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Relationships between First Generation College Students and Faculty: A Case Study of a Small
Rural Private University

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Abstract

Relationships between first-generation college students and faculty: A case study of a small rural liberal arts university

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The purpose of this qualitative case study is to describe the relationships between first-generation college students and faculty through their own experiences at this rural private four-year institution. It is well documented that positive outcomes are linked with faculty-student interaction which include grade point average (Anaya and Cole 2001), persistence (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1977), self-reports of learning (Lundberg and Schreiner 2004), plans for graduate study (Hathaway et al. 2002), social integration/adjustment (Schwitzer et al. 1999) and many other valuable outcomes as cited in Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini and Reason (2010). The research questions focused on the development and reciprocal outcomes of faculty-student relationships specific to first-generation students. Ten first –generation college students and six faculty were interviewed along with informal observations and document analysis. Data from the participants were gathered through semi-structured interviews, field notes, documents and informal observations. This triangulation of data was used to find themes and findings for this study. The results of this study found that initiation by faculty was a crucial tone-setter in the beginning

phases of the developed relationship between faculty and students. Furthermore, shared lived experiences by both parties coupled with validation and increasing student self-efficacy by faculty contributed to minimizing the cultural capital deficit and the college intimidation factor. These findings could be used to improve institutional programs that focus on retention rates of first-generation college students, and contribute to the literature of relationships and interactions between faculty and first-generation college students.

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Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:10).

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Carolina and son, Alejandro,
who I love unconditionally and beyond words.

You fill my life with joy.

To my parents,

Your sacrifice, love and encouragement will never be forgotten.

I know you would have been proud.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognized that student-faculty interactions generally have positive influence on the cognitive growth and development of college students (Astin 1993; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak & Terenzini, 2004). For instance, Tinto (1987) found that student-faculty interactions, which include both formal classroom experiences and informal interactions outside of class, are crucial to the academic continuation and intellectual development of students (Woodside, Wong & Wiest, 1999). There is also an abundant amount of research that student-faculty interactions are a significant predictor of first year attrition (Pascarella and Terenzini (1977), students' learning outcomes (1980) or predicting GPA (Kim & Sax, 2009). Kuh and Hu (2001) explored whether study findings from the 1970's and 1980's of the impact of faculty – student relationships have persisted through the 1990's. In general, Kuh and Hu (2001) reported that despite significant changes over time in higher education, both the frequency and nature of interactions between faculty and students continue to make important contributions to student outcomes (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Furthermore, Jaasma and Koper (1999) reported that verbal immediacy and student motivation are also positively related to out-of-class interactions, both formal and informal. In addition, Nadler and Nadler (2000) found that instructor empathy and credibility are also positively related to out-of-class communication. This expansive body of research pertaining to student-faculty interaction is generally focused on the entire student body and not specific to the growing number of first-generation college students at our colleges and universities today. For instance, one in six freshmen at American 4-year institutions today are first generation students (Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007) and more than a quarter do not complete their first year of college. An additional 90% do not graduate within six

years (Greenwald, 2012). The number of FGCS enrolled in American colleges and universities has been reported over the past thirty years to be anywhere from 22 percent to 47 percent (Choy, 2001), depending on the definition used. The overall number is trending higher, at both two-year and four-year institutions (p. 10). Among students enrolled in two-year institutions, FGCS are significantly less likely to persist into a second year (Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012). Also what is widely known is that they tend to attain lower grades, take fewer credits, less likely to participate in extracurricular activities, less likely to develop close relationships with peers and faculty and have higher drop-out rates than non-first generation students (Stephens, et al. 2012). “In public four-year institutions only 34 percent of first-generation students earned a bachelor’s degree within six years compared to 66 percent of their peers” (Engle & Tinto, 2008, p. 2) as cited in (Jehangir, 2010). While not all first-generation students are the same, they share much of the same set of these characteristics. They often struggle academically, attain lower grades, lack self-confidence, work more while attending college than their non-first generation peers, have fewer financial resources and attend lower-quality schools (Stephens et al. 2012). First-generation college students, students whose parents have not earned a four-year degree, are not new to higher education, but their increasing presence at private, four-year institutions should require careful attention from administration and faculty.

Many colleges and universities provide an expansive set of resources to students in an effort to enhance student satisfaction and to stimulate learning and discovery. For example many colleges offer freshman seminar courses or bridge programs that help students transition into colleges. Others offer federal educational programs such as CAMP (College Assistance Migrant Program) or may attempt to introduce college readiness at an early stage in middle school or high school such as the U.S Department of Education’s Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness in

Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) for this same reason.

