students must meet the family income requirements, based on the amount of income and the number of people living in a household. The student must have demonstrated that he or she will potentially be successful in the completion of college work (U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, 1965). The students typically entered the program during the tenth or eleventh grades (U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, 1971). Students were FGC students, the first in their families to pursue a higher education (McElroy & Arnesto, 1998). Many of the students chosen to be part of the program were students who were not likely to attend college due to financial reasons or lack of their perception of themselves, and their probable success due to socioeconomic status. Numerous participants in the program received scholarships and grants (Garms, 1998).

Purpose of TRIO Upward Bound

TRIO Upward Bound was for students at risk of academic and vocational underachievement due to their socioeconomic status, race, or gender. The program served students between 13-19 years old (grades nine through twelve). The students were typically first-generation college students (McElroy & Arnesto, 1998). According to O'Brien et al. (2000), the qualitative data suggested that the pilot career exploration program assisted the students in their career development and the enhancement of their career and decision- making process. While also shaping and molding the students so

that they could be successful in their future jobs, they were also helping change students'

outlook on education by changing the attitudes of the students.

Poverty could condition a young person's attitude in extraordinary ways (U.S.

Office of Economic Opportunity, 1965). The program offered many incentives for the

students who participated in the program. Students gained knowledge they were not

exposed to during high school. They had the opportunity to succeed with the necessary

tools that it took to be successful in a career. During the summer, the students

participated in a six-week program with a plethora of resources, such as resume writing

and taking classes in a college setting. Also during the school year, the students

participated in workshops to help build on the knowledge they had already obtained.

During the first session, the students learned about applying personal strengths to various

career development opportunities (O'Brien et al., 2000). The implementation of such

programs exposed students classified as disadvantaged to many career opportunities, as

well as professional experiences. The ultimate benefit was the changed lives of

thousands of Americans who found new hope, new life, and productive careers from

TRIO programs (Herman, 1998).

Benefits of Upward Bound

In comparison to students who were not participants or did not have older siblings

in the program, the graduation rate had risen substantially. The Upward Bound program

was reaching its targeted population of disadvantaged youth (U.S. Office of Economic

Opportunity, 1971). Students had the opportunity during the school year to receive an

intensive program to work on the subject matters that were not their strong points. A

lifetime income was another benefit for a disadvantaged student who participated in the

Upward Bound program. The standard methods of estimating lifetime incomes for a

plethora of ages and career abilities represented longitudinal data (Garms, 1998).

Upward Bound helped students identify strengths and weaknesses. According to McLure

(1998), Upward Bound students were more likely than non-Upward Bound students to

acknowledge needs for help in the areas of writing, reading and comprehension, study

skills, mathematical skills, and personal concerns. When parents of Upward Bound

students were surveyed, they stated that because of Upward Bound, the students

improved both self-confidence and self-esteem. In addition, children appeared to be

more motivated and interested in learning (Zulli, Frierson, & Clayton, 1998). Herman

(1998) stated former Upward Bound students revealed favorable ratings to the critical

components of the program, and credited Student Support Services for financial support,

mentoring, internship, and research.

There were not only benefits to the program, but incentives to the participants and

their parents. For the participants of the program, the program provided academic,

financial, and social support. About 90.6% of the participants stated they applied for

Upward Bound in order to have the opportunity to prepare for college (Grimard &

Maddus, 2004, p. 8). Approximately 66.0% of the participants surveyed conveyed the

belief the program assisted them in exploring career opportunities (Grimard & Maddus,

2004, p. 8). The program also gave students the chance to experience what living on a

college campus was like. Many other students benefited from the program because of

stipends and work experience (Grimard & Maddus, 2004). Meanwhile, the students met

different participants from other racial backgrounds and academic backgrounds (White,

Sakiestewa, & Shelley, 1998).

Rationale

At the time of this writing, there was minimal research comparing first-generation college students at the three major types of universities with non-first-generation college students. This study was unique because it looked at the both types of students (first-generation and non-first-generation students), and it compared their overall college experiences, along with specific factors, such as students' college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection, college experiences, and deciding factors on attending college at a private, public, and HBCUs. There were similar studies conducted at different universities. However, these studies looked at the causes of first-generation students not being able to succeed at the rate of their counterparts. They also looked at factors that contributed to the success of first-generation college students. Some studies included which factors contributed the most to non-first-generation college students and their success.

How do students define success? Many students defined success differently. A case study conducted by Jennings, Lovett, Cuba, Swingle and Lindkvist (2013) showed that students defined their success based on how far along they were in college. Within the first year, students determined success as 'getting good grades,' but by junior or senior year the perception of grades was the effect on completing the then-current year and being able to graduate with a degree. Research also showed that the non-profit sector and public institutions had the lowest graduation rates (Barrow, Brock, & Rouse, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

First-generation students had a harder time adjusting to college. Trouble adjusting to college led to other factors, such as lower grades, dropping out, and/or not

being as connected with the university. First-generation students were less likely to receive a degree than non-first-generation students were. According to researchers Engle and Tinto (2008), first-generation college students were nearly four times more likely to leave higher education institutions without a degree, when compared to their counterparts.

As a possible solution to first-generation students not fairing as well as their peers, researchers suggested getting students involved in early start programs. These early start programs were designed to get students acclimated to the college environment. They also prepared them for the process of applying to college. Early start programs were designed to remediate at-risk academic and vocational underachievement due to socioeconomic status, race, or gender. The programs served students between 13 and 19-years-old (grades 9 through 12) (Barrow et al., 2013).

Although researchers conducted research on first-generation and non-first-generation students, they did not research exclusively within the Midwest. Possibly due to the locations where research was conducted, they yielded different results. For example, a study conducted at Arizona State University noted students from first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented backgrounds earned bachelor's degrees at a rate of 40% to 80% higher than more advantaged peers (Cook, 2015, p. 32). Only 11% of first-generation, low-income college students graduated with a four-year degree, according to research from the Pell Institute (2008). Erbentraut (2015) stated that first-generation students were twice as likely to graduate as those with parents who graduated from college (para. 1).

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is a difference in the college satisfaction of first-generation continuing-generation students who attended a private, public and a Historically Black College or University in the Midwest.

Hypothesis 2: There is a difference in the retention factors of first-generation and continuing-generation students who attended a private, public and a Historically Black College or University in the Midwest.

Hypothesis 3: There is a difference in the college selection for first-generation and continuing-generation students who attended a private, public and a Historically Black College or University in the Midwest.

Hypothesis 4: There is a difference in college experience of first-generation and continuing-generation students who attended a private, public and a Historically Black College or University in the Midwest.

Hypothesis 5: There is a difference in deciding factors of attending college of first-generation and continuing-generation students who attended a private, public and Historically Black College or University in the Midwest.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do first year, first-generation and continuing-generation university students perceive their experience in college specifically their culture congruity, competence, and self-efficacy?

RQ2: How do first year, first-generation and continuing-generation college students select a university?

Limitations

There were a few limitations to this study. Some students were not eligible to participate in the study. Transfer students, non-traditional students, and students who attended the university for more than six years were not eligible. These limitations and parameters were set so there would be a control group. The variables compared were student status as first-generation or continuing-generation, type of university attended, college experience, and retention and persistence rate at each university for two kinds of students. The survey helped to get an accurate account of a student's college experience. By excluding those who attended their university for more than six years, persistence rates outside the typically researched range were eliminated. According to Engle and Tinto (2008), in public four-year institutions, only about 34% of low-income, first-generation college students received bachelor's degrees in six years, compared to the remaining 66% of the student population (para. 5).

Definitions

For the purposes of this research, the following definitions were used:

Competence - believing one could accomplish a goal (Hicks & McFrazier, 2014).

Cultural capital referred to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society (Yosso, 2006, p.76).

Cultural congruity - a measure of the degree of fit between one's own culture and that of the institutional environment (Hicks & McFrazier, 2014).

Disadvantaged pertained to students considered at high risk of being deprived of proper training (McElroy & Arnesto, 1998).

Deficit thinking - "The position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and b) parents neither value nor support their child's education" (Yosso, 2005, p.75).

First-generation students - a minority population with unique characteristics and needs (Ward et al., 2012). For this study, the first-generation college student was a traditional college student who did not transfer and continually enrolled no more than six years in any bachelor degree program.

HBCU - Historically Black Colleges and Universities were institutions designed to educate African Americans (The Network Journal, 2015).

Low income - For the purpose of this study, low-income was defined as 150% at or below the federal poverty guideline (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, para.2). This definition was also used by TRIO Programs.

Persistence - was the continuance of an effect after its cause was removed (Pfeil, 2010). For this study, persistence was synonymous with college graduation.

Post-secondary institutions - a program that students entered after high school, such as vocational, college programs, or any program designed to increase career development (O'Brien et al., 2000).

Retention - a minimum-level standard to which educators adhered to retain students at the institution (Ward et al., 2012).

Self-efficacy- an individual's judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances (Hicks & McFrazier, 2014).

Summary

The Researcher developed this study from the prior research conducted by Hicks & McFrazier (2014). Cook (2015) wrote an article titled, "These Groups are Hoping to Help First-Generation College Students Make it to Graduation," focused on schools in New York and how the graduation gap could be addressed by creating a not-for-profit organization for students who hoped to be the first in the family to attend college. A study conducted at Arizona State University noted students from first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented backgrounds that earned bachelor's degrees at a rate of 40% to 80% higher than the more advantaged peer (Cook, 2015, para. 1). The Researcher, based on prior experience as a first-generation student, believed these outcomes varied, based on the geographical location and type of university researched.

According to Santelises (2016), approximately one-quarter of seniors completed academically rigorous high school coursework that prepared them for college (para. 1). Traditionally, this lack of preparation meant that large numbers of students began a college career enrolled in developmental courses (Barrow et al., 2013). By age 24, only 12% of students from low-income families earned a bachelor's degree, compared to 73% of their higher-income peers (Engle & Obrien, 2007, p. 11). Only 11% of first-generation, low-income college students graduated with a four-year degree, according to research from the Pell Institute (2008). In contrast, Erbentraut (2015) stated that first-generation students were twice as likely to graduate as those with parents who graduated from college (para. 2). Many students pursued bachelor degrees for many reasons. Some were looking for broad liberal arts education, while others were more career-focused (Barrow et al., 2013).

Traditionally, lack of college preparation was the reason for many students who required developmental coursework (Barrow et al., 2013). Students defined success differently, and a case study conducted by Jennings et al. (2013) noted students determined success based on how far along they were in college. Within the first-year, students may have defined success as 'getting good grades,' by their junior or senior year. The perception of good grades was based on completing the then-current year and being able to graduate with a degree. Researchers also showed that the not-for-profit sector and public institutions had the lowest graduation rates (Barrow et al., 2013).

After an extensive review of the literature, the Researcher found no study that completed a comparative analysis on three distinct types of universities in the Midwest, specifically focused on college satisfaction, retention, college selection, college experience, and deciding factor of first-generation college students.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review was conducted to complete a mixed-method comparative analysis of first-generation and non-first-generation students in the Midwest United States to determine differences between students' college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection, college experiences, and deciding factors on attending college at a private, public, or Historically Black College and University (HBCU). The Researcher conducted a comparative analysis of the following types of universities: public, private, and HBCUs. Depending on what type of university that first-generation student attended (community college, a private liberal-arts college, or a large university) the experiences contrasted (Housel, 2012).

Organization of the Literature Review

The literature review begins with a description of the three different types of universities used for this study. The first focus of the research was to analyze the typical differences between first-generation and non-first-generation students. The second area of interest was to examine how low-income, first-generation students fared in college. Next was to identify what difficulties low-income students faced attending college. Enrollment and challenges and barriers of first-generation college students were the needs of first-generation students, along with programs designed for first-generation students, motivational factors, cultural differences, and culture of different types of universities, ending with retention.

Differences Between Groups

The term 'first-generation' had different meanings, depending on the one who was defining the term. Many people believed that first-generation meant neither parent received a college degree. Whereas, others believed that if one parent graduated, then a student was not considered first-generation. Still others believed that if a parent attended some college but did not earn a degree that students were no longer considered first-generation students (Smith, 2017). First-generation college students were less likely than their counterparts to enroll in a postsecondary institution. Furthermore, they were less likely to persist to college graduation once they entered college (Ward et al., 2012). Many low-income students came from underserved backgrounds and had a lack of academic preparation needed to be successful in college. Tinto (2006) stated that many low-income, first-generation college students came from ethnic and racial minority backgrounds with lower levels of academic preparation. About three-fourths of first-generation college students entered two-year institutions. At these institutions, the retention of the students was the lowest. However, only 25% of the first-generation college students entered four-year institutions; the 25% who entered four-year institutions were more likely to receive a baccalaureate degree (Ward et al., 2012, p. 21). Even though there were such significant gaps, low-income, first-generation students were seven times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree if they started in four-year institutions; but, only 25% did so (Engle &Tinto, 2008, p. 2).

A report from the Institute of Education Sciences reported that 54% of first- time students left college without obtaining a degree due to finances, compared to 45% of non-first-generation students (as cited in Smith, 2017, para. 4). When first-generation college

students got to college, they were more academically at risk (Ward et al., 2012). First-generation students tended to have lower reading levels, and more moderate math abilities and critical thinking skills (Ward et al., 2012).

Although the demographics went into consideration with low-income, first-generation students and their success in college, other risk factors hindered progress. Low-income, first-generation college students tended to have many different responsibilities outside of college. Many of the duties faced outside of college were lack of financial support from parents, family, and work. These were things that caused the students not to be able to indulge fully in the college experience (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Some of the other barriers faced were financial constraints, resentment about going to college from parents who might not have any higher education experience, unrealistic expectations about college life, under preparedness for college, and social and personal worries (Ward et al., 2012).

Many of these low-income, first-generation students delayed entry into postsecondary education after high school. They attended part-time, held full-time employment while enrolled, had children, were a single parent, and/or only held a GED (Engle &Tinto, 2008).   The likelihood of college enrollment varied as a function of parental educational attainment (Choy, 2001). When the parents did not hold a baccalaureate degree by the student's senior year, only 50% of first-generation students expected to obtain a bachelor's degree, compared to 90% of their non-first-generation counterparts (Ward et al., 2012, p. 21). Due to the first-generation not having the support that their counterparts, non-first-generation college students had, they were less likely to pursue postsecondary education (Ward et al., 2012). One of the barriers first-generation

students faced was lack of parental support. Yet, not all parents were unsupportive.

Parents who lacked a bachelor's degree often supported their children in a multitude of

ways.

Family expectations expressed tacitly or overtly, influenced a student's decision

to attend college (Ward et al., 2012). The United States had one of the largest disparities

between those who were wealthy and those who were poor. The top 1% of U.S. families

had more total money than the bottom 40%, and this gap had steadily increased over the

70 years previous to this writing (Capra, 2009, p. 76).

Academic-semester data was as follows for a small, private, Midwestern faith-

based university for 2010 through 2013. Data indicated the overall traditional first-year,

full-time freshman cohort withdrawal rates were 25% (Fall 2010), 25% (Fall 2011), 26 %

(Fall 2012), and 23 % (Fall 2013) (McCulloh, 2016, p. 4).

Table 1

First- Generation /Rural/Freshman Cohort Institutional Withdrawal Rates

Semester	All first-generation	Rural first-generation	All freshman
Fall semester 2010	45%	31%	25%
Fall semester 2011	51%	28%	25%
Fall semester 2012	41%	27%	26%
Fall semester 2013	45%	25%	23%

Note. These data represent the percentage of students who did not remain enrolled in the institution.

The corresponding withdrawal rates for the university's FGC student cohorts were 45%,

51%, 41%, and 45% (McCulloh, 2016, p. 4). Meanwhile, the withdrawal rates for the

rural FGC student population were 31%, 31%, 27%, and 25% (McCulloh, 2016, p. 4).

