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## First Generation College Students and Leadership

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# First Generation College Students and Leadership

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## Abstract

Every college student has a story to share. This study focuses on first-generation college students. This qualitative research study is about students who struggle to fit-in and who sometimes wonder if they should quit. I explore the life of first-generation college students who have been in difficult situations and overcome them. Although first generation college students accomplish great things and establish themselves in great leadership roles, many students still struggle to find ways to overcome barriers when they do not have the resources to help them. This research will provide an inside view to demonstrate that many students want to go to college and want to be an excellent example to their family and community, but do not have the resources to do so.

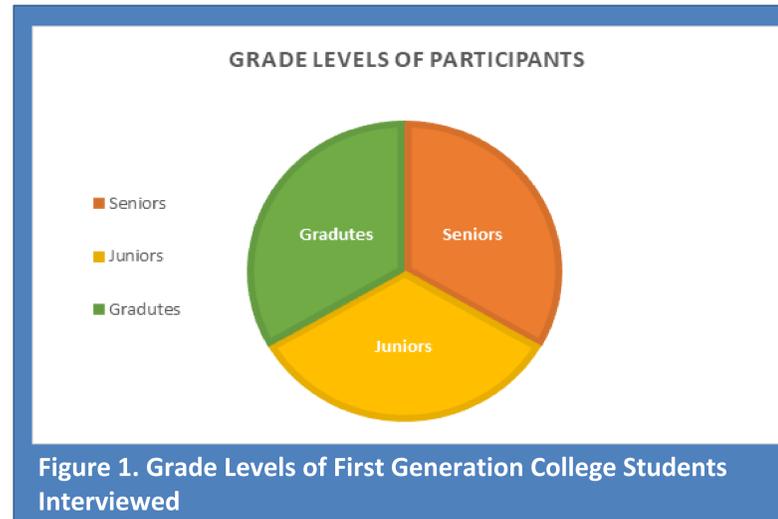
## Introduction

Being a first-generation college student means that you are the first person in your immediate family to attend college. The thought of being the first person in your family to do something different can often be daunting and scary. Many obstacles can obstruct your way. I know because I, myself, am a first-generation college student, and I have encountered many hardships and obstacles throughout my college experience. First-generation college students face many problems such as; low self-esteem, anxiety, doubt, lack of family support, and financial challenges as well as not being prepared to start college.

The focus of this project was to learn about the most prevalent issues first generation college students face. There are many reasons that I decided to research this topic, my main goal is to make people aware of all the struggles that first-generation college students experience. Through research and locating resources, I will help others learn how to overcome challenging barriers and obstacles that first-generation college students might face.

## References:

Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D. (2018) Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.). SAGE.



## Methods

- Phenomenological research /Qualitative study
- Confidentiality:
  - All data collected is kept on a password-protected drive and locked in a private and safe place accessible to and by me only
  - Participants will not be identified by name
  - Consent form was given to each participant - stating that they could withdraw from the study at any point, with no consequences
- Interviews:
  - Six participants of varying grade levels (see **Figure 1**) were asked ten predetermined questions about their college experience as a first generation college student
  - Participants were offered individual or group interviews

## Results

The study was able to identify the common themes and differences based on the participants experiences.

### Similarities:

- Parental influence/support of going to college.
- All participants were worried about finances and how they would pay for/afford college.
- Getting involved on campus led to meeting new people/friends which created a feeling of belonging that led to a good overall college experience

### Differences:

- Differences in preparedness for college
- Parental influences (from the start to the end of college)
- Some felt that it “wasn’t a big deal” to be a first-generation college student

## Discussion/Conclusions

This research provided an inside perspective which demonstrated that many first generation college students want to go to college and want to be an excellent example to their family and community.

Students interviewed had similar college experiences as first-generation students, even with varying backgrounds and attendance at different universities. Most of the participants major concern was financial situations. Participants expressed worries about how they were going to pay for college. Many were worried about being approved for loans and getting enough financial aid.

Participants stated that becoming involved on campus helped them adapt to college life. Joining groups, clubs, and attending different events hosted on campus allowed them to meet many new people and make friends. Creating close-knit friendships and being an active member of various clubs allowed a sense of belonging and made the transition into college a pleasant experience.

### Acknowledgments:

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