

First-Generation College Student Preparedness

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Research Question

What is the relationship between gender and preparedness to attend college in first-generation college students?

Purpose

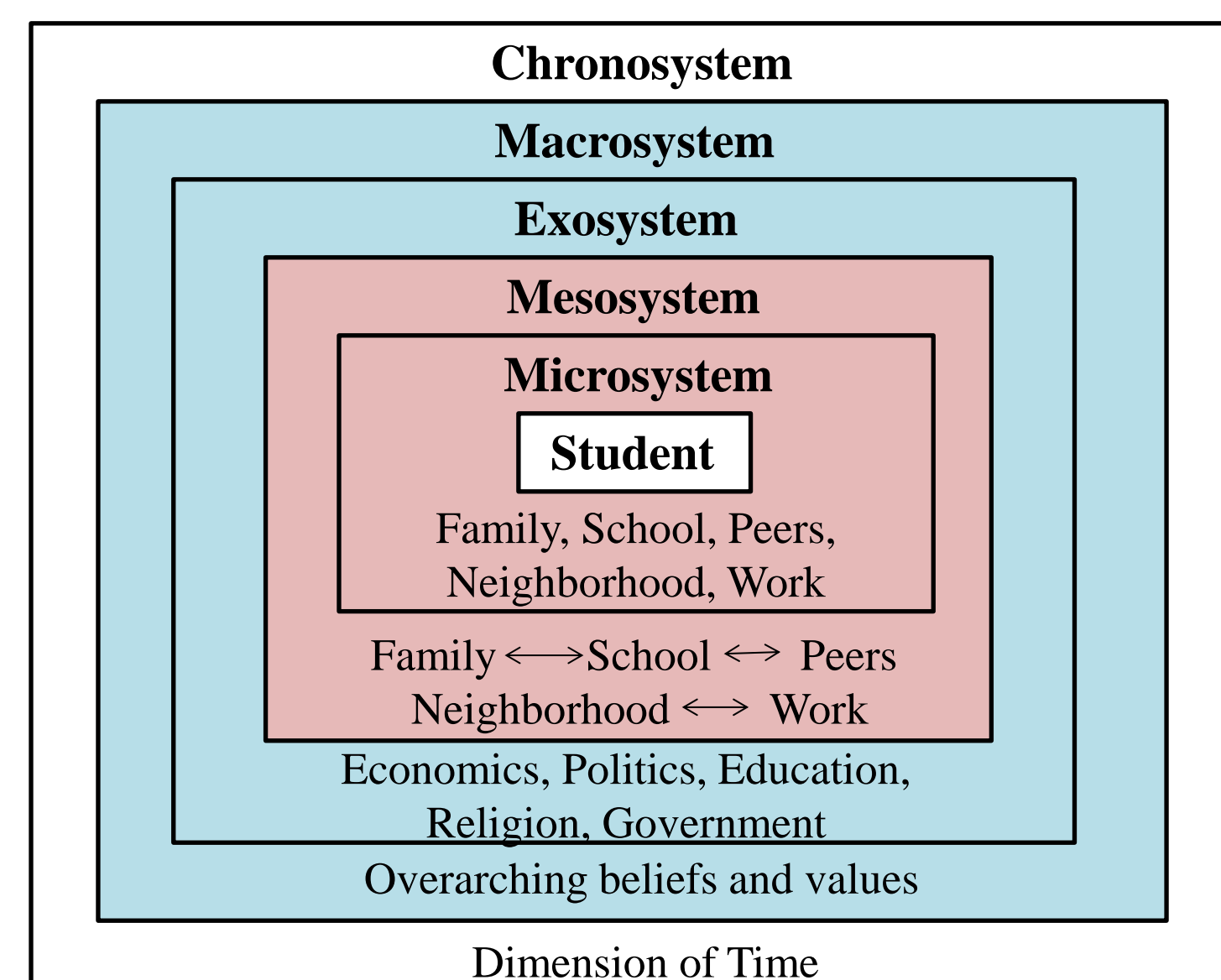
1. To examine the relationship between gender and first-generation students preparedness for college
2. To develop a reliable survey instrument which measures this relationship
3. To increase awareness within the collegiate setting of the impact gender has on first-generation students and how this plays a role in the programming that should be implemented to assist these students

Theoretical Framework

Individuals throughout family life interact with different environments influencing one's behavior over a lifespan (Demo, Aquilino, & Fine, 2005).

These environments are classified into five specific systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, chronosystem.

- It is predicted that for first-generation students there are many influencing factors on their preparedness for college.
- There are many interlocking layers that impact family living and with each of these layers there are factors that affect readiness to obtain a college degree.