These percentages detailed in the Table 1, provide evidence that there was a local problem with retaining rural FGC students at this university.

First- Generation Students

According to Engle and Tinto (2008), in public four-year institutions, only about 34% of low-income first-generation college students received bachelor's degrees in six years. There was an even more significant gap between low-income first-generation and non-first-generation students who received bachelor's degrees at private not-for-profit, four-year institutions. There was a 43% to 80% difference between the two (Engle & Tinto, 2008, p. 2). About 90% of low income, first-generation students did not graduate within six years (Education Advisory Board, 2016, para. 2).

Non-low-income, first-generation students were also known as the more advantaged students, who attended public two-year institutions and went on to attain bachelor's degrees at nearly five times the rate of low-income, first-generation students, at rates of 24% versus 5% respectively (Engle & Tinto, 2008, p. 2). Students who were the first to attend college in their families had different experiences than those with college graduate parents. Having a parent who attended college previously was very beneficial to non-first-generation students (Banks-Santilli, 2015).

Difficulties of Low-Income Students Attending College

According to previous research, Engle and Tinto (2008) stated that low-income, first-generation students were not as likely to engage in academic or social experiences that promoted success in college. Low-income, first-generation college students were less likely to participate in study groups with their peers or interact with faculty, engage in extracurricular activities, or utilize available support services. Many disadvantaged

students in poverty-stricken communities found that once they entered college, they were

not adequately prepared. Students not adequately prepared resulted in disadvantaged

students failing or even dropping a class within the first year of college (Capra, 2009).

Being a first-generation student often came with lack of prior information regarding

enrolling in college. Many students did not know to apply to multiple universities, nor did

they understand what it took to apply and be accepted to a top Ivy League university.

Many just settled for the first, available option (Banks-Santilli, 2015). In addition, the

maximum Pell grant covered only 36% of the price of attendance at a public-four-year

institution in 2004-2005, down from 42% in 2001-2002 (America's Promise Alliance,

2012, para. 3).

   Deficit thinking was a form of racism in the United States. Deficit thinking was

at the epicenter for minority students and families. The blame for insignificant scholastic

achievement was placed on students for their lack of cultural knowledge and on parents

due to a lack of support and valuing of education (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano,

2009). Deficit thinking could be detrimental to first-generation success. Yosso (2005)

described deficit thinking as "the position that minority students and families are at fault

for poor academic performance because: a) students enter school without the normative

cultural knowledge and skills; and b) parents neither value nor support their child's

education" (p.75). Families placed the burden on the younger generations by passing

down the expectation to get a job immediately following high school graduation (LaMar,

2015).

   To eliminate deficit thinking one must think about capital and use it in more

composite means (Ward et al., 2012). One researcher stated:

Despite such struggles, I sometimes forgot that my family was not on this

adventure with me. My father (who worked on the assembly line and later as a

custodian at Goodyear Tire in Akron) and I argued during visits about whether I

was acting 'too good' for them. (Housel, 2012 p. 2)

College retention was also essential. Some researchers stated that people who

attended college accrued more income during their lifetime. The difference between a

high school diploma and a four-year degree in both annual and lifetime earnings was

considerable, and the gap increased significantly over time. A college degree had many

benefits. Four-year college graduates would earn nearly $1 million more over their

working lives than will those who only received a high school diploma and nearly

$570,000 more than those who attended some college and earned a two-year degree

(College Board, 2007, p. 10). For the United States to remain competitive with other

countries, society must continue to increase the success rates of all citizens, whether low-

income, first-generation or the more advantaged. By 2020, 65% of all jobs in the U.S.

economy will require post-secondary education or training after high school (Center on

Education and Workforce, 2014, p. 1).

Many of the low-income, first-generation students who had one of the risk factors

discussed typically had another risk factor that hindered success in college. Sometimes,

the risk factors correlated with students' background characteristics. Minority students

from low-income families, students who were the first in their family to go to college,

and other nontraditional students tended to have more risk factors than peers (Berkner,

Cuccaro-Alamin, & McCormick, 1996, Horn & Premo, 1995; Horn, 1996). Engle and

Tinto (2008) stated, in *Moving Beyond Access: College for Low Income, First-*

Generation Students, that the more risk factors a student had, the more likely the student failed to earn a bachelor's degree. Students with no risk factors entering four-year institutions in 1995-1996, for instance, were more than three times as likely to earn a bachelor's degree by 2001 than students with two or more risk factors, 62% and 19% respectively (Engle & Tinto, 2008, p. 9). Where a student decided to go to college made a difference in whether the student would be successful. "Where and how one goes to college influences the likelihood of college completion" (Tinto, 2006, p. 11). The research conducted by Tinto (2006) supported that a student's college choice was important to college completion.

First-Generation Enrollment

Nationally, of the 7.3 million undergraduates attending four-year public and private colleges and universities, about 20% were first-generation students (Banks-Santilli, 2015, para. 5). Due to the increase of first-generation college students, administrators were often not prepared. According to some researchers, most of the first-generation students enrolling were female, from disadvantaged backgrounds, and minority groups (Ward et al., 2012). The constant push to promote diversity within universities boomeranged. However, Community College of Aurora was able to tackle the issues of first-generation students and academic success. Addressing the issues consisted of monitoring performance for students of numerous ethnic backgrounds and educating instructors on how to increase the academic outcomes for non-White students. As of 2016, the achievement gap at the Community College of Aurora had practically closed among non-White students (Education Advisory Board, 2016). College and universities included many first-generation college students. First-generation students

made up approximately one third of the freshman populations (Zinshteyn, 2016, para. 4).

Although a third of the universities freshman populations consisted of first-generation

students, not many of the students returned the second year. One-third of students

entering two or four-year colleges in the United States each year were first-generation

(Cardoza, 2016). "By 2011, nearly one in five freshmen at four-year American colleges

was a first-generation student, according to statistics from the University of California at

Los Angeles's Higher Education Research Institute" (Housel, 2012, p. 1). According to

the research conducted and reported in "Who's in First (Generation)" the percentage

could vary from 22% to 77% (as cited in Smith, 2015, para. 6). In 2012, studies showed

about 73% of first-generation college students would return a second year (Lightweis,

2014, para. 2). First-time, first-generation students had lower retention rates than their

peers, the non-first-generation students. "Thirty percent of current college students were

first- generation. Eighty-five percent of those first-generation college students were

considered low income. Only eleven percent of those low-income students will be the

first in their family to graduate from college" (Bui, 2017, p. 1).

   According to McCulloh (2016), the withdrawal rates indicated that traditional-

aged, first-time, full-time, first-generation college students were retained at a lower

percentage in comparison to traditional, non-first-generation students. In the article

titled, "Who's in First (Generation)," Toutkoushian said, "Regardless of how we define

it, first-generation students were at a disadvantage when compared to non-first-generation

students" (as cited in Smith, 2017, para. 5).

Table 2

Breakdown of Dependent Variable by First-Generation Status

Definition of First Generation College Student	Y= Planned in Grade 10 on taking the SAT			Y= Applied to College			Y= Enrolled in College		
	1st-Gen	Non-1st Gen	Gap	1st-Gen	Non-1st Gen	Gap	1st-Gen	Non-1st Gen	Gap
Both parents: HS or Less	60.6%	81.1%	-20.5%	71.2%	90.4%	-19.2%	63.4%	87.6%	-24.2%
Both Parents: Some AA or Less	64.2%	82.5%	-18.3%	74.8%	91.5%	-16.7%	67.2%	89.4%	-22.2%
Both Parents: AA or Less	66.0%	84.6%	-18.6%	77.2%	92.9%	-15.7%	70.0%	91.4%	-21.4%
Both Parents: Some BA or Less	68.3%	86.3%	-18.0%	79.5%	93.9%	-14.4%	72.3%	93.8%	-21.5%
At least One Parent: HS or Less	67.6%	84.6%	-17.0%	78.0%	93.3%	-15.3%	71.0%	92.1%	-21.1%
At Least One Parent: Some AA or Less	69.8$	86.2%	-16.4%	80.2%	94.5%	-14.3%	73.9%	94.0	-20.1%
At Least One Parent: AA or Less	71.4%	87.6%	-16.2%	81.8%	95.4%	-13.6%	76.0%	95.4%	-19.4%
At Least One Parent: Some BA or Less	72.6%	90.3%	-17.7%	83.2%	96.2%	-13.0%	77.8%	97.4%	-19.6%

Notes: Sample Size is approximately 7,300 (rounded per NCES requirements). All differences in means were statistically
significant at the 0.1% significance level (Smith, 2017, para. 7).

Challenges and Barriers

"When a student is the first to go to college in the family, he or she is not aware of the barriers ahead: social, academic, and cultural, in addition to his or her own skepticism" (Cardoza, 2016, para. 3). Often, first-generation college students experienced many challenges that the non-first-generation college students did not experience. There were many barriers to college persistence and student success (Forbus, Newbold, & Mehta, 2011).

One of the challenges that first-generation students faced daily was with cultural capital. Many first-generation students had trouble building cultural capital. The inability to build cultural capital only widened the gap (Housel, 2012). Cultural capital referred to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society (Yosso, 2006, p.76). Nearly 20% of first-generation, low-income students did not speak English as their first language (Cardoza, 2016, para. 9). First-generation students did not have the support of family members to encourage or walk them through the process of college choice or enrollment. First-generation students many times did not decide that they wanted to attend college until they were in high school (Garcia, 2015).

The financial aspect of college also weighed heavy on first-generation students. Many first-generation students who enrolled in college experienced earning lower grades, due to the responsibility of working while in college (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, &Terenzini, 2004). Despite the higher risk, first-generation students did not receive more assistance in the form of grants. Nationwide, when it came to private colleges, and some public colleges, students that had the need for financial assistance to pay for their

education were expected to take out loans (Anderson, 2016). The amount required to pay

for college required first-generation students to not only receive a Pell grant; but, also

required them to take out loans. However, they often still fell on average $3,600 short of

the required amount (America's Promise Alliance, 2012, para. 3). Goldrick-Rab stated

part of the problem was, "Cost of living during breaks and the cost of 'keeping up with

the Joneses'" (as cited in Anderson, 2016, p. 2). Some students wrestled with money

worries even when education costs were covered.

        The odds of degree completion were much lower for a first-generation student

than non-first-generation college students. According to researchers Engle and Tinto

(2008), first-generation college students were nearly four times more likely to leave

higher education institutions without a degree when compared to their peers. Many

students did not have the parental support to attend college. Due to a lack of support,

first-generation college students did not know how to speak up for themselves or how to

advocate for their education or beliefs (McCulloh, 2016). Culver (2012) stated that

speaking up and questioning authority was discouraged, and the line between adults and

children tended to be much more firmly drawn.

        In most cases, the education levels of the parent was the deciding factor in the

students' choice to attend college (Horn & Nunez, 2000). Due to living in a rural area,

the students who chose to go to a four-year college often entered with limited preparation

and lower socioeconomic circumstances, in comparison to the suburban and urban areas

(McCulloh, 2016).

        When first-generation students attended institutions, it was imperative for them to

be engaged and involved on campus. Participation in study groups, social groups,

integrated campus life, and attendance in outside lectures could have a positive impact on student persistence (Garcia, 2015). College access was affected in many ways. The barriers that affected student access could affect a student's retention, enrollment, or even the college experience (McCulloh, 2016).

When it came to obstacles of first-generation and non-first-generation students, it went beyond academic barriers. The barriers faced could lead to withdrawal from a university. Some of the obstacles included, but were not limited to, family conflicts, insufficient family resources, inability to adjust to first-generation cultural status, inadequate parental support, and lack of social and cultural capital (McCulloh, 2016). As cited in *Voice of America,* Curran was a first-generation student who attended Bridgewater State University and admitted that attending college was difficult for him partially because he lacked being able to ask his parents for advice on classes (Musto, 2016). Furthermore, he felt the need to work harder than his peers to prove himself to his parents (Musto, 2016). When first-generation students left to attend college, they did not think about the 'break-away guilt' that would be faced. These students also did not think of the possibility or need to develop two identities to connect with their families back home (Banks-Santilli, 2015). One student said, "My family and I won't see eye to eye on particular issues because of our different experience. This difference causes a rift, and sometimes I feel like an outsider to my own family" (Bui, 2017, p. 2). Another student echoed this in stating the parents thought, "Maybe you think you're better than us because you went to college" (LaMar, 2015, p. 1).

The disconnection between the social class of the first-generation students and professors was another hurdle for the retention and persistence of first-generation

students. It was as simple as the ability to hold a conversation, being able to feel comfortable enough to ask a teacher for assistance without feeling alienated for doing so. Social class stratified how students engaged teachers in primary and secondary school (Calarco, 2011). Non-first-generation students entering college who could hold intelligent conversations with their professors and peers had an increased opportunity for degree completion. Housel (2012) stated in *First-Generation Students Need Help in Straddling Their 2 Cultures,* "Early in my first semester, I received a low exam mark and did not know how to approach the professor for help" (p. 2). When non-first-generation students experienced problems at their institutions, they were able to cope and actively sought the necessary help they needed. Compared to the working-class youth, middle-class children were better primed to engage teachers and felt more comfortable doing so (Calarco, 2014). In addition, many teachers identified with those students who were from non-first-generation backgrounds. Due to the same social class connection, the teachers had a different response to the students who were of the same class. Teachers responded more positively and tended to spend more time with those students who identified as middle-class or were able to adjust so that they too were identified as middle-class (Calarco, 2014).

When it came to persistence in college, freshman stress was one of the negative effects (Zajacova, Lynch, & Epenshade, 2005). Often, first-generation undergraduate students encountered stress outside of degree completion and working. Due to the cultural discrepancy of the working-class undergraduate students experienced increased levels of stress in comparison to the middle-class undergraduate student (Stephens,

Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). For first-generation students, there was often stress in trying to manage two cultures (Housel, 2012).

College-related stresses affected the academic performance of the traditional undergraduates (Zajacova et al., 2005). In general, stress had a negative impact on a student's GPA and persistence. However, some studies contradicted such findings. Other sources produced evidence that stress had a positive influence only slightly related to persistence (Zajacova et al., 2005). The issue of teachers pre-judging or misjudging students based upon their classification as a first-generation student had been an issue within institutions.

According to research conducted by Garcia (2015), first-generation college students were doubly disadvantaged. The doubly underprivileged students were not as likely to have positive interactions with the teachers and lacked the motivation to aspire to hold positive relationships with teachers. It was a common assumption that a majority of first-generation students came from low-income households. The study confirmed that 27% of first-generation students came from impoverished households, as compared to non-impoverished peers of 6% (Smith, 2017, para. 2). Doubly disadvantaged students reported fewer interactions with faculty, and did not desire to engage faculty, although they witnessed their counterparts obtaining benefits from doing so (Garcia, 2015). The rural first-generation students tended to face unique experiences in comparison to peers. Other conditions that a rural first-generation student must overcome were complex socioeconomic status conditions, inability to adjust to new ways of studying, and community living (McCulloh, 2016).

Addressing the Needs

Countless times, the social needs of first-generation college students were neglected. Many students did not want to feel like they were an outcast at their institutions (Hsiao, 1992). Financial assistance could also be in the form of expanded work-study programs for students who lacked the finances, but met the requirements to enter a four-year program (America's Promise Alliance, 2012). Often, the social aspect was not thought to be important to student retention and persistence. First-generation students faced a higher risk for not completing a degree program, as their social and academic integration played a role in leaving an institution (McCay & Estrell, 2008).

Many other factors contributed to the lack of success of first-generation students. Hicks (2006) stated that first-generation students had lower self-esteem, which caused them to be unable to excel in academics. One of the solutions for improving access to and success in post–secondary education, specifically for (low-income) first-generation students, would be to ease the transition from high school and post-secondary for high need students (America's Promise Alliance, 2012).