One area that is often overlooked is the role of faculty and student interactions specific to this growing segment of the student population. As stated earlier, it is widely recognized that relationships between faculty and students bring about a host of positive benefits. But interestingly, Pascarella et al. (2004) points out that “first generation students tended to derive significantly stronger positive benefits from these involvements than did other students” (p. 5). For FGCS, these relationships represent points of connectedness within the campus community, ideally leading to “self-confidence, loyalty, fitting in, and remaining enrolled” (Bean, 2005, p. 229). As with much of the other body of literature, Kuh (1995) found that informal student-faculty interactions impact aspects of students’ self-concept, such as self-worth and confidence, as well as academic skills. Interestingly these characteristics as Kuh noted align with much of the same deficit framing characteristics noted by many that specifically affect first-generation college students (Stephens et al. 2012).

As noted earlier, FGCS research is abundant and revolves mainly across three general categories. The first category examines degree attainment and job opportunities. (e.g., Choy 2000, Horn & Nunez, 2000, Warburton , Bugarin, & Nunez, 2001). The second category compares first generation college students and non-first generation students in terms of demographics, college choice and preparation (e.g. Warburton, Bugarin & Nunez, 2001, Horn & Nunez, 2000 & Berkner & Chavez, 1997). The third category examines transition from high school to college and the barriers associated with this transition (e.g. Lara, 1992; Rendon, 1992). Although this research is vitally important for understanding the holistic characteristics and challenges of FGCS, what is often understudied are the “underlying patterns” of student-faculty interactions. Terenzini et al. (1994) indicated that while existing quantitative studies have made it clear that the role of faculty

beyond the classroom is significant, it is less clear where and under what circumstances this role is most important. In other words, we want to know the underpinnings of the dynamics and progression of faculty-student relationships and how and when this gets initiated and sustained. Furthermore, what is even less studied is how this relationship/interaction with students affect faculty. Are there possible reciprocal benefits from these interactions? As the college population of FGCS continues to rise, it would behoove institutions of higher education to seek alternative opportunities to study the impacts of these relationships.

This qualitative case study is designed to address these shortcomings by focusing the lens squarely at the dynamics and nature of faculty-student relationships and how these relationships shape the college experience specific to First Generation College Students (FGCS) and faculty at a small, private 4-year liberal arts university in the state of Washington. An exception is a study by Cotten & Wilson (2006) which designed a qualitative study that explored underlying patterns of student-faculty relationships. The study consisted of a series of nine focus groups, with 49 undergraduate students, and one university. Their results suggested that students experienced performance-based motivation after personal contact with an instructor, and the resulting improvement in performance that follows from increased effort enhances self-worth (p.512). It was also important to note that negative interactions with faculty members also played an important role in the frequency with which students are willing to interact with faculty. Cotten & Wilson (2006) addressed in their limitations that further research should look not only from the student perspective, but also faculty to determine what factors affect the dynamics of these relationships. In addition, this study was done at a mid-size public university and another limitation suggested that research should extend the analysis to a variety of higher education settings. Although Cotten & Wilson's study provided an intimate look at faculty-student

relationships through a qualitative lens, my study aims to narrow this research and place the research lens specifically on first-generation students, a fast growing student population that is often overlooked. As Pascarella et al. (2004) points out in their own quantitative study of the interactions between faculty and first-generation students, “first generation students tend to derive significantly stronger positive benefits from faculty-student interactions than did other students” (p.5).

A Brief Note on the Definition of First Generation College Student

Numerous bodies of literature reveal some differences when it comes to defining first generation college students. Housel & Harvey (2009) define FGCS as having parents who do not have a bachelor’s degree or an associate degree and are enrolling at American colleges and universities (p. 13). Others say it is a student for whom neither parent attended college regardless if they graduated or not. Neither definition is right or wrong, although the way it is defined has ramifications across institutions. Defining first-generation as those for whom neither parent earned a baccalaureate degree would inflate the numbers, while defining first generation college students as those for whom neither parent attended college would deflate the number. According to Ward, Siegel and Davenport (2012), students whose parents did not attend are generally less prepared for the college experience than students whose parents attended college but did not necessarily receive a degree. Because this level of preparedness is a critical factor in the success of any student, I will define first-generation as those for whom neither parent attended college for this specific study.