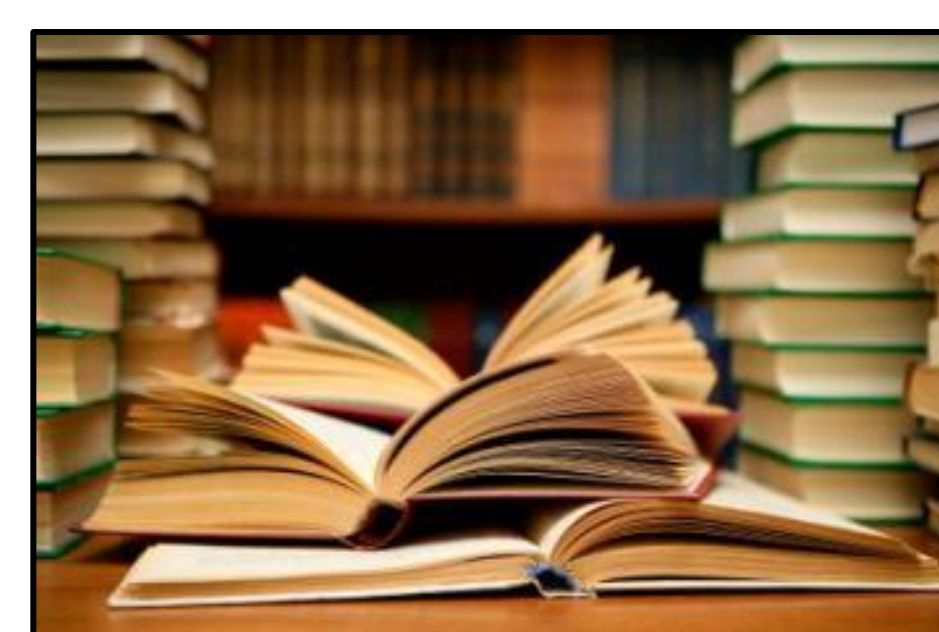


Literature Review

Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias (2012) discussed a mismatch between the norms of first-generation students and the universities they attend.

Mehta, Newbold, & O'Rourke (2011) found first-generation students had different stressors and were less satisfied with their college experience.

Collier & Morgan (2008) found first-generation students had a hard time grasping the course materials and their role.



Hypothesis

There will be a difference between male first-generation students and female first-generation students in their preparedness to attend college based on the ideas and assumptions of the Family Ecology Theory (Demo, Aquilino, & Fine, 2005)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>A. Males –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exosystem & Macrosystem • Getting involved • Creating new social circles • Feeling financially prepared • Cultural preparedness | <p>B. Females –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsystem & Mesosystem • Academic preparedness • Facing challenges • Coping with stress • Assistance from parents |
|---|---|

Cross Tabulations Table

| FNC | | | | | | |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| GEN | SD | D | U | A | SA | Total |
| Male: | 25.0% | 25.0% | 8.3% | 25.0% | 16.7% | 100.0% |
| Female: | 9.1% | 36.4% | 30.3% | 21.2% | 3.0% | 100.0% |

| ACD | | | | | | |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| GEN | SD | D | U | A | SA | Total |
| Male: | 16.7% | 16.7% | .0% | 41.7% | 25.0% | 100.0% |
| Female: | 9.1% | 21.2% | 15.2% | 42.4% | 12.1% | 100.0% |

| LVG | | | | | | |
|---------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| GEN | SD | D | U | A | SA | Total |
| Male: | 8.3% | .0% | 16.7% | 50.0% | 25.0% | 100.0% |
| Female: | 3.0% | 12.1% | 15.2% | 51.5% | 18.2% | 100.0% |

| PRT | | | | | | |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| GEN | SD | D | U | A | SA | Total |
| Male: | 33.3% | 25.0% | 8.3% | 8.3% | 25.0% | 100.0% |
| Female: | 21.2% | 24.2% | 15.2% | 33.3% | 6.1% | 100.0% |

Demographic Variables:
AGE - Age YER - Year in school

Independent Variable:
GEN - Gender

Dependent Variables:

- **ACD** – Academic Preparedness
- **LVG** – Living Preparedness
- **FNC** – Financial Preparedness
- **STR** – Stress Preparedness
- **PRT** – Parental Preparedness
- **CUL** – Cultural Preparedness
- **INV** – Involvement Preparedness
- **SOC** – Social Preparedness
- **CHG** – Challenge Preparedness
- **ROL** – Role Preparedness

Family Ecology Theory Fit:

- **Microsystem**
- **Mesosystem**
- **Exosystem**
- **Macrosystem**
- **Chronosystem**

“Information is hard to access. It would be nice to have information available so students don't have to learn the hard way.”
– male student

Methods

Participants:

- 12 male and 35 female first-generation college students from a university in western Wisconsin

Data Collection Instrument:

- IRB approved, informed by literature & theory, implied consent
- Online Qualtrics survey with three demographic questions, ten closed ended statements based on a 1-5 Likert Scale, and three open ended statements

Research Design:

- Non-random pilot study
- Cross Sectional
- Purposive/Snowball sampling

Procedure

- Online email dissemination of survey to male and female first-generation college students through those we knew & through a campus resource

Data Analysis:

- Cleaned & coded surveys
- Analyzed data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)
- Cross-tabulations & mean-comparison

Results

“Being first generation was a privilege that I took serious. I think for many first generation students there is a “win or go home” attitude.” – male student

“When I first started attending college I was not aware of available scholarships because nobody in my family had gone to college so I felt there was no one I could ask” – female student

“I have a very close group of friends at home and didn't feel like I wanted to make new ones”
– female student

1. Support for our hypothesis that there would be a difference between male first-generation and female first generation students in preparedness.
2. Support for our hypothesis that males would be more prepared with living on their own because of relationships brought through in exosystem and macrosystem.
3. Mixed Support for our hypothesis that females would be more prepared with relation to aspects of the microsystem and mesosystem. There is mixed support because the male mean was higher than the female mean in all areas except parental assistance.

Implications

This research has the ability to increase knowledge of the field of collegiate student success that can be used by educators, advisors, student service offices, and collegiate administrators.

This research would benefit from a large, random, national sample utilizing a 1-7 Likert Scale. In addition more specific questions related to preparedness to get in-depth information.

Conclusion

Lack of research in this topic area has allowed first-generation students to flounder. It is hoped that with continued research in understanding these students they will be able to succeed in the college setting.