One idea to help span the gap between high school and college included summer bridge programs, which proved to be successful (America's Promise Alliance, 2012). Not many options offered a remedy for the first-generation student. LaMar (2015) proposed supporting first-generation students by starting a mentoring program between recent first-generation college graduates and high school students.

However, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) was one of many schools that was able to close the achievement gap between White and African American students and White and Hispanic students. They used data to identify students at risk for

dropping out of college. They reached out to the students individually. By doing so, one

third of VCU's population, which consisted of a majority of minority students, was

positively affected (Cardoza, 2016). A 2011 study of more than 13,000 college student

records found that students who used mentoring and coaching services were 10% to 15%

more likely to go on to another year of college (Education Advisory Board, 2016, para.

4). Due to the services offered to first-generation students, there was an increase of four

percentage points for graduation rates (Education Advisory Board, 2016).

Influences on Attending College

Many factors contributed to whether a student decided to attend college. Some

common examples of contributing factors were family income, educational expectations,

academic preparation, parental involvement, and peer influences (Horn & Nunez, 2000).

There was an abundance of research on other universities and the early start programs.

Middle College High Schools (MCHS) and Early College High Schools (ECHS) were

programs that proved to show promise for college preparation (Barrow et al., 2013). That

research touched on the implementations of various early start programs and how they

helped with the retention of first-generation college students. New York was spotlighted

in an article titled, "These Groups are Hoping to Help First-Generation College Students

make it to Graduation" (Cook, 2015), which focused on schools in New York and how

the graduation gap could be addressed by creating a not-for-profit organization for

students who hoped to be the first in their families to attend college. An article in

Academic Impressions focused on Arizona State University (Erbentraut, 2015). Both

articles revealed different outcomes. Possible explanations for the variance in outcomes

could be the geographic location or type of university researched. A study conducted at

Arizona State University noted students from first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented backgrounds earned bachelor's degrees at a rate of 40% to 80% higher than more advantaged peers (Cook, 2015, p. 32).

There were many reasons that students were underprepared for college. The schools the economically challenged students attended had vast disparities between the instruction and services offered by high schools of the more economically advantaged students (Barrow et al., 2013). By age 24, only 12% of students from low-income families would have earned a bachelor's degree compared to 73% of higher-income peers (Engle & O'Brien, 2007, p. 11). Only 11% of first-generation, low-income college students graduated with a four-year degree, according to research from the Pell Institute (Engle & O'Brien, 2007). Erbentraut (2015) stated, "First-generation students were twice as likely to graduate as those with parents who graduated from college to drop out of school" (para. 2). Many students pursued bachelor degrees for many reasons. Some were looking for broad liberal arts education, while others were more career focused (Barrow et al., 2013).

Traditionally, lack of college preparation was the reason for students enrolling in developmental courses (Barrow et al., 2013). To help with the lack of preparation for college, many institutions had interventions for college readiness. In addition, most high schools in the United States had counselors and college advisors. Their job was to help students understand the process of applying to schools (2016). One author stated:

As teachers, it is almost second nature for us to encourage our students to go to college—to chase the American Dream. But, do we take the time to at least acknowledge that this achievement comes with other transformations—that for

some students we are encouraging them to depart from the world that they know

and feel they belong in? Is there a place for this conversation in high school? Are

our students already thinking about it? (LaMar, 2015, p. 2)

Two of the federal programs were Upward Bound and Talent Search and Gaining Early

Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). These TRIO

programs had small impacts on preparation for college (Barrow et al., 2013).

OneGoal

The OneGoal program started in 2007 as a teacher-led college persistence

program for low-income students. The program offered school-based support beginning

the junior year of the student's high school career. This program continued throughout

the student's freshman year in college.

Since 2012, the OneGoal program added a new region in which they operated.

The program in 2017 served Chicago, New York, San Francisco Bay Area, Houston,

Massachusetts, and Metro Atlanta. Before choosing a region to work in, OneGoal looked

for need, college access and success momentum, higher education landscape, school and

district support, and lastly, funding. What were the local college enrollment and

persistence numbers of low-income communities? What then-current college access and

success efforts were in place, and what role might OneGoal play in the regional

landscape? Was there a variety of colleges/universities for the OneGoal Fellows based

on selectivity, graduation rates, and financial aid? Did schools share the vision and seek

collaboration with a college access and success partner? Could the program secure

support from a diverse funding community?

Motivational Factors

The ability for students to feel self-sufficient and in control of their lives helped to motivate them. According to Deci and Flaste (1995), it was determined that the sense of autonomy was what motivated students. Many other factors contributed to the motivation of students. There were both internal and external motivational factors. One's internal experiences, perceptions, and emotions came from within the individual (Reeves, 2005). An example of an external influence could be one's parents or peers. Another example could also include the environment of the student (Reeves, 2005). The social factors of parental and peer motivation and the environment could affect human behavior to an extent, because they influenced a person's aspirations, self-efficacy, personal standards, emotional states, and other self-regulatory influences (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000). According to research conducted by Bui (2002), reasons for attending college included: friends were going to college, parents expected them to attend college, they were persuaded by a teacher or counselor, to make a better life for themselves and their children, not wanting to enter the work field immediately after high school, and the love of learning.

In the study conducted by Blackwell and Pinder (2014), students gave the following motivating factors that pushed them to want to pursue a higher education: the love of reading at an early age, the feeling of being different from other siblings, and wanting a better life for themselves. All three of the students in the study stated that they viewed receiving a college education as a ticket out of their then-current situation. They also reported parental support was a strong influence. One of the students stated her

strongest influence was her teacher, while the other two stated their teachers were not influential (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014).

According to Eitel and Martin (1997), 75% of the students who failed to persist to college graduation were female (p. 618). Lohfink and Paulsen (2005) found that female students and Hispanic students were at a higher risk of failing to persist, particularly between the first and second year of college. First-generation students tended to have lower graduation rates than their counterparts (Engle and Tinto, 2008). In most cases, when first-generation students had more than one barrier impeding them from persisting, the odds of completion were small. The Council of Independent Colleges, found that 57% of first-generation students who attended a four-year university attained a degree within six years (Markowitz, 2017, para. 70). The national average graduation rate for first-generation students was only 34%, yet their counterparts were averaging 55% (Tibbetts, 2015, para. 5). Studies conducted in the years just prior to this writing found that in six years, 40% of first-generation students would have earned a bachelor's degree, associate's degree, or certificate compared to 55% of their peers whose parents attended college (Cardoza, 2016, para. 4).

Social media and technology played a huge role in the education of students. Having access to social media exposed students to many different things they otherwise would not be exposed to. Social media was the lifeline to a more extensive network of people who actively answered questions and provided meaningful information as it related to the college experience (Wohn, Ellison, Khan, Fewins, & Gray, 2013). Although social media was one outlet for exposure to what was to come once enrolled into college, it did not solve the actual problem at hand, which was the low rates of

persistence and retention of first-generation students. "Access without support is not opportunity" (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, p. 1).

There were many times when first-generation students decided that wanted to attend a university, and instead they chose non-university schools with which they were familiar. As first-generation students, they often lacked the understanding of what it would take to pursue a higher education. Social identity theory was how people defined or thought of themselves regarding their in-group (Brown, 2000). Many times, when first-generation students were enrolled in these universities, they did not account for the feeling of isolation or if they were the odd man out. In most cases when they felt this way, they tended to find other students who were of the same social class; so, they could have a sense of belonging.

Many students from low socio-economic backgrounds struggled to get away from their communities. Many first-generation students thought that attending college was an escape from their environments (Rico, 2016). Becoming distant from family members could be hard. Often, students did not know how to navigate between college life and life at home with friends and families. They suffered emotionally while trying to maintain or rekindle past relationships. (Rico, 2016). The feeling of belonging was not always possible when it came to dealing with the reality of the environment, which possibly could consist of escaping the community that came with distancing themselves from the environment of violence, drug abuse, and crime (Rico, 2016). An in-group was the group with which a student identified. The out-group was a group in which a student did not belong. A meta-stereotype was a perception perceived by the in-group. Research

conducted by Finchilescu (2005) confirmed that the way a person felt that others

perceived them had a substantial effect on their emotions (as cited in Rico, 2016).

Being the first to attend college in a family could be more challenging than one

would think. Harry who was a minority, attended Vanderbilt. In the article, "What It's

Like to Be the First Person in Your Family to Go to College," Harry stated, "I quickly

realized that although I may look the part, my cultural and socio-economic backgrounds

were vastly different from those of my predominantly white, affluent peers" (Riggs,

2014b, p. 2).

Knowing Cultural Differences

The transition for first-generation students from high school to college was a

difficult one. Many first-generation students did not know what to expect while attending

college. Due to the lack of prior knowledge, it made navigating through college more

challenging (Ward, 2013). Many first-generation, low-income students lacked cultural

capital, the know-how of how to navigate complex campus systems. First-generation

students were not aware of how they could find the programs to help assist them and to

evaluate what worked for them and what did not (Ellucian, 2015). Often first-generation

college students did not speak up for fear of sounding incompetent. When first-

generation students did not speak up in class, the professor could mistake the silence for

slowness or incompetence that was not necessarily the case (Culver, 2012). In most

cases, first-generation college students lacked support, as well as parental engagement.

Culture of the Campus

First-generation students who lacked the knowledge of how to seek a university

designed for their retention often found themselves at universities not designed for

students like them. In the article, "Retention and Student Success: Implementing

Strategies that Make a Difference" (Coley, Coley, & Lynch-Holmes, 2015), it was

pointed out that many institutions were intended to weed out students. Many institutions'

prestige was tied to the ability to weed out students. Kuh (2008) helped universities and

colleges develop a new perspective on student success and changed how to measure

success. Success came to be measured by persistence to graduation, transfer success,

time to degree, or improved learning outcomes.

Before starting school, first-generation college students should know it was their

responsibility as a student to ensure they were receiving the proper academic advising.

However, as a first-generation student, they were often unaware and overly trustful of the

academic advisor provided for them. College administrators identified the problem as

"inadequate academic advising" (Beal & Noel, 1980, p. 43). When parents and students

heard the term 'full-ride,' they often never took into consideration additional expenses

that would be encountered. Once at a university, students often had to choose between a

meal and books. Delgadillo stated, "Things that you don't think about are extremely

expensive. It's not a full ride" (as cited in Anderson, 2016, p. 5).

Being a first-generation student affected the college experience. Due to the lack

of support from peers and family, the first-generation students relied heavily on the

academic advising of the universities. Many of the faculty members were not trained to

handle the variety of cultural influences and the different levels of oppression that the

first-generation student possessed (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Many

universities were not diverse enough to understand the cultures of the students they

served. Student populations continued to become more diverse, and the institutions

needed to understand the students' prior academic preparation to serve them better (Matthew, 2014). Many first-generation college students tended to be of the minority groups Black or Hispanic. This led to the gap in educational achievement among the different cultural groups. More than 30% of Whites and 50% of Asian adults over the age of 25 earned at least a bachelor's degree in comparison with only 18% of Black and just 12% of Hispanics (Carnevale & Strohl, 2012. p. 73).

According to Brazzell, a former vice president of student affairs at Spellman College, "Retention is the lifeblood of institutions" (as cited in Hurd, 2000, p. 43). Many students attended college and questioned if college was the place for them. Conversely, some students attended college with the intention of success, only to have their hopes and dreams crushed, because they received poor marks on assignments. Due to students receiving poor marks it made them question if they had what it took to succeed. As a result, many students' self-efficacy disappeared, as well as any aspirations of success (Sternberg, 2013). This was problematic because self-efficacy was positively associated with grades in college (Zajacova et al., 2005).

Student's came to college with the mindset that they could allocate the same amount of time studying as they did in high school. In high school, students often had a support network to help regulate their time and energy (Sternberg, 2013). When it came to self-efficacy, four areas tended to stand out. These were confidence in interactions at school, in academic performance outside of class, academic performance in class, and confidence in the ability to manage work, family, and school (Zajacova, et al., 2005). Therefore, many students did not persist to college graduation. Academic self-efficacy

had a strong positive effect on freshman grades and credits, which was consistent with previously conducted research (Zajacova et al., 2005).

Many of the students who entered higher education programs dropped out before completing the program (Seidman, 2015). The importance of retention, specifically freshman retention mattered most. The ability for a freshman to thrive on campus was a key indicator of student retention (O'Shaughnessy, 2015).

There were programs designed to help the retention of students. The academic programs consisted of tutoring, mentoring programs, and other interventions. The programs were in place to help increase retention, and these services were sometimes directed to the wrong students (Tyson, 2014). Colleges spent large amounts of money designing programs and services for the diverse student population to help them develop the skills necessary to persist (Seidman, 2015). It was extremely important to place students in the class that fit their academic needs and to give them advisors that could help them make the best decisions for their academic goals.

For students to be successful in college there were four core areas that needed emphasis: assessment, course placement, developmental education initiatives, academic advising, and student transition programming (Tyson, 2014). In the first year, colleges lost the most significant number of students. To improve overall retention, many colleges focused their student-success resources on freshman (Seidman, 2015). The benefit of these programs was that they targeted students' motivation and strategies they applied when engaging to learn (Vanthournout, Gijbel, Coertjens, Donche, & Petegem, 2012). Students that had an academic goal to accomplish performed better than those who did not. Pintrich of the University of Michigan pointed out that when students had

an educational destination in mind or had the feeling that what they were doing would

have enormous positive outcomes, they perform better (Sternberg, 2013).

The retention rate was continuously dropping. Fain (2014) stated for the second

year, the retention rate of college students had fallen 1.2 percentage points, since 2009

(para. 1). The retention rate was based on the percentage of students who returned to any

university for the following year. According to Fuente, a retention expert, in the article

titled, "Staying power: Colleges work to improve retention rates," many students left due

to lack of both financial assistance and academically preparation (as cited in Hurd, 2000).

In the Fall 2012, 68.7% returned to a college at any U.S institution in Fall 2013, and

58.2% returned to the same institution (Fain, 2014, para. 3). When students did not

continue pursuing a college education, the university's reputation was hurt (Sternberg,

2013). Forty-five percent of total dropouts nationwide finished a year of college and with

a grade-point average between 2.0 and 3.0 (Tyson, 2014, para. 5). According to the U.S.

Department of Education, Center for Educational Statistics, Seidman (2015) cited only

50% of those who entered higher education institutions finished with a degree (para. 1).

One third or more of students left four-year public colleges and universities at the end of

their first year, and about 40% of students who began college would never earn a degree

(Kinzie, 2014, para. 2).

Although much attention was given to the retention of students, the majority of

persistence rates remained torpid (Tyson, 2014). Many first-generation students left

college for several different reasons. Two of those reasons included inadequate and

unsuitable parental support (McCulloh, 2016). Research conducted by Zajacova, Lynch,

and Epenshade, (2005) stated that self-efficacy did not affect a student's second-year persistence.

The most prominent drop was at four-year private institutions, where the persistence rate for first-time students fell 2.8 percentage points. The rate declined by 2.3 percentage points at both four-year public schools and community colleges. Four-year for-profits saw a slight improvement of 0.7% (Fain, 2014, para. 24). Although both groups' (part-time and full-time students) persistence rates had dropped; the retention rate of part-time students was lower than their counterparts (Fain, 2014).

HBCUs were universities known to take students under their wing. Colleges looked at students' prior performance in high school to see where students placed on standardized tests. Some characteristics that indicated a student's academic performance were proficiency rates in Math, Language Arts, English, and Writing (DeNicco, Harrington, & Fogg, 2015). Many universities relied heavily on scholastic aptitude tests. These tests were designed to place students into introductory college courses. These tests only accounted for 25% of the variation in academic success in college (Sternberg, 2013, para. 3).