Rationale for Study

This qualitative single case study is important and needed for several reasons. First, a gap exists in the first-generation college literature where the perspectives of the students and

faculty are not integrated to understand the implications of these relationships specific to first-generation college students. Although an expansive body of literature exists on the interactions between faculty and students, we have yet to understand how the progression works, the dynamics associated of these interactions, the reciprocal nature of these interactions between faculty and specifically first-generation students and examples of what it looks like in practice. The majority of the scholarship has also been mainly quantitative. Thus, the second goal of this study is to focus on qualitative findings in order to gain an in-depth understanding of how relationships between faculty and first-generation college students are initiated and experienced by both parties. Third, for many years, policy makers and administrators have looked at first generation student underperformance as a problem that includes mainly external factors and/or framed from a deficit perspective, such as being underprepared for college expectations, parental and family influences or lacking financial resources. Although these are all valid and vitally important factors to consider, it would be wise for institutions to look internally at models of practice that facilitate faculty-student interactions specific to the growing number of first-generation college students. Fourth, this study will add new knowledge to this neglected area, but it also provides information to educators, program officers, school administrators, and policy makers to better understand first-generation college students and the faculty who teach and interact with this growing student demographic on a daily basis. Finally, previous research has taken place primarily at larger or mid-size urban universities and colleges. This case study will provide a contrast from previous studies by examining these relationships conducted in a small, rural, private Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), where a large number of Latino and Native Americans students attend. Although I am cognizant that this is a very unique setting, it may provide valuable information for

those institutions in similar settings.

Statement of the Problem

Over 30-plus years of scholars contributing to the research on student-faculty interactions have documented clearly that positive outcomes occur when student and faculty form relationships. These can be in the form of personal, social, and intellectual outcomes, as well as student satisfaction (Endo and Harpel, 1982). Furthermore, Nadler & Nadler (2000) found that students who stayed in college reported significantly more contacts with faculty outside the classroom than did students who eventually dropped out. Tinto (1987) stated that student-faculty interactions, which include both formal classroom experiences and informal interactions outside of class, are crucial to the academic continuation and intellectual development of students. However, Pascarella et al. (2004) found that first-generation students as compared to non-first generation students often forego or delay involvement in campus activities or reach out in an effort to develop a relationship with professors and staff. Forgoing or delaying interaction means that first generation college students often miss out on the appreciable benefits that come from developing key relationships with faculty and staff. This creates something of a paradox: they are less likely than their non-first generation peers to develop relationships with faculty and other students outside of class, yet they are more likely than their peers to benefit from such interactions (Moschetti & Hudley, 2008; Pascarella, et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996) as cited in Ward, Siegel and Davenport, 2010. What is also less apparent in the abundance of research is how these engagements affect faculty.

A survey of faculty and students at nine colleges and universities found that the single biggest difference between influential faculty and their colleagues is the extent to which they interact with students outside the classroom...The evidence indicates that a college teacher's chances of being regarded as effective are significantly affected by the extent to which he

interacts with the students beyond the classroom (Kaplowitz, 1986). Given what we know about the research, it would suit educators, program officers, school administrators, and policy makers to look at ways to purposefully and mindfully encourage faculty interactions with first-generation college students.

In response to this problem, this study proposes to add to existing knowledge of faculty-student relationships through a case-study of a small 4-year private institution that is situated in a rural and highly diverse setting. In particular, this proposed research aspires to further elucidate the factors that affect whether and how first-generation college students and faculty interact, the dynamics and underpinnings of this contact and the implications of this contact, including the reciprocal benefits, if any, that faculty and students may encounter.

Research Questions

Through a single-bounded case study of a small 4-year private liberal arts university, my study will examine first-generation student and faculty relationships at this particular institution. My study will explore two questions central in understanding the dynamics and nature of first-generation college student and faculty relationships.

1. In what ways and under what conditions have students and faculty built relationships with each other? What do these relationships look like?
2. What faculty-student interactions, if any, result in reciprocal benefits? What are the benefits, as the participants see it?

Outline of Dissertation

This dissertation will be divided into five chapters and an appendix section. The first chapter will provide a brief introduction about first generation college students and faculty relationships, the rationale for the study, a brief definition of first-generation college students, the rationale for using qualitative case study research methods, statement of the

problem, and the research questions. Chapter two will present a comprehensive review of the literature that will include a theoretical context and literature that might account for the socialization processes of first-generation college students and their relationship with faculty. The third chapter will describe the research methods including how the case was selected, the forms of data collection, how data was analyzed, the validation strategies used to increase the validity and reliability of the study, theoretical and practical implications, data quality and limitations, and finally the role of the researcher. Chapter four presents and highlights the results of the case analysis. This chapter provides detail along with the themes that emerged from the case. The last chapter discusses the results of the study, the implications for theory development, practice, public policy, future research, the strengths and limitations of the study, a conclusion, and a section on lessons learned and models of practice, as well as the references used in all the chapters of this dissertation. The appendix section includes copies of the internal review board approval from the University of Washington, the informed consent forms, interview protocols and observational protocols, and any institutional documents that were used.