The problems faced by private post-secondary schools was the same as those faced by public and HBCU-academic preparedness, students' finances, students' communication, relationship building, and graduate outcomes (Rodeman, 2016). One of the many issues for students, no matter which type of university that a student attended, was that their needs must be addressed. Successful retention and graduate outcomes were a result of schools demonstrating and meeting the needs of the students (Rodeman, 2016). According to McCulloh (2016), first-generation students' withdrawal data additionally

supported the problem of retention among first-generation students. They found that

46.8% of low-income, first-generation students withdrew from college without

completing a degree within 6 years, whereas 23.3% of the non-first-generation population

withdrew before completing a degree (p. 5). A national study by Pierson and Hanson

(2015) suggested that rural college students attending two- and four-year public and

private institutions were less likely to continue their enrollment beyond the first year,

compared to non-rural college students.

Inadequate Development of Self-Regulation Skills

During college, many students experienced a new level of independence. Due to

the level of independence, some students found themselves astonished. Many of the

students found themselves on their own for the first time in their lives (Sternberg, 2013).

When transitioning from high school to college, students did not realize that things would

be different. The attitudes of teachers and peers were different. When in high school,

many students thought it was bad being caught talking with the teacher or having the

teacher assist them with an assignment. However, when transitioning to college, students

retained the same mindset.

This mindset caused students to fail. Often many first-generation students were

placed on academic probation or put out of school due to failing grades (Cardoza, 2016).

Students who had trouble managing themselves independently were at risk for lack of

success in a variety of environments (Sternberg, 2013). Amabile of Harvard found that

students and others who had been pushed hard by parents, teachers, or other superiors

experienced problems when it came to self-motivation when immediate extrinsic rewards

(parental approval, reward money, an additional praise) were no longer accessible (as

cited in Sternberg, 2013). There were many students who did not achieve success due to problems with delayed gratification; students wanted smaller rewards instead of waiting for the more substantial reward, the diploma (Sternberg, 2013). Students who were able to delay gratification performed better when in college (Sternberg, 2013). Students were used to getting immediate rewards from parents and educators. However, immediate rewards did not necessarily mean that the student would be successful in the end. It should be the responsibility of parents and teachers to work with students to help them realize that the best rewards in life were not immediate (Sternberg, 2013).

There were different types of commitments to institutions. In the article titled "Identifying Precursors to Student Defection," (Johnson, n.d.), three were named: affective commitment, obligation commitment, and continuance commitment. Some students were emotionally attached and stayed at their university, others felt the need to remain at their university, and others had expectations from their parents. Students who struggled or neglected to make social bonds with the community and universities they attended were more likely to become disengaged. Autonomy can be challenging for students whose sociocultural background was different from that of many others in the university (Sternberg, 2013). Student retention was also linked to many 'soft' constructs, such as feeling connected, feeling integrated into the community, and feeling academically competent (Sydow & Sandel 1998). If students could take a course that interested them, they would be less likely to become bored. Light of Harvard University stated that students should be able to take at least one course because it was interesting to the student, regardless if the course was required or not (Sternberg, 2013).

Greater Risk

Typically, if a student GPA fell between a 2.0 and 3.0, they usually returned for the second year. Nine out of 10 students who finished their first year with a GPA of a 2.0 or higher returned for a second year (Tyson, 2014, para. 1). There was no doubt, there were some students who persisted through college and others who would fall between the cracks and eventually drop out (Tyson, 2014). At the end of the first year, a student's GPA could often determine if they would persist to graduation. Researchers contended the first-year GPA offered a compelling indication of a student's chances of graduation (Tyson, 2014).

One researcher divided students into three different groups. The first group were students who had a GPA closer to 2.0 and the second group had a GPA closer to 3.0. The third group of students were those students who had a GPA that ranged from 2.0 and 3.0 and made up nearly 50% of dropouts (Tyson, 2014, para. 10). The rationale for why the third group dropped out at a higher rate was unknown. Because all the categories of students looked so similar, the author titled the article, "The Murky Middle" (Tyson, 2014).

To better assist these students in the murky middle become more successful the author suggested that offering one-on-one tutoring could be the push that could keep a student on track (Tyson, 2014). Venit stated that sophomore interventions could play a role in reducing the murky middle (as cited in Tyson, 2014). Many of the students who fell into the murky middle were sophomores, only credits away from being juniors, and juniors. The typical "murky middle" dropout spent 4.5 to 5.7 semesters at college before dropping out (Tyson, 2014, para. 14).

The problem researchers found was that no matter how much information an institution had on a student, or the background of the student, it did not have a positive impact on student retention. A study conducted by Scott-Clayton and Rodriguez (2012) found that developmental coursework did not have a positive effect on student retention or achievement. The real problem was curriculum. Textbooks in the introductory courses were at reading levels for which the students were not academically prepared. There were numerous studies conducted showing that low-income and first-generation students were more likely not to be academically prepared, in many cases grade-levels behind (Riggs, 2014a). Therefore, the writing and mathematics skills that the student lacked would cause the student not to succeed (Tyson, 2014).

Obstacles of first-generation and non-first-generation students went beyond academic barriers. The barriers they faced could lead to withdrawal from a university. Some of the challenges included, but were not limited to, family conflicts, insufficient family resources, inability to adjust to first-generation cultural status, inadequate parental support, and lack of social and cultural capital (McCulloh, 2016)).

Conclusion

First-generation students faced a wide range of obstacles as they attempted to navigate college. Researchers conducted a variety of research to determine the best way to help these students be successful more often. The results have been mixed. Chapter Three outlines the methodology used by the Researcher to conduct this study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

In Chapter Three, the purpose, hypotheses, and research questions are explained. A complete delineation of the methodology is included. The three research sites are described, as are the methods of analysis for the different types of data.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to complete a mixed-methods comparative analysis of first-generation and continuing-generation students in the Midwest, to determine differences between students' college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection, college experiences, and deciding factors for attending college at either a private, public, or Historically Black College or University. The Primary Researcher also surveyed first-generation and continuing-generation college students to gather their perceptions of their college experiences. Hicks and McFrazier (2014) noted self-efficacy, cultural congruency, and competence were characteristics that led to persistence. The Primary Researcher used descriptive statistics to report results from the Likert scale survey. A sample of surveyed students participated in an interview and the Researcher coded for common themes aligned with each research question. The twin goals of this study were to raise awareness of first-generation students and for first-generation students to become aware of both factors and settings that accommodated success in degree completion.

Null Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no difference in the college satisfaction of first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public or Historically Black College or University in the Midwest (Survey questions 1, 12, & 13).

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in the retention factors of first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public or Historically Black College or University in the Midwest (Survey questions 6, 7, & 11).

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no difference in the college selection for first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public or Historically Black College or University in the Midwest (Survey questions 3, 8, 9).

Null Hypothesis 4: There is no difference in college experience of first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public or Historically Black College or University in the Midwest (Survey question 10).

Null Hypothesis 5: There is no difference in deciding factors of attending college of first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public or Historically Black College or University in the Midwest (Survey question 4, 5, & 14).

Research Questions

RQ1: How do first year, first-generation and non-first-generation university students perceive their experience in college specifically their culture congruity, competence, and self-efficacy? (Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 6, & 7)

RQ2: How do first year, first-generation and non-first-generation, college students select a university? (Interview Questions 8, & 9)

Data Gathering Instruments

The Primary Researcher received approval from the Institution Review Board from all three university sites: University 1, University 2, and University 3. Each college granted permission for their school to participate in the study (see Appendix A). The Researcher first implemented a student perception survey (see Appendix B). The

students at University 1 and University 2 signed consent forms before participating in the

survey and returned them to the Researcher. University 3 students received an email

inviting them to participate in the survey, and the consent for University 3 students was

completion of the survey. The students from University 3 consented through actively

participating in the survey, as stated by the survey directions. Both first-generation and

non-first-generation students completed the voluntary survey. The Researcher utilized a

random sample to determine which students to interview, from surveyed students who

volunteered. The students from University 1, University 2, and University 3 gave contact

information when volunteering to be in the selection sample for the interview. The

Primary Researcher accepted a minimum of 10 completed surveys from each of the three

universities. The first two data collections took place on the campus with the Primary

Researcher within a two-hour period. The third data collection was via email, and the

responses slowly trickled in.

Methodology

Students were informed about the research opportunity during the semester and an

introductory email was sent to each university Provost detailing the study. The Primary

Researcher requested the email addresses of both first-generation and non-first-

generation students from the Provost at each researched university. After receiving

approval to conduct the study and upon receipt of the participant list from University 3,

the Researcher sent an email to all students requesting their participation in the survey

(see Appendix E). At University 1 and University 2 the Primary Researcher set up a table

in the lobby and asked for students to participate in the study. At the end of each survey,

students were asked to participate in an interview. The students were only eligible for the

interview if they were classified as a sophomore, junior, or senior at the researched

colleges/universities. Any student interested in participating in the interview responded

by adding their email and contact number to the survey. Because there were more than

15 first-generation and 15 non-first-generation students from each university who

responded to participate in the interview portion, the Primary Researcher randomly chose

students to interview. The students participating in the interview and survey component

participated in a drawing to receive a $25 gift card. Someone other than the Primary

Researcher, who had no relationship with the selected winner, completed the drawing and

notified the student. All students who participated in this study were reminded that

participating in the survey or the interview was optional and would not harm them. Prior

to completion of the survey, the students were reminded that all answers would remain

strictly confidential and anonymous. Interviews took place via phone and were recorded

(see Appendix C). This study utilized primary data from student surveys and interviews

and university secondary student data. To display data, the Primary Researcher

organized survey data retrieved from Qualtrics and conducted interviews via telephone.

Student Perception Survey, Part 1, and Interview, Part 2

The Primary Researcher administered an 11-question survey. This survey

allowed the Primary Researcher to obtain the students' perceptions of their college

experiences. The data collection helped the Primary Researcher determine if there was a

difference in college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection, college experiences,

and deciding factors on attending college at a private, public, or Historically Black

College or University in the Midwest.

The methodology included the development of two testing models that allowed the Primary Researcher to provide a quantitative analysis of five hypothesis statements. The statistical methodology of this comparative analysis allowed the Primary Researcher to examine if there was a difference in college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection, college experiences, and deciding factors on attending college at a private, public, or Historically Black College or University in the Midwest.

The analysis of results within the framework of the hypotheses allowed the Researcher to determine if there was a difference between the two types of students and the three different types of universities. The methodology also permitted the Primary Researcher to report to the universities the differences found in the methodology. The Primary Researcher believed in an influential component of the research in helping first-generation students understand what factors contribute to college completion.

Population Determined

This study examined first-generation and non-first-generation college students and three different types of universities: HBCUs, private, and public. The Primary Researcher chose the participants to participate in the study because they met the selection criteria. The criteria for participation were the student must be a traditional college student, not attended the university for more than six years, and must be a full-time student. The goal of the research was to recruit students who were not aware of programs and factors that contributed to college graduation. In addition, the Researcher sought to check if there was a difference in overall college experience between first-generation and non-first-generation students, based on the type of university the student attended. The students participating in the study were all over the age of 18.

Qualitative Methodology

       The qualitative component of this study relied on interviews to collect data on student perception of their college experiences, specifically cultural congruity, competence, and self-efficacy. The interviews also allowed the Primary Researcher to gain a better understanding of how the first year, first-generation and non-first-generation, students selected a university. The Researcher used open coding and looked for common themes to emerge from the participant responses. These themes were then gathered and the interview material reexamined to look for additional instances of the theme in the responses.

Quantitative Methodology

       The Primary Researcher used a quantitative methodology as well. Descriptive data were analyzed to compare responses of the first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a public, private or Historically Black College or University in the Midwest. The Primary Researcher examined hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 using a t-test and/or ANOVA Test. The Primary Researcher applied the t-test to test for difference in means for hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. These tests were conducted to compare University 1 and University 2, University 2 and University 3, and University 1 and University 3.

       Variables. The independent variable was the University setting, which included a private, public, and Historically Black College or University. The dependent variable was the student perception at each of the universities. The Primary Researcher did not manipulate any of the variables. The results reflected the difference, or lack of

difference, between first-generation and non-first-generation students in the setting of a

private, public, and Historically Black College or University.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection and analysis procedures began by contacting the provost at each

university. At each of the three universities, the provost directed the Primary Researcher

to the appropriate research representative within the institution.

Table 3

Data Collection Time Frame

Data Collected	Date Collected	Provided by
Survey	2/9/2017 - 6/6/2017	Qualtrics/Researcher
Interviews	5/2/2017 - 9/18/2017	Participant

Descriptive Statistics

The Primary Researcher divided students into three sample population groups and

two sub-groups. The three sample population groups were private, public, and

Historically Black College or University. The subgroups were first-generation and non-

first-generation college students. Each group contained students considered as traditional

students. Each group of students entered four-year universities of their choice as a

freshman. If the students were recognized as a traditional student but were part-time or in

attendance for six years or more, they were not eligible to participate in the study.

Research Sites

The research was conducted on the site of three different universities. Each

university represented one of the tree types of institutions. Either a public, private or

Historically Black College or University. University 1 represented the HBCUs category.

The size and demographic breakdown of the student body as a whole of University 1 is

shown in Table 4. University 2 represented the private category. The size and

demographic breakdown of the student body as a whole of University 2 is included on

Table 5.

Table 4

University 1

Category	Number or Percentage
Size	10
Ethnicity	
White	0
Black or African American	9
American Indian or Alaska Native	0
Asian	0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Island	0
Other	1
Male	2
Female	8

Table 5

University 2

Category	Number or Percentage
Size	10
Ethnicity	
White	0
Black or African American	7
American Indian or Alaska Native	0
Asian	0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Island	0
Other	3
Male	8
Female	2

University 3 represented the public category. The size and demographic

breakdown of the student body as a whole of University 3 is displayed on Table 6.

Table 6

University 3

Category	Number or Percentage
Size	10
Ethnicity	
White	8
Black or African American	1
American Indian or Alaska Native	0
Asian	0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Island	0
Other	1
Male	3
Female	7

Participants

Table 7 provides a breakdown of the total number of participants from each of the

three Universities.

Table 7

Total Participants

Schools	%	Count
University 1	24.12%	48
University 2	15.58%	31
University 3	60.30%	120
Total	100.00%	199

Ethnicity. The ethnic breakdown of the participants is shown on Table 8. The

ethnic breakdown is for the total participant pool.

Table 8

Ethnicity of participants

Ethnicity	%	Count
White	62.31%	124
Black or African American	29.15%	58
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.01%	2
Asian	1.01%	2
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
Other	6.53%	13
Total	100.00%	199

Gender. The gender breakdown of the participants is in Table 9. The gender

breakdown is for the total participant pool.

Table 9

Gender of participants

Gender	%	Count
Female	42.71%	85
Male	57.29%	114
Total	100%	199

Classification. The participants in the study represented all four traditional

classifications of college students: Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors. The

breakdown of the four student classifications is displayed in Table 10.

Table 10

Classifications of participants

Classification	%	Count
Freshman	20.60%	41
Sophomore	23.62%	47
Junior	22.11%	44
Senior	33.67%	67
Total	100.00%	199

First-generation vs. Non-first-generation. The participants included both first-generation and non-first-generation students. The breakdown of the two types is below.

Table 11

First-generation students

First-Generation Student	%	Count
Yes	31.66%	63
No	68.34%	136
Total	100.00%	199

Age. College students represented a variety of age ranges. For the purposes of the study, only those age 18 or older were eligible. The age breakdown of participants is included in Table 12.

Table 12

Age of participants

Age	%	Count
18 or older	100%	199
Total	100%	199

Summary

The Primary Researcher used a mixed-methods methodology, with both a qualitative and quantitative approach, to determine if there was a significant difference in first-generation and non-first-generation students in the Midwest regarding college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection, college experiences, and deciding factors on attending college at a private, public, or Historically Black College or University. For the quantitative portion of the study, the independent variables were the instructional settings, private, public, or Historically Black Colleges or Universities. The dependent variable was how students perceived their college experiences while being either a first-generation or a non-first-generation college student. The qualitative method involved analyzing interviews of the first-generation and non-first-generation students in the environments of either a private, public, or Historically Black College or University. The qualitative method involved surveying students for their perception of the college experience.

Chapter Four: Results

Overview

The analysis described in Chapter Four aims to explore a possible relationship between first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a public, private, or a Historically Black College or University and through an examination of differences in perceptions of their college experiences. The quantitative analysis also examined college satisfaction, retention, college selection, and deciding factors of attending college. Research participants received and completed a student perception survey. The Researcher also used open coding to identify common themes from the participants.

Null Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no difference in the college satisfaction of first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public or Historically Black College or University in the Midwest (Survey questions 1, 12, & 13).

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in the retention factors of first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public or Historically Black College or University in the Midwest (Survey questions 6, 7, & 11).

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no difference in the college selection for first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public or Historically Black College or University in the Midwest (Survey questions 3, 8, 9).

Null Hypothesis 4: There is no difference in college experience of first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public or Historically Black College or University in the Midwest (Survey question 10).

Null Hypothesis 5: There is no difference in deciding factors of attending college

of first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public or

Historically Black College or University in the Midwest (Survey question 4, 5, & 14).

Research Questions

RQ1: How do first year, first-generation and non-first-generation university

students perceive their experience in college specifically their culture congruity,

competence, and self-efficacy? (Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 6, & 7)

RQ2: How do first year, first-generation and non-first-generation, college

students select a university? (Interview Questions 8 &9)

Table 13

Summary of Results of Hypotheses 1 - 5, Overall

	1st Gen		Non-1st-Gen				
	n	M (SD)	n	M(SD)	d.f.	t-score	p-Value
1 (College Satisfaction)	57	12.44 (2.85)	129	12.74 (2.51)	184	0.733	0.4642
2 (Retention Factors)	57	111.07(2.04)	128	11.43 (2.04)	56	0.783	0.4370
3 (College Selection)	54	10.89 (2.65)	127	11.72 (2.18)	179	2.187	0.0300
4 (College Experience)	54	3.93 (1.30)	129	2.84 (1.23)	181	-5.369	0.0000
5 (Deciding Factors)	56	11.11 (2.60)	127	10.92 (2.04)	55	-0.476	0.6362

Quantitative Data Analysis

In analyzing Hypothesis 1, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null

hypothesis; there was no difference in levels of college satisfaction between first-

generation students and non-first-generation students. In order to determine whether

there was a difference in levels of college satisfaction between first-generation students

and non-first-generation students at University 3, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-

test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that

there was no difference between the two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of

the first-generation students (M = 12.44, SD = 2.85) was not significantly different from

the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 12.74, SD = 2.51); $t(184) = 0.733$, $p =$

0.4642.

In analyzing Hypothesis 2 the Primary Researcher did not reject the null

hypothesis; there was no a difference in the retention factors of first-generation students

and non-first-generation students. In order to determine whether there was a difference in

the retention factors of first-generation students and non-first-generation students at

University 3, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for difference in independent

means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was no difference between the

two variances. The t-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M =

11.07, SD = 3.19) was not significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation

students (M = 11.43, SD = 2.04); $t(56) = 0.783$, $p = 0.4370$.

In analyzing Hypothesis 3 the Primary Researcher rejected the null hypothesis

that there would be no difference in college selection. In order to determine whether there

was a difference in college selection between first-generation students and non-first-

generation students at University 1, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for

difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was

a difference between the two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of the first-

generation students (M = 10.89, SD = 2.65) was significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 11.72, SD = 2.18); $t(179) = 2.187$, $p = 0.0300$. The mean of the first-generation category was significantly lower than mean of the non-first-generation category.

In analyzing Hypothesis 4 the Primary Researcher rejected the null hypothesis that there would be no difference in college experience. In order to determine whether there was a difference in college experience for first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 1, the Primary research conducted a t-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was a difference between the two variances. The t-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 3.93, SD = 1.30) was different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 2.84, SD = 1.23); $t(181) = -5.369$, $p = 0.0000$. The mean of first-generation category was significantly higher than mean of the non-first-generation category.

In analyzing Hypothesis 5 the Primary Researcher did not reject the null hypothesis; there was no difference in deciding factors of attending college between first-generation students and non-first-generation students. In order to determine whether there was a difference in deciding factors of attending college between first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 3, the Primary research conducted a t-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was a difference between the two variances. The t-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 11.11, SD = 2.60) was not significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 10.92, SD =2.04); $t(55) = -0.476$, $p = 0.6362$.

Comparison of Three Universities

The following section contains analysis for each of the five hypotheses.

In analyzing Hypothesis 1, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null

hypothesis that there was no difference in the in college satisfaction among first-

generation and non-first-generation university students who attended a private, public,

and a Historically Black Universities in the Midwest (Table 14). The persistence rate

among first- generation and non-first-generation students differed according to a p-value

of .8623 ($p <.05$).

Table 14

Comparison of Schools, Hypothesis 1

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	2.1419584	2	1.0710	0.148	0.8623	3.048
Within Groups	1264.143	175	7.22367			
Total	1266.2849	177				

Table15

Comparison of Schools for Hypothesis 2

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	14.617385	2	7.3087	1.169	0.3130	3.048
Within Groups	1087.5664	174	6.25038			
Total	1102.1838	176				

In analyzing Hypothesis 2, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null

hypothesis that there was no difference between the retention factors among first-

generation and non-first-generation university students who attended a public, private, or

Historically Black universities in the Midwest (Table 15). The retention rate among first-

generation and non-first-generation students had a p-value of .3130 ($p <.05$).

Table16

Comparison of Schools for Hypothesis 3

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	41.626789	2	20.8134	3.703	0.0267	3.049
Within Groups	955.45608	170	5.62033			
Total	997.08287	172				

In analyzing Hypothesis 3, the Primary Researcher rejected the null hypothesis

that there was no difference in college selection for first-generation and non-first-

generation university students who attended a public and private university in the

Midwest (Table 16). The college selection for the first-generation and non-first-

generation students differed, according to a *p*-value of .0267 (*p* >.05).

Table17

Comparison of Schools for Hypothesis 4

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	5.2428912	2	2.6214	1.395	0.2506	3.049
Within Groups	323.16148	172	1.87885			
Total	328.40437	174				

In analyzing Hypothesis 4, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null

hypothesis that there was no difference in college experience of the first-generation and

non-first-generation students who attended a private, public, and a Historically Black

Universities in the Midwest (Table 17). The difference in college experience among

first-generation and non-first-generation students had a *p*-value of .2506 (*p* <.05).

Table18

Comparison of Schools for Hypothesis 5

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	31.039156	2	15.5196	3.086	0.0482	3.049
Within Groups	864.87341	172	5.02833			
Total	895.91257	174				

In analyzing Hypothesis 5, the Primary Researcher rejected the null hypothesis that there was no difference in deciding factors of attending a college of the first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended private, public, and Historically Black Universities in the Midwest (Table 18). The difference in deciding factors of attending a college of the first-generation and non-first-generation students differed, according to a *p*-value of .0482 (*p* >.05).

Analysis of Hypotheses for University 1

Table 19 provides a summary of statistical outcomes for University 1, with regard to the five categories examined: college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection, and college experience.

Table19

Summary of Hypotheses 1 - 5 for University 1

	1st Gen		Non-1st-Gen				
	n	M (SD)	n	M(SD)	d.f.	t-Score	p-Value
1 (College Satisfaction)	25	12.16 (3.25)	22	12.82 (1.82)	21	0.870	0.394
2 (Retention Factors)	25	11.56 (3.08)	21	11.95 (1.75)	20	0.541	0.594
3 (College Selection)	22	11.14 (3.08)	22	11.59 (2.38)	42	0.548	0.587
4 (College Experience)	22	4.05 (1.13)	22	2.86 (1.49)	42	-2.962	0.005
5 (Deciding Factors)	24	12.04 (2.61)	22	11.23 (1.95)	44	-1.189	0.241

In analyzing Hypothesis 1, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null hypothesis that there was no difference in the college satisfaction of first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended public, private, or Historically Black Universities in the Midwest. To determine whether there was a difference in levels of college satisfaction between first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 1, the Primary Researcher conducted a t-test for difference in independent means.

A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was no difference between the two variances. The t-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 12.16, SD = 3.25) was not significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 12.82, SD = 1.82): $t(21) = 0.870$, $p = 0.394$.

In analyzing Hypothesis 2, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null hypothesis that there was no difference in the retention factors of first-generation students and non-first-generation students. To determine whether there was a difference in the retention factors of first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 1, the Primary Research conducted a t-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was no difference between the two variances. The t-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 11.56, SD = 3.08) was not significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 11.95, SD = 1.75): $t(20) = 0.541$, $p = 0.5943$.

In analyzing Hypothesis 3, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null hypothesis that there was no difference in the college selection for first-generation students and non-first-generation students. To determine whether there was a difference

in the college selection for first-generation students and non-first-generation students at

University 1, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for difference in independent

means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was no difference between the

two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M =

11.14, SD = 3.08) was not significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation

students (M = 11.59, SD = 2.38); $t(42) = 0.548$, $p = 0.5866$.

In analyzing Hypothesis 4, the Primary Researcher rejected the null hypothesis

that there would be no difference in the college experience. To determine whether there

was a difference in college experience for first-generation students and non-first-

generation students at University 1, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for

difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was

a difference between the two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of the first-

generation students (M = 4.05, SD = 1.13) was different from the mean of non-first-

generation students (M = 11.59, SD = 2.38); $t(42) = -2.962$, $p = 0.0050$. The mean of the

first-generation category was significantly lower than the mean of the non-first

generation category.

In analyzing Hypothesis 5, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null

hypothesis that there was no difference in deciding factors of attending college among

first-generation students. To determine whether there was a difference in deciding

factors of attending college among first-generation students and non-first-generation

students at University 1, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for difference in

independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was no difference

between the two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation

students (M = 12.04, SD = 2.61) was not significantly different from the mean of non-

first-generation students (M = 11.22, SD = 1.95): $t(44) = -1.189$, $p = 0.2407$.

Analysis of Hypotheses for University 2

Table 20 provides a summary of statistical outcomes for University 2, with regard

to the five categories examined: college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection,

and college experience.

Table 20

Summary of Hypotheses 1 Through 5, University 2

	1st Gen		Non-1st-Gen				
	n	M (SD)	n	M(SD)	d.f.	t-score	p-value
1 (College Satisfaction)	7	11.43 (3.55)	24	13.04 (1.63)	6	1.166	0.2728
2 (Retention Factors)	7	10.86(4.63)	24	10.88 (2.27)	6	0.010	0.9925
3 (College Selection)	7	10.43 (3.36)	22	10.45 (2.63)	27	0.021	0.9832
4 (College Experience)	27	3.86 (1.46)	24	2.92 (1.14)	29	-1.804	0.0815
5 (Deciding Factors)	7	9.57 (3.15)	23	10.74 (2.34)	28	1.066	0.2953

In analyzing Hypothesis 1, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null

hypothesis that there was no difference in the college satisfaction of first-generation and

non-first-generation students who attended a public, private, or Historically Black

Universities in the Midwest. To determine whether there was a difference in levels of

college satisfaction between first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 2, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was no difference between the two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 11.43, SD = 3.55) was not significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 13.04, SD = 1.63): $t(6) = 1.166$, $p = 0.2878$.

In analyzing Hypothesis 2, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null hypothesis that there was no difference in levels of college satisfaction between first-generation students and non-first-generation students. To determine whether there was a difference in levels of college satisfaction between first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 2, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was no difference between the two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 10.86, SD = 4.63) was not significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 10.88, SD = 2.27): $t(6) = 0.0.010$, $p = 0.9925$.

In analyzing Hypothesis 3, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null hypothesis that there was no difference in the college selection for first-generation students and non-first-generation students. To determine whether there was a difference in the college selection for first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 2, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was a difference between the two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M =

10.42, SD = 3.36) was not significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 10.45, SD = 2.63): $t(27) = 0.021$, $p = 0.9832$.

In analyzing Hypothesis 4, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null hypothesis that there would be no difference in the college experience. To determine whether there was a difference in college experience for first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 1, the Primary Researcher conducted a t-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was a difference between the two variances. The t-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 3.86, SD = 1.46) was not different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 2.92, SD = 1.14): $t(29) = -1.804$, $p = 0.0815$. There was moderate observable evidence that the mean of first-generation was higher than non-first-generation.

In analyzing Hypothesis 5, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null hypothesis that there was no difference in deciding factors of attending college among first-generation students and non-first-generation students. To determine whether there was a difference in deciding factors of attending college among first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 2, the Primary Researcher conducted a t-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was no difference between the two variances. The t-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 9.57, SD = 3.151) was not significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 10.74, SD = 2.34): $t(28) = 1.066$, $p = 0.2953$.

Analysis of Hypotheses for University 3

Table 21 provides a summary of statistical outcomes for University 2, with regard to the five categories examined: college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection, and college experience.

Table 12

Summary of Hypotheses 1 - 5, University 3

	1st Gen		Non-1st-Gen				
	n	M (SD)	n	M(SD)	d.f.	t-score	p-value
1 (College Satisfaction)	7	11.43 (3.55)	25	12.64 (2.87)	106	-0.583	0.5612
2 (Retention Factors)	7	10.86(4.63)	25	11.46 (2.02)	24	1.317	0.2002
3 (College Selection)	7	10.43 (3.36)	25	12.08 (1.88)	106	2.933	0.0041
4 (College Experience)	27	3.86 (1.46)	25	2.81 (1.43)	106	-3.614	0.0005
5 (Deciding Factors)	7	9.57 (3.15)	25	10.89 (1.99)	105	0.540	0.5902

In analyzing Hypothesis 1, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null hypothesis that there was no difference in levels of college satisfaction between first-generation students and non-first-generation students. To determine whether there was a difference in levels of college satisfaction between first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 3, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was

no difference between the two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 13, SD = 2.14) was not significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 12.64, SD = 2.87): $t(106) = -0.583$, $p = 0.5612$.

In analyzing Hypothesis 2, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null hypothesis that there was no difference in the retention factors of first-generation students and non-first-generation students. To determine whether there was a difference in the retention factors of first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 3, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was no difference between the two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 10.64, SD = 2.90) was not significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 11.46, SD = 2.02): $t(24) = 1.317$, $p = 0.2002$.

In analyzing Hypothesis 3, the Primary Researcher rejected the null hypothesis that there would be no difference in college selection. To determine whether there was a difference in college selection for first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 3, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was a difference between the two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 10.8, SD = 2.06) was different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 12.08, SD = 1.88): $t(106) = 2.933$, $p = 0.0041$. The mean for the non-first-generation category was significantly higher than the mean for the first-generation category.

In analyzing Hypothesis 4, the Primary Researcher rejected the null hypothesis that there would be no difference in the college experience. To determine whether there was a difference in college experience for first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 3, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was a difference between the two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 3.84, SD = 1.43) was different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 2.80, SD = 1.19): $t(29) = -3.614$, $p = 0.0005$. The mean of first-generation was significantly higher than mean of non-first-generation.

In analyzing Hypothesis 5, the Primary Researcher did not reject the null hypothesis that there was no difference in deciding factors of attending college among first-generation students and non-first-generation students. To determine whether there was a difference in deciding factors of attending college among first-generation students and non-first-generation students at University 3, the Primary Researcher conducted a *t*-test for difference in independent means. A preliminary test of variances revealed that there was not a difference between the two variances. The *t*-test revealed that the mean of the first-generation students (M = 10.64, SD = 2.14) was not significantly different from the mean of non-first-generation students (M = 10.89, SD = 1.99): $t(105) = 0.540$, $p = 0.5902$.