Role of the Researcher

As with much research, bias plays a role and this is no exception. I am a Mexican-American male and also a first generation college student which might impact the way I experience, interpret and analyze these narratives because I may share the same stories as these students. I am also employed at the proposed setting where the research is taking place. I have worked on the campus for more than 10 years and although I bring much experience working with diverse student populations, I need to be cognizant of my own personal interest and bias to the topic which I must moderate throughout the study.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The American higher education system has the highest college participation rates in the world and is challenged with educating the most diverse student population. According to Ward, Siegel & Davenport (2012), the single most significant challenge facing an increasingly globalized American college and university system is ensuring that the faculty and staff who shape and deliver learning opportunities, both in and out of class, are increasingly prepared to meet the needs of all student populations. Current research on first-generation college students is growing; however, existing research lacks depth, insight and knowledge involving the intricacies and process of the relationships between faculty and first-generation college students.

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section provides a general overview of literature pertaining to first-generation college students and interaction with faculty. This section will highlight (1) talking vs. silence, the dialectic struggle of being silent or talking with others, (2) cultural disjunction: a change in the life course of first-generation college students, (3) cultural capital: the values students gain from their parents that support and assist them through college as it relates to student-faculty interaction, and (4) factors that contribute to the success of first-generation college students. The second section of this chapter focuses on organizational and environmental factors, and how universities and colleges affect the socialization processes of first-generation college students during college. This section will highlight various institutional and environmental factors that address student-faculty relationships. I will focus on the (1) *DEEP* (Documenting Effective Educational Practice) Project mentioned in Kuh et al. (2010): institutions that have demonstrated strong institutional performance related to

factors addressing faculty-student interactions, (2) independence vs. interdependence: independent norms institutionalized in American universities and the relatively interdependent norms that first-generation students are socialized with, (3) social integration: strong affiliations within the college social environment, (4) relationship forming process across institutional types: since this case study is being conducted in a small, rural isolated region, it is important to address the relationship forming process that differs across institutional types, such as 4yr., 2 yr., or minority serving institutions (MSI's), and (5) institutional size and setting: how size and environment affect the socialization forming process between faculty and FGCS. The sixth section is my own critical analysis of this body of literature which includes qualitative analysis, self-efficacy, empathy and institutional uniqueness. I will conclude chapter 2 with a theoretical context and summary that might account for the socialization process of first-generation college students and their relationship with faculty.

First Generation College Students

First generation college students (FGCS) represent a “common thread” cutting across all student cohorts and institutional types, yet according to Ward, Siegel & Davenport (2012); “they remain largely hidden” (p. 3). Until these students announce themselves as first-generation students, self-identify on questionnaires and surveys for the purposes of institutional or national-level research, or become identified through participation in such campus programs as new student orientation, they may remain hidden (Ward, Siegel & Davenport (2012). According to Housel & Harvey (2009), first-generation college students must understand that their new surroundings will require much more from them than just getting good grade marks. No matter what distance they have physically traveled to their campus, college requires a cultural journey to a very different land than the one they knew as youngsters. A famous

example of the struggle first-generation college students' face that may hinder faculty-student interactions came from an article written by Stolberg for the New York Times in 2009 tracing the struggles of Sonia Sotomayor, Supreme Court Justice that was nominated by U.S. President Barack Obama. Stolberg (2009) stated that when Sotomayor began college classes in the fall of 1972, she described the feeling of being suddenly out of place among her classmates. She rarely raised her hand in class discussions and spent summers "inhaling children's classics, grammar books and literature that many of her Princeton peers had already conquered at Choate or Exeter" (Housel & Harvey 2009). Sotomayor's experience as a first-generation college student struggling to speak up in class discussions may resonate with many of the same challenges facing the increasing number of first-generation college students in American institutions. Furthermore, this fear of speaking may also hinder faculty-student interactions.

Talking Versus Silence

In a study conducted by Lowery-Hart & Pacheco (2011), that involved four focus groups of first generation students, they found that whether in an academic or social setting, FGCS struggled between being silent or talking with others, especially regarding their fears and uncertainty about the college experience. An excerpt taken from one student in this study epitomizes the dialectic difference between first generation and non-first generation college students:

"We had to give an introduction speech where we talked about what made me who I am. The first two girls get up and give their speeches and one talks about how her parents made her take violin and study music as a kid and how it became her passion. The next one show pictures of some country in Europe I'd never heard of and how the travel made her see the "possibilities" of life. I thought, "I can do this". I was gonna talk about how helping my dad fix cars at this shop taught me about hard work and taking care of my little brother and sister helped me grow up. In my house, if I said I was taking violin lessons I would have been laughed at....I didn't tell them what really made

me who I was. I talked about being in basketball and how it taught me teamwork. It was safe. I gotta B, and I was happy” (p.60).