Synthesis of Quantitative Tests

Table 23 summarizes the comparison of the three universities through an analysis of variance (ANOVA). The Primary Researcher conducted ANOVA Test, and a *t*-test to test for a difference in variances. Only one difference was found from the tests.

Table 22

Summary of Hypotheses 1 - 5

		1st-Gen	Non-1st-Gen	Same	Different
		Null Hypothesis	Null Hypothesis		
1 (College Satisfaction)					
University 1	University 2	Not reject	Not reject	X	
University 2	University 3	Not reject	Not reject	X	
University 1	University 3	Not reject	Not reject	X	
2 (Retention Factors)					
University 1	University 2	Not reject	Not reject	X	
University 2	University 3	Not reject	Not reject	X	
University 1	University 3	Not reject	Not reject	X	
3 (College Selection Factors)					
University 1	University 2	Not reject	Not reject	X	
University 2	University 3	Not reject	Not reject	X	
University 1	University 3	Not reject	Not reject	X	
4 (College Experience)					
University 1	University 2	Reject	Reject		X
University 2	University 3	Reject	Reject		X
University 1	University 3	Reject	Reject		X
5 (Deciding Factors)					
University 1	University 2	Not reject	Not reject	X	
University 2	University 3	Not reject	Not reject	X	
University 1	University 3	Not reject	Not reject	X	

The difference was found with hypothesis 4. The null hypothesis stated that there would be no difference in the college experience. At University 1 there was a difference. First-generation students scored higher for college experience. At University 2, there was a moderate difference found. At University 3, there was a difference. Again, first-generation students scored higher. When comparing the universities, University 1 and University 3 were the same.

Emerging Themes-Coded Information

To analyze the interviews, the Primary Researcher employed descriptive coding in this mixed methods, comparative analysis. For the three Universities: University 1, University 2, and University 3, the data were gathered from interview responses. The interview consisted of 11 questions. The responses were recorded, transcribed, and coded for common themes.

The Primary Researcher interviewed 30 students. Ten students participated in the interview process from each school. Individual interviews resulted in a plethora of qualitative data. The Primary Researcher analyzed the data and coded each participant's responses looking for common themes.

Research question one. The first research question (RQ1) was 'How do the first year, first-generation and non-first-generation university students perceive their experience in college specifically their culture congruity, competence, and self-efficacy?' Interview questions one, two, three, six, and seven helped to simplify and provide a helpful understanding of students' perceptions of their college experiences. The data revealed five major themes 1) studying was not consistent, 2) connected with peers, 3) very successful, 4) average academic ability, and 5) university met their needs

RQ1 theme one: Studying was not consistent. The Primary Researcher concluded that both first-generation and non-first-generation college students did not study on a consistent basis. S7 (NFG) stated, 'My study habits are sporadic, a burst of energy here and there.' S11 (NFG) stated, 'They were rocky at first until I found my system to help me focus.' S23 (FG) stated, 'Poor study habits first year and the second year better due to school.' S25 (FG) stated, 'It started pretty rocky, but I found my own.'

RQ1 theme two: Connected with peers. The Primary Researcher concluded that non-first-generation college students felt that they connected with their peers. S10 (NFG) stated, 'From where I am from I would say top notch.' S16 (NFG) stated, 'Pretty successful, but I surround myself around successful people.' S18 (NFG) stated, 'I think I'm one of the smartest people in my classes, I'm on top!' S19 (NFG) stated, 'I think I'm very successful. I pride myself on grades.'

RQ1 theme three: Very successful. The Primary Researcher concluded that both first-generation and non-first-generation college students considered themselves to be very successful. S8 (NFG) stated, 'Well . . . I'm satisfied since I am still in college. It's a rocky road honestly, but I'm getting there.' S25 (FG) stated, 'We are at a different pace, but pretty successful I feel strongly about education.' S26 (NFG) stated, 'I have more advantages than my parents, but I am just as successful as my parents.'

RQ1 theme four: Average academic ability. The Primary Researcher concluded that both first-generation and non-first-generation college students considered themselves to be average in comparison to their peers. S2 (FG) stated, 'One of the highest. Higher than most people.' S3 (NFG) stated, 'I would say probably like average. There are a lot of nerdy students here, and they work harder than they need to.' S8 (NFG) stated,

'Sometimes I feel like I am intimidated. Sometimes I am behind others, but I'm also ahead of others I have learned that everyone learns at their own pace.'

RQ1 theme five: University meets their needs. The Primary Researcher concluded that non-first-generation college students felt that the universities that they attended met their academic needs. S1 (NFG) stated, 'Yes, I believe it does.' S28 (NFG) stated, 'Yes, it does. I do not believe people take advantage of the resources.'

Research question two. The second research question was 'How do first year, first-generation and non-first-generation, college students select a university?' TRIO Interview questions eight and nine helped to simplify and provide a helpful understanding into how students selected a university. The data revealed two major themes 1) price, sports, great programs and 2) parents, family, and a better life.

RQ2 theme one: Price, sports, and great programs. The Primary Researcher concluded that both first-generation and non-first-generation college students selected a university based on the price, sports teams, and the type of degree programs the universities offered. S2 (FG) stated, 'I chose this university because of the money. I was accepted to university 3 and SLU, and when I got my FAFSA package, it was cheaper to go here (university 3).' S10 (NFG) stated, 'Mainly sports; I got a scholarship for sports, I liked my teammates more than anything. I just wish my school was a little more diverse.' S21 (NFG) stated, 'Cost, proximity, and reputation was good for biology and political sciences.' S22 (FG) stated, '(University 3) is highly selected Liberal Arts Institution. It is an affordable state school and high ranking.' S25 (FG) stated, 'Local, inexpensive, and I received the same amount of support.'

RQ2 theme two: Parents, family, and a better life. The Primary Researcher concluded that both first-generation and non-first-generation college students selected a university based on the encouragement to attend a college by their parents, family members, or to better their lives. S3 (FG) stated, 'My parents wanted me to do better than them.' S7 (NFG) stated, 'My mom, she influenced me to go to college but she didn't influence my path.' S11 (NFG) stated 'The fact that I wanted to help provide for my family.' S13 (NFG) stated 'Personal choice, my parents made it important that I pursue higher education.' S21 (NFG) stated, 'It was expected. I was going regardless.' S27 (NFG) stated, 'Education was important to my family aunts, uncles, and cousins.'

Research Data Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of first-generation and non-first-generation students' college experiences explicitly relating to cultural congruity, competence, and self-efficacy, as well as see what factors contributed to how first-generation and non-first-generation students selected a college. The data gathered from the study participant interviews provided a plethora of specific factors that both first-generation and non-first-generation perceived to have affected their decisions of college choice, and how they perceived their college experiences based on their culture congruity, competence, and self-efficacy.

Themes that emerged from the interviews but were not identifiable within the Research Questions included: (a) What types of support have you had while attending college? (b) What types of support did you receive before attending college? (c) How comfortable are you with your decision in college choice? and (d) If presented the opportunity would you select a different university?

Table 13

Themes from interviews, aligned with research questions

Themes from Interview Questions	Two Interview Questions
Studying was not consistent	How do the first year, first-generation and non-first-university students perceive their experience in college specifically their culture congruity, competence, and self-efficacy?
Connected with peers	How do the first year, first-generation and non-first-university students perceive their experience in college specifically their culture congruity, competence, and self-efficacy?
Very successful	How do the first year, first-generation and non-first-university students perceive their experience in college specifically their culture congruity, competence, and self-efficacy?
Average Academic Ability	How do the first year, first-generation and non-first-university students perceive their experience in college specifically their culture congruity, competence, and self-efficacy?
University Met their Needs	How do the first year, first-generation and non-first-university students perceive their experience in college specifically their culture congruity, competence, and self-efficacy?
Price, Sports, Great Programs	How do the first year, first-generation and non-first-generation college students select a university?
Parents, Family, Better Life	How do the first year, first-generation and non-first-generation college students select a university?

Descriptive Data Results

University 1. University 1 had five first-generation students and five non-first-generation students who participated in the interview. There were eight female

participants and two male participants. Six students had between 30 and 60 credit hours.

Three students had more than 90 credit hours. One student had between 60 and 90 credit

hours. There were nine students who classified as Black and one who classified as other.

Table 14

Summary of results from Interview, University 1

University – 1			
Generation	First-gen	Non-first-gen	
	5	5	
Gender	Female	Male	
	8	2	
Credit hours	30- 60	60-90	90+
	6	1	3
Ethnicity	Black	White	other
	9	0	1

University 2. University 2 had three students who classified as first-generation.

Seven students classified as non-first-generation.

Table 15

Summary of results from Interview University 2

University – 2			
Generation	First-gen	Non-first-gen	
	3	7	
Gender	Female	Male	
	2	8	
Credit hours	30- 60	60-90	90+
	3	0	7
Ethnicity	Black	White	other
	7	0	2

There were two female students and eight male students who participated in the interview. Three students had between 30 and 60 credit hours and seven students had more than 90 credit hours. There were seven students who classified as Black and two who classified as other.

University 3. University 3 had three students who were first-generation students. Seven students classified as non-first-generation students. There were seven female students and three male students who participated in the interview. One student had between 30 and 60 credit hours. One student had between 60 and 90 credit hours. Eight students had more than 90 credit hours. One student classified as Black. Eight students classified as White. One student classified as other.

Table 16

Summary of results from Interview University 3

University – 3			
Generation	First-gen	Non-first-gen	
	3	7	
Gender	Female	Male	
	7	3	
Credit hours	30- 60	60-90	90+
	1	1	8
Ethnicity	Black	White	other
	1	8	1

Data Results Summary

Generation. University 1 students' results included an equal number of first-generation and non-first-generation, with five first-generation students and five non-first-generation students. University 2 students' results included three first-generation students and seven non-first-generation students. University 3 students' results included

three first-generation students and five non-first-generation students. University 2 and

University 3 mirrored one another in generational make-up.

Furthermore, the Primary Researcher found a slight difference in analyzing

Hypothesis 4, which was 'There is no difference in college experience of first-generation

and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public, or Historically Black

University in the Midwest.'

	University 1	University 2	University 3
■ Generation First Gen	5	3	7
▨ Generation Non-First Gen	5	7	3
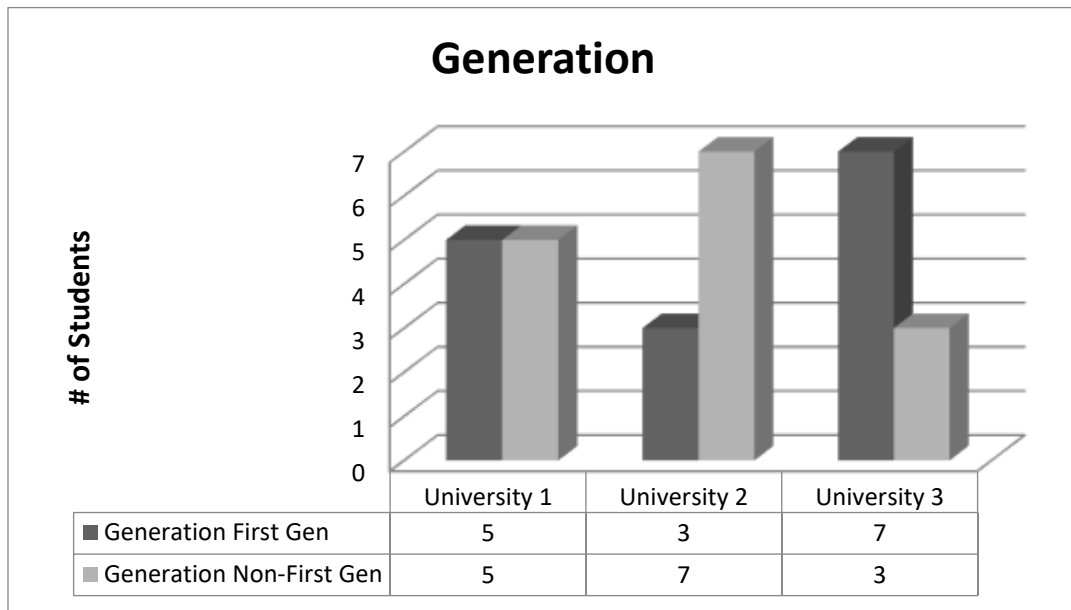
Figure 1: Summary of Generation all Universities

Gender. University 1 had eight female students and two male students.

University 2 had two female students and eight male students. University 3 had seven

female students and three male students. University 1 and University 2 mirrored one

another in gender make up.
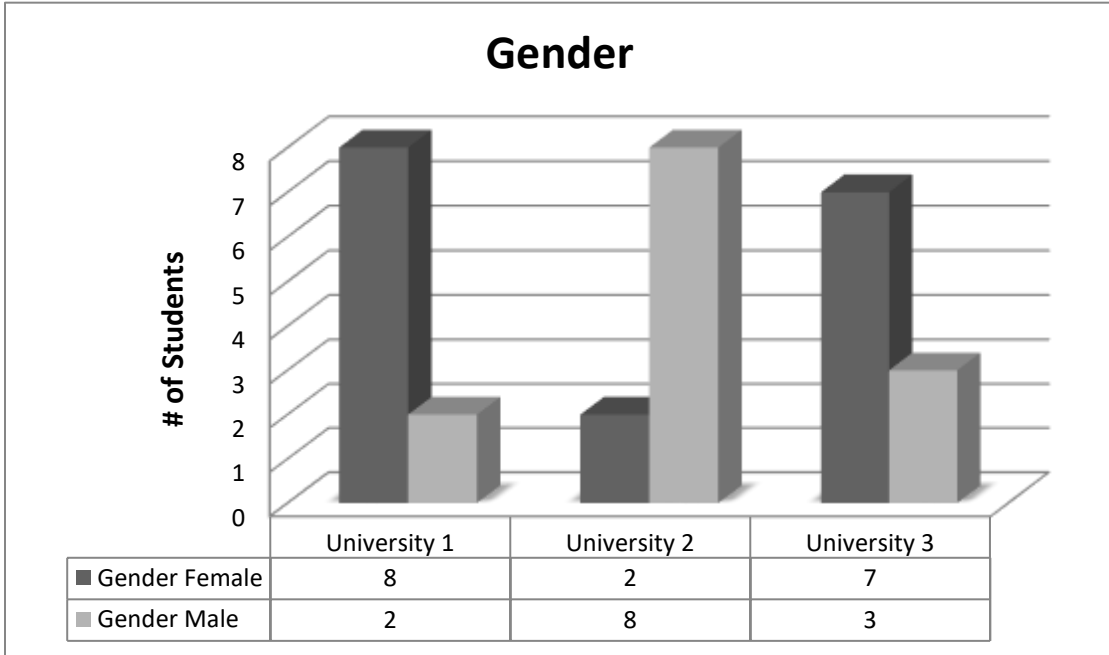
Figure 2: Summary of Gender all Universities

Ethnicity. University 1 students represented nine Black, zero White students, and one other student. University 2 students represented seven Black students, zero White students, and three other students. University 3 students represented one Black student, eight White students, and one other student. University 1 and University 2 were the most similar in ethnic makeup.

Figure 3: Summary of Ethnicity all Universities

Credit hours. University 1 students represented six students with 30 to 60 credit hours, one student with 61 to 90 credit hours, and three students with more than 91 credit hours. University 2 students represented three students with 30 to 60 credit hours, zero students with 61 to 90 credit hours, and seven students with more than 91 credit hours. University 3 students represented one student with 30 to 60 credit hours, one student with 61 to 90 credit hours, and eight students with more than 91 credit hours.

Credit Hours

	30-60	61-90	91+
▪ University 1	6	1	3
▪ University 2	3	0	7
▪ University 3	1	1	8
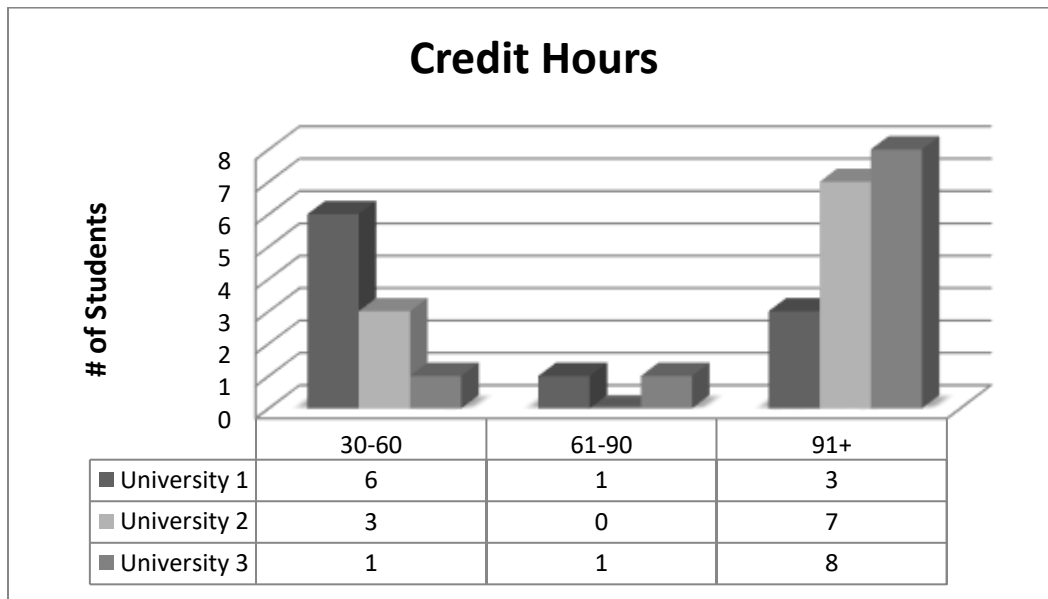
Figure 4: Summary of Credit Hours all Universities

- At University 1, the majority of the participants in the interview were female.

- At University 1, the classification of students were 50/50. This allowed for the Primary Researcher to obtain information from both perspectives evenly. The information was not skewed.

- At University 1, the majority of the participants were sophomores.

- At University 1, the majority of the participants classified themselves as Black.

- At University 2, the majority of the participants were classified as non-first-generation students.

- At University 2, the majority of the participants were male.

- At University 2, the majority of the participants had 91 or more credits.

- At University 2, the majority of the participants were Black.

Additional Data

Many students supplied additional information via the survey about their college experiences. As the Primary Researcher read the additional responses, there were a plethora of feelings and emotions expressed about their college experiences. Many felt they had good experiences, while others felt they did not have such a good experience. One student said:

> It was amazing. I'm going to miss college a lot. Being a 1st generation college student was difficult as I couldn't relate to my parents about my education. It wasn't that they weren't supportive, but they didn't know how to support me.

Another student stated:

> My experience at university 3 was incredible. University 3 offered me so many great opportunities, and I met wonderful people who have shaped who I've become. I came to university 3 wanting to find myself and through academics, student organizations, and the general culture I was able to decide who I wanted to be and then become that person.

Another student voiced concerns about the experience when he/she said:

> I often felt like I was 'cheating' and had a great deal of imposter syndrome- despite good grades, I was aware of my privilege and class and was humbled by those who had to work or were in worse financial situations while still doing well academically.

A positive experience at University 3 led one student to say:

> My time spent at university 3 has been challenging and has forced me to think
> about matters from different viewpoints, and although I was challenged, I found
> security in the knowledge that was being passed to me. The University has
> provided me with an undeniably meaningful experience. I feel as though my
> being here is invaluable, while at the same time I regularly question whether or
> not I have made the right decision, reflecting on my insurmountable debt.

One student also experienced struggles they felt others might not have shared. The
student stated that some of the challenges seemed unique as he/she said:

> I've noticed a big difference in stress levels between myself and those who do not
> have to worry about paying for college/rent/utilities/phone bills/medical bills/etc.
> My grades are disproportionately less than those of my peers, and I believe the
> sole reason is the amount of stress I both have and that I am under to succeed.
> Being Native American is not easy at a predominately white school. I feel the
> need to wash myself of my culture, so I'm not romanticized. I feel isolated and am
> constantly under a great deal of stress.

Financial hardship was the theme of one other student. A lack of knowledge may have
led to financial problems later. The student said:

> University 3 was the only school I applied to. I didn't know anything about
> scholarships besides A+ in high school and where to find them, so I didn't have
> any outside funding. If I had my knowledge of college now, I would go back and
> go through Meramec Community College in *S*TL and then transfer to university 3
> after the two years of the A+ program.

One respondent said that part of the dissatisfaction was with the administration. They said, 'I like University 2, but it has serious problems with the people in charge being disconnected with its students. Also, my degree needs a total revamping (computer science).'

Summary

The primary purpose of conducting this study was to determine if there was a difference in college experience based the students' classification of the first-generation or non-first-generation. This study secondarily addressed first-generation students becoming aware of their classification and making them aware of the various programs available at the different types of universities geared toward student persistence. The results from this study did not provide data showing that there was a difference among first-generation and non-first-generation students' college experiences.

In Chapter Five, the Primary Researcher highlights the research questions and the hypotheses that guided this study, and provides an overview of the methodology used to complete the study. Revisited are the study design, limitations, and data results. Recommendations for future studies and connections to the literature review, along with conclusions and the discussion of the results appear in Chapter Five. The Primary Researcher also presents personal reflections related to the study.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection

Introduction

This study examined if there was a difference between first-generation and non-first-generation college students in the Midwest in regards to their self-reported college satisfaction, retention factors, college selection, and college experiences. In addition, the students' deciding factors on attending college at a private, public, or Historically Black University were explored. Secondarily, this study examined if attending a private, public, or Historically Black University made a difference in students' overall college experiences.

Literature Review Connections

Differences between first-generation and non-first-generation. First-generation college students were less likely than their counterparts to enroll in a postsecondary institution. Furthermore, they were less likely to persist to college graduation once they entered college (Ward et al., 2012). According to the data collected from the three universities in this study, the enrollment rate for first-generation students for University 2 (private) matched what research suggested. Students who were the first to attend college in their family had different experiences than those with college graduate parents (2016). According to the data collected from all three universities first-generation students overall perceived their college experiences to be significantly higher when compared to non-first-generation students.

Being a first-generation student often came with lack of prior information regarding enrolling in college. Many just settled for the first, available option (Banks-Santilli, 2015).

Influences on Attending

Many factors contributed to whether a student decided to attend college. Some common examples of contributing factors were family income, educational expectations, academic preparation, parental involvement, and peer influences (Horn & Nunez, 2000).

Family expectations expressed tacitly or overtly, influenced a student's decision to attend college (Ward et al., 2012). Having a parent who attended college previously was very beneficial to non-first-generation students (Banks-Santilli, 2015). In most cases, the education level of the parent was the deciding factor in the student's choice to attend college (Horn & Nunez, 2000). Many students pursued bachelor degrees for many reasons. Some were looking for broad liberal arts education, while others were more career focused (Barrow et al., 2013). According to research conducted by Bui (2002), reasons for attending college included: friends were going to college, parents expected them to attend college, they were persuaded by a teacher or counselor, to make a better life for themselves and their children, not wanting to enter the work field immediately after high school, and the love of learning.

In the study conducted by Blackwell and Pinder (2014), students gave the following motivating factors that pushed them to want to pursue a higher education: the love of reading at an early age, the feeling of being different from other siblings, and wanting a better life for themselves. A few of the statements students gave when asked the question, 'How do the first year, first-generation and non-first-generation college students select a university?,' were

S3 (FG) stated, "My parents wanted me to do better than them." S7 (NFG)

stated, "My mom, she influenced me to go to college but she didn't influence my

path." S11 (NFG) stated, "The fact that I wanted to help provide for my family."

S13 (NFG) stated, "Personal choice, my parents made it important that I pursue

higher education." S21 (NFG) stated, "It was expected. I was going regardless."

S27 (NFG) stated, "Education was important to my family aunts, uncles, and

cousins." Where a student decided to go to college made a difference in if the

student would be successful or not. "Where and how one goes to college

influences the likelihood of college completion." (Tinto, 2006, p. 11)

The research conducted by Tinto (2006) supported that student's college choice

was important to college completion.

Preparing for College

Research touched on the implementations of various early start programs and how

they have helped with the retention of first-generation college students. New York was

spotlighted in an article titled, "These Groups are Hoping to Help First-Generation

College Students make it to Graduation" (Cook, 2015), which focused on schools in New

York and how the graduation gap could be addressed by creating a not-for-profit

organization for students who hoped to be the first in their families to attend college.

First-generation students had a harder time adjusting to college. Trouble adjusting to

college led to other factors such as lower grades, dropping out, and/or not being as

connected with the university. As a possible solution to first-generation students not

fairing as well as their peers, researchers suggested getting students involved in early start

programs. These early start programs were designed to get students acclimated to how

college would be. It also prepared them for the process of applying to college. Early

start programs were designed to remediate at risk academic and vocational

underachievement due to socioeconomic status, race, or gender. The programs served

students between 13 and 19-years-old (grades 9 through 12) (Barrow et al., 2013). When

first-generation students attended institutions, it was imperative for them to be engaged

and involved on campus. Participation in study groups, social groups, integrated campus

life, and attendance in outside lectures could have a positive impact on student

persistence (Garcia, 2015). One of the solutions for improving access to and success in

post–secondary education, specifically for (low-income) first-generation students would

be to ease the transition from high school and post-secondary for high-need students

(America's Promise Alliance, 2012). Here are a few students' testimonials about their

college experiences, from this study.

> One student said:

> It was amazing. I'm going to miss college a lot. Being a 1st generation college
> student was difficult as I couldn't relate to my parents about my education. It
> wasn't that they weren't supportive, but they didn't know how to support me.

Another student stated:

> My experience at university 3 was incredible. University 3 offered me so many
> great opportunities, and I met wonderful people who have shaped who I've
> become. I came to university 3 wanting to find myself and through academics,
> student organizations, and the general culture I was able to decide who I wanted
> to be and then become that person.

One student also experienced struggles they felt others might not have shared. The

student stated that some of the challenges seemed unique as they said:

> I've noticed a big difference in stress levels between myself and those who do not
> have to worry about paying for college/rent/utilities/phone bills/medical bills/etc.

> My grades are disproportionately less than those of my peers, and I believe the
> sole reason is the amount of stress I both have and that I am under to succeed.
> Being Native American is not easy at a predominately white school. I feel the
> need to wash myself of my culture, so I'm not romanticized. I feel isolated and
> am constantly under a great deal of stress.

Financial hardship was the theme of one other student. A lack of knowledge may have led to financial problems later. They said:

> University 3 was the only school I applied to. I didn't know anything about
> scholarships besides A+ in high school and where to find them, so I didn't have any
> outside funding. If I had my knowledge of college now, I would go back and go through
> Meramec Community College in STL and then transfer to university 3 after the two years
> of the A+ program.'

One respondent said that part of their dissatisfaction was with the administration. They said, "I like University 2, but it has serious problems with the people in charge being disconnected with its students. Also, my degree needs a total revamping (computer science).'

Review of Methodology

To determine students' college experiences, the first step was to determine if students who attended the three types of universities had different outcomes according to the survey. After establishing if there was a difference in college experience, the Primary Researcher compared data through descriptive statistics, followed by quantitative statistics, which tested the five hypotheses. To determine whether there was a difference in college experience, the Researcher used a *t*-test for difference in independent means,

F-test for difference of variances, ANOVA-test, Scheffe post hoc analysis test, and a Tukey post hoc analysis test.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is a difference in the college satisfaction of first-generation continuing-generation students who attended a private, public and a Historically Black College or University in the Midwest.

Hypothesis 2: There is a difference in the retention factors of first-generation and continuing-generation students who attended a private, public and a Historically Black College or University in the Midwest.

Hypothesis 3: There is a difference in the college selection for first-generation and continuing-generation students who attended a private, public and a Historically Black College or University in the Midwest.

Hypothesis 4: There is a difference in college experience of first-generation and continuing-generation students who attended a private, public and a Historically Black College or University in the Midwest.

Hypothesis 5: There is a difference in deciding factors of attending college of first-generation and continuing-generation students who attended a private, public and Historically Black College or University in the Midwest.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do first year, first-generation and continuing-generation university students perceive their experience in college specifically their culture congruity, competence, and self-efficacy?

RQ2: How do first year, first-generation and continuing-generation college students select a university?

Null Hypothesis 1. There is no difference in the college satisfaction of first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public, or Historically Black University in the Midwest.

When analyzing data of first-generation and non-first-generation college students at public, private, and Historically Black Universities within the Midwest there was no difference in students' levels of college satisfaction. However, the Primary Researcher did believe that if more research was completed with a more substantial population group, the study could yield different results. The Primary Researcher felt that students who were first-generation and attending a large private institution would perceive their college experiences to be more unfavorable than a non-first-generation college student, due to the larger universities not meeting the needs of first-generation students.

Null Hypothesis 2. There is no difference in the retention factors of first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public, or Historically Black University in the Midwest.

The Primary Researcher believed that with a larger population that the study would have yielded different results. The Primary Researcher considered that retention factors for first-generation students should be different from non-first-generation college students. The Primary Researcher felt that due to the barriers that first-generation students faced, it causes a lower percentage of retention. More importantly, the Primary Researcher believed that the type of university that a student attended was also a determining factor in the university's student retention.

Null Hypothesis 3. There is no difference in college selection for first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public, or Historically Black University in the Midwest.

The Primary Researcher was surprised to find that there was not a huge difference in college selection for both first and non-first-generation students. The Primary Researcher expected there to be a difference between the two types of students. The reason the Primary Researcher expected the difference was due to non-first-generation students having parents who obtained a degree would be more heavily influenced in college selection. When surveying the students from University 3, there was a difference in college selection. There were not as many first-generation students at this university. The Primary Researcher believed that was due to the college being perceived as a top Liberal Arts University and that previous graduates had a higher influence on their family members.

Null Hypothesis 4. There is no difference in college experience of first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public, or Historically Black University in the Midwest.

The Primary Researcher was excited to see that there was a difference in college experience between first-generation and non-first-generation students. At each university, there was a moderate or significant difference. The Researcher realized that at the Historically Black University the difference was significantly higher, as opposed to a moderate difference. The Primary Researcher believed that students perceived their college experiences to be better due to the small campus and their involvement in campus programs. At each of the three universities, all of the students felt that being the first-

generation or not being a first-generation student made a difference in their college

experiences

   Null Hypothesis 5. There is no difference in deciding factors of attending college

of the first-generation and non-first-generation students who attended a private, public, or

Historically Black University in the Midwest.

   When it came to first-generation and non-first-generation students deciding to

attend college, there was no difference. The Primary Researcher believed that according

to the data from Hypothesis 4 that the data collected for Hypothesis 5 should have

yielded different results. The questions in the survey that pertained to Hypothesis 5 were:

'My friends or family was a deciding factor in attending college. Cultural congruity's

impact on your decision to attend college? How would you rate your self-efficacy?'

These three questions were developed to gain a better understanding of students'

perceptions of themselves about their culture and family and friends. Based on the

Researcher's own experience a person's culture and family had proven to have a more

significant impact on the path a student decides to take.

Overall Results

   Overall, the results were baffling. The Primary Researcher expected to see a

difference in first-generation and non-first-generation students in respect to which type of

university they attended, based on the Primary Researcher's personal experience. The

Primary Researcher attended a large public university that was predominately White and

then later transferring to a smaller HBCU. The Primary Researcher's experience was

different at each of the universities. The Primary Researcher felt more connected to the

smaller HBCU. The Primary Researcher believed that due to resources that were

available and geared towards first-generation students, it helped her to become more

successful than she was at the large public university.

Tables 27 through 30 provide a recap of the Hypotheses 1 through 5. In

considering the five hypotheses, number four was supported in each category and overall

for the three universities combined.

Table 17

Summary of Hypotheses 1 - 5, University 1

University 1		
Hypothesis 1	no difference	not supported
Hypothesis 2	no difference	not supported
Hypothesis 3	no difference	not supported
Hypothesis 4	difference first-gen higher	supported
Hypothesis 5	no difference	not supported

Table 18

Summary of Hypotheses 1 - 5, University 2

University 2		
Hypothesis 1	no difference	not supported
Hypothesis 2	no difference	not supported
Hypothesis 3	no difference	not supported
Hypothesis 4	moderate difference	supported
Hypothesis 5	no difference	not supported

Table 19

Summary of Hypotheses 1 - 5, University 3

	University 3	
Hypothesis 1	no difference	not supported
Hypothesis 2	no difference	not supported
Hypothesis 3	no difference	not supported
Hypothesis 4	difference first-gen higher	supported
Hypothesis 5	no difference	not supported

Table 30

Summary of Hypotheses

	All Universities	
Hypothesis 1	no difference	not supported
Hypothesis 2	no difference	not supported
Hypothesis 3	no difference	not supported
Hypothesis 4	sig. Diff first-gen higher	supported
Hypothesis 5	no difference	not supported

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, the Primary Researcher would recommend completing more in-depth study. The study should be conducted at other Midwestern Universities and compare the variables of being public, private, or HBCU. In addition, for future research, the Primary Researcher would recommend that the future researcher use a larger population to see if it would make a difference in the results. In addition, when surveying

students it would be important to have students answer more questions in relation to their college experiences.

Furthermore, for future research, the Primary Researcher would recommend similar studies be conducted in various other regions throughout the United States and compare first-generation students and non-first-generation students. In addition, there could be a difference in the 'First-generation American, first-generation student.' This demographic group was not examined in the current study.

Conclusion

Overall, there was not a difference in college experience based on the type of university that the student attended. However, the Researcher noticed, on Hypothesis 4, at all of the universities there was a difference in either the moderate or significant range. When participants answered survey questions based on their college experiences at University 1, first-generation students seemed to have a significantly better experience than the non-first-generation students. At University 2, there was a moderate difference in students' college experiences. At University 3 there was a difference; first-generation students seemed to have a better experience. Of the five hypotheses, only hypothesis 4 indicated any difference in the college experience.

With the additional data provided, the results showed a variance in how some of the students viewed their college experiences. It also allowed the Primary Researcher to understand that although some of the students had an issue with the university that they attended, there was not a significant impact on the overall data collected.

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Appendix A

Permission to conduct study letter to Provost

June 25, 2016
Provost
Re: Permission to conduct Research Study

Dear Provost of Public University

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at your institution. I am currently enrolled in the Doctoral program for Lindenwood University in St. Louis, MO, and I am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is titled "A mixed method comparative analysis of first generation and non-first generation students in the Midwest."

I am requesting permission to recruit and obtain university email addresses for 50-100 first-generation and non-first-generation students. Each participant is defined as a first generation/non first generation student continuously enrolled for no more than six years; each student will participate in an anonymous survey (attached). Also, students will have an opportunity to participate in a follow up interview. The students who chose to participate in the interview and survey will be entered into a random drawing to receive a $25.00 gift card. The researcher is also requesting persistence data, defined as graduation rate and retention data for the years 2009-2015.

If approval is granted, student participants will complete the survey online at a time of their choosing. The follow up interview will take place via telephone and will be recorded. The survey will take 10- 15 minutes to complete. It will take approximately 30-45 minutes for students to participate in this study. The results from the survey will be confidential and coded so that all students remain anonymous.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at the time. You may contact me at my email address: jw188@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Alternatively, kindly submit a letter of permission on your institution's letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this survey/study at your institution.

Sincerely,

Juanika Q. Williams, Lindenwood University

Approved by:

_____
Print your name here

_____
Signature

_____
Date

June 25, 2016
Provost
Re: Permission to conduct Research Study

Dear Provost at HBCU
I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at your institution. I am currently enrolled in the Doctoral program for Lindenwood University in St. Louis, MO, and I am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is titled "A mixed method comparative analysis of first generation and non first generation students in the Midwest."
I am requesting permission to recruit and obtain university email addresses for 50-100 first-generation and non-first-generation students. Each participant is defined as a first generation/non first generation student continuously enrolled for no more than six years; each student will participate in an anonymous survey (attached). Also, students will have an opportunity to participate in a follow up interview. The students who chose to participate in the interview and survey will be entered into a random drawing to receive a $25.00 gift card. The researcher is also requesting persistence data, defined as graduation rate and retention data for the years 2009-2015.
If approval is granted, student participants will complete the survey online at a time of their choosing. The follow up interview will take place via telephone and will be recorded. The survey will take 10- 15 minutes to complete. It will take 30-45 minutes for each student to participate in this study. The results from the survey will be confidential and coded so that all students remain anonymous.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at the time. You may contact me at my email address:
jw188@lionmail.lindenwood.edu
If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form in the enclosed self addressed envelope. Alternatively, kindly submit a letter of permission on your institution's letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this survey/study at your institution.
Sincerely,

Juanika Q. Williams, Lindenwood University

Approved by:

_____
Print your name here

_____
Signature

_____
Date

June 25, 2016
Provost name at private university
 Provost

Re: Permission to conduct Research Study

Dear Provost at Private University
I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at your institution. I am currently enrolled in the Doctoral program at Lindenwood University in St. Louis, MO, and I am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is titled, "A mixed method comparative analysis of first generation and non first generation students in the Midwest."
I am requesting permission to recruit and obtain university email addresses for 50-100 first-generation and non-first-generation students. Each participant is defined as a first generation/non first generation student continuously enrolled for no more than six years; each student will participate in an anonymous survey (attached). Also, students will have an opportunity to participate in a follow up interview. The students who chose to participate in the interview and survey will be entered into a random drawing to receive a $25.00 gift card. The researcher is also requesting persistence data, defined as graduation rate and retention data for the years 2009-2015.
If approval is granted, student participants will complete the survey online at a time of their choosing. The follow up interview will take place via telephone and will be recorded. The survey will take 10- 15 minutes to complete. It will take 30-45 minutes for students to participate in this study. The results from the survey will be confidential and coded so that all students remain anonymous.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at the time. You may contact me at my email address: jw188@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form in the enclosed self addressed envelope. Alternatively, kindly submit a letter of permission on your institution's letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this survey/study at your institution.

Sincerely,

Juanika Q. Williams, Lindenwood University

Approved by:

_____
Print your name here

_____

Signature

_____

Date

Appendix B

Student Perception Survey

What is your gender?   ___ Female   ___ Male
What is your race / ethnicity?
—— Asian   ___ Hawaiian Pacific Islander   ___ Other Pacific Islander

___ American Indian / Alaska Native   ___ African American   ___ Caucasian / White

___ Hispanic   ___ Mixed Ethnic   ___ Other _____
Total number of credit hours: _____
Classification
____first-generation student   ____non-first-generation student
Please rate the following statements by check (√) your responses using the scale below:
The purpose of this survey is to measure student perceptions on contributing factors to student retention and persistence while seeking a degree from a higher education program. All responses are confidential and anonymous. We appreciate your honest and thoughtful response. Answer each question by providing the best suitable response.
Please check (√) the box or fill in the blank with the best answer for each statement:
What is your current classification? _____

	SA = Strongly Agree	A = Agree	N = Neutral	D = Disagree	SD = Strongly Disagree
1. My college experience is positive					
2. My college experience is negative					
3. My friends or family influenced my college selection.					
4. My friends or family was a deciding factor in attending college.					
5. Culture congruity's impact on your decision to attend college (**a measure of the degree of fit between ones' own culture and that of the institutional environment).**					
6. How would you rate your self-efficacy.					
7. My professors contributed to your retention in college.					
8. My parents contributed to my retention in college.					
9. Finances had a role in my university selection.					
10. My awareness of different colleges played a role in college selection.					
11. Being either a first generation or non-first generation student made a difference in my college experience.					
	SA = Strongly Agree	A = Agree	N = Neutral	D = Disagree	SD = Strongly Disagree

12. Persistence was important to my family.					
13. I am happy with the university I chose.					
14. I have a feeling of belonging at my university.					

Please share anything you wish about being a first-generation or non-first-generation college student.

Thank you for completing this survey! If you are a sophomore, junior, or senior and will like to participate in a follow up interview please send your contact number to jw188@lionmail.lindenwood.edu. For your participation in this study you will be entered into a drawing for the chance to win a $25 gift card

Appendix C

Interview Questions

What is your gender?   ___ Female   ___ Male

What is your race / ethnicity?

––– Asian   ___ Hawaiian Pacific Islander   ___ Other Pacific Islander

___ American Indian / Alaska Native   ___ African American   ___ Caucasian /

White

___ Hispanic   ___ Mixed Ethnic   ___ Other _____

How many credit hours do you currently have? _____

What is your classification?

____first-generation student   ____non-first-generation student

1. **Describe your study habits in college.**
2. **Describe your level of success in relation to your peers.**
3. **Describe your level of success in relation to your family.**
4. **What types of support have you had while attending college?**
5. **What types of support did you receive prior to attending college?**
6. **How would you rate your academic ability in comparison to your peers?**
7. **Do you believe that your university meets your academic needs?**
8. **Describe your reasons for selecting this university/college**
9. **What relationships, if any, influenced your decision making in going to college?**
10. **How comfortable are you with your decision in college choice?**
11. **If presented the opportunity would you select a different university?**

Appendix D

Consent Form for Interview

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
*Your participation in this survey will serve as your consent to participate
A Mixed-Method Comparative Analysis of First-generation and Non-first-generation Students in the Midwest.

Principal Investigator: Juanika Williams
Phone: 314-884-0367   E-mail: jw188@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Participant Email: _____

Participant Phone Number: _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Juanika Williams under the guidance of Dr. Lynda Leavitt. The purpose of this study is to complete a mixed method comparative analysis of first generation and non first generation students in the Midwest to seek a possible relationship between private and public universities and student persistence and retention of first-generation college students versus non-first-generation college students.

2. The amount of time involved in your participation will be 30-45 minutes for the interview. Approximately 10-15 people will be involved in this research. The interview will be recorded.

3. If you are classified as a sophomore, junior, or senior and you participate in the interview portion of the research you will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win a $25 gift card.

4. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

 5. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the

investigator in a safe location. In some studies with small samples sizes, there is risk of identification of participants.

6. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Juanika Williams at 314-884-0367or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Lynda Leavitt at 636-949-4756 You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records.

Appendix E

Introductory email to participate in the perception survey

Dear Student,

        You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Juanika Williams under the guidance of Dr. Lynda Leavitt of Lindenwood University. The purpose of this proposed study is to complete a mixed method comparative analysis of first generation and non first generation students in the Midwest to seek a possible relationship between private, public and HBCU universities, specifically student persistence and retention rate of first-generation college students and non-first-generation college students 2009-2015.

        Participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. All data obtained will be anonymous.

        If you wish to participate in this survey, please proceed to the electronic questionnaire by clicking on the provided link. If not, simply close or delete this e-mail. Your participation in this survey will be deemed your consent to participate in the e-mail survey.

        This survey should take 10-15 minutes to complete.

        This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at Lindenwood University. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB). Please contact Dr. Lynda Leavitt, Dissertation Chair and Lindenwood University Associate Professor at lleavitt@lindenwood.edu or (636-949-4756) or Dr. Marilyn Abbott, **Interim Provost at mabbott@lindenwood.edu or (636-949-4912) if you have any questions.**

Your participation is greatly appreciated in this research study. There are no direct benefits for participating in this survey. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about contributing factors to student retention and persistence rates at Universities in the Midwest.

Sincerely,

Juanika Williams
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
*Your participation in this survey will serve as your consent to participate
A Mixed-Method Comparative Analysis of First-generation and Non-first-generation Students in the Midwest.

Principal Investigator: Juanika Williams
        Phone: 314-884-0367   E-mail: jw188@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Participant Email: _____

Participant Phone Number: _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Juanika Williams under the guidance of Dr. Lynda Leavitt. The purpose of this study is to complete a mixed method comparative analysis of first generation and non first generation students in the Midwest to seek a possible relationship between private and public universities and student persistence and retention of first-generation college students versus non-first-generation college students.

2. The amount of time involved in your participation will be 30-45 minutes for the interview. Approximately 10-15 people will be involved in this research. The interview will be recorded.

3. If you are classified as a sophomore, junior, or senior and you participate in the interview portion of the research you will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win a $25 gift card.

4. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

5. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location. In some studies with small samples sizes, there is risk of identification of participants.

6. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Juanika Williams at 314-884-0367or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Lynda Leavitt at 636-949-4756 You may also ask questions of or state

concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records.

Appendix F

Introductory email to participate in the interview

Dear Student,

Thank you for participating in the interview component of this study conducted by Juanika Williams under the guidance of Dr. Lynda Leavitt of Lindenwood University. The purpose of this proposed study is to complete a mixed method comparative analysis of first generation and non first generation students in the Midwest to seek a possible relationship between private and public and HBCU universities, specifically student persistence and retention rate of first-generation college students and non-first-generation college students 2009-2015.

Participation is this interview is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. All data obtained will be anonymous and kept confidential.

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at Lindenwood University. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB). Please contact Dr. Lynda Leavitt, Dissertation Chair and Lindenwood University Associate Professor at lleavitt@lindenwood.edu or (636-949-4756) or Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Interim Provost at mabbott@lindenwood.edu or (636-949-4912) if you have any questions.

Your participation is greatly appreciated in this research study. For your participation in both the survey and the interview you will have the chance to be entered into a drawing to win a $25.00 gift card. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about contributing factors to student retention and persistence rates at Universities in the Midwest.

Please send a few dates/times that you would be available for me to contact you to complete the interview.

Sincerely,

Juanika Williams
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
*Your participation in this interview will serve as your consent to participate
A Mixed-Method Comparative Analysis of First-generation and Non-first-generation Students in the Midwest.

Principal Investigator: Juanika Williams
          Phone: 314-884-0367   E-mail: jw188@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Participant Email: _____

Participant Phone Number: _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Juanika Williams under the guidance of Dr. Lynda Leavitt. The purpose of this study is to complete a mixed method comparative analysis of first generation and non first generation students in the Midwest to seek a possible relationship between private and public universities and student persistence and retention of first-generation college students versus non-first-generation college students.

2. The amount of time involved in your participation will be 30-45 minutes for the interview. Approximately 10-15 people will be involved in this research. The interview will be recorded.

3. If you are classified as a sophomore, junior, or senior and you participate in the interview portion of the research you will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win a $25 gift card.

4. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

5. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location. In some studies with small samples sizes, there is risk of identification of participants.

6. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Juanika Williams at 314-884-0367or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Lynda Leavitt at 636-949-4756 You may also ask questions of or state

concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records.

Vitae

Juanika Q. Williams

EMPLOYMENT

Ninth through twelfth Grade Math Teacher (2016-Present)
Northview High School, Special School District St. Louis County

MSEIP Facilitator (2017-Present)
Harris-Stowe State University

Seventh and eighth Grade Teacher (2014-2016)
Jennings Junior High, Jennings School District

Sixth Grade Math Teacher (2012-2014)
Central Middle School, Riverview Gardens School District

EDUCATION, HONORS, AND CERTIFICATES
Masters of Arts, Administration of Education (2014)
Lindenwood University, St. Charles, MO
Bachelor of Science Middle School Mathematics (2012)
Harris-Stowe State University, St. Louis, MO
Kappa Delta Pi (2012)

CERTIFICATIONS
The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Certificate (2015)
Missouri: Mathematics, 5-9 (2012)
Missouri: Mild to Moderate Cross Categorical (2016)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS
Missouri Special School District National Education Association