In this study, students did not perceive their concerns about college success as “normal” fears for the non-first generation college student. When FGCS were asked to share personal information and concerns about college, they worried about others’ perceptions and faced the reality of talking or remaining silent. Consequently, they remained silent (p. 61). Lowery-Hart and Pacheco (2011) cited that although FGCS understood their need to talk, their fear in talking about themselves created a powerful dialectic struggle. They constantly struggled with what, when, and with whom they should communicate. Their fears about communicating were wrapped around larger fears of judgment from others. Because FGCS seemed to judge themselves as lacking important understanding of college, they assumed other people would have the same harsh judgments (p. 65). Hao, Harvey & Housel (2011), who studied critical compassionate pedagogy, cited that many FGCS are too afraid to ask for help because they think that teachers may perceive them as unprepared for college (p. 96). This fear of asking for help may also be directly related to why first-generation college students forego engagement activities on campus as noted by Pascarella et al. (2004). Housel & Harvey (2009), note a personal experience as a first generation college student that she later realized was normalcy in a college setting. She recounts,

“During one of my first days on campus, I was sitting at a table in the student union beside two professors and some students. They were all hotly contesting some point. The students appeared to me to be juniors or seniors, and they were just as likely to disagree with one or both professors as they were with each other. I do not recall what they were debating, but I expected to see them fist fighting any second...I later realized that if anything, these disputes make the contestants better friends. It is still hard for me to accept that sometimes students or faculty pick arguments just to test an idea.” (p. 67)

First-generation college students must master their social setting which is generally taken for granted with non-first generation college students. Along with adaptation to the campus

culture, establishing a new identity, coping with new time demands and balancing independence that is encouraged by institutions, FGCS must also communicate with professors and establish a rapport that will unknowingly benefit their academic outcomes. For example, a study was conducted by Brost and Payne, (2011) of first generation and non-first generation dismissed students for poor academic achievement. When the students were asked the question “What kind of support did you need to be academically successful?” All FGCS stated that relationships with faculty needed to be stronger. One student stated, “I would like to have a better relationship with faculty.” Another said, “Good relationships with professors and TA’s are important, you need to be comfortable talking with them.” It is important to note that non-first generation college students did not admit to the same responses. On the contrary, non-first generation college students stated that friends and parents help with “every problem I ever had with college”. This statement is important because it underlies the importance that for first generation students, faculty and staff often times may be the only people they have to seek assistance, positive encouragement and trust. When this relationship is absent as with the case for most FGCS as Pascarella notes, FGCS may find themselves with limited options for assistance and more importantly, someone to trust. As Harris and Nettles (1996) point out, the presence of someone who is trusted to offer corrective feedback, interpret and impart institutional norms, and provide emotional and social support can increase the probability of a successful academic experience. Lowery-Hart & Pacheco suggest that institutions offer instructional training for professors and graduate assistants about how to effectively develop relationships with FGCS (p. 66). Compounding the tension about whether to talk or remain silent is the fact that most first-generation college students are minority and they may fluctuate

between two different worlds. This cultural disjunction may further impede the student-faculty relationships process.

Cultural Disjunction

Rendón & Hope (1996) stated that the process of navigating college and building new relationships is difficult enough for non-minority students, and for minority students it is more challenging, but for first generation students it can even be more daunting – it requires them to “shift form one culture to another, it makes visits home harder to manage, and it adds another layer of complexity” (as cited in Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012, p. 56). According to Lowery-Hart & Pacheco (2011), negotiating their place in college forces FGCS to minimize their interaction with peers, professors and others. They seem to choose “out” because they don’t understand how to fit “in”. “Out” is a natural progression of the isolation many FGCS experience (Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011). Consequently, the relationship forming process between faculty and first-generation college students may be affected by what Terenzini et al. (1994) calls a disjunction in their life course. In contrast, London (1989) states that “college changes all students, whether first-generation or not” (p.10). However, London does point out that for many first-generation students, the very act of going to college indicates an interest in attaining a white-collar, middle-class position not previously attained by a family member and this may take the student into uncharted cultural territory. Kuh (2005) agrees with most of the literature pertaining to FGCS, and interestingly that these same students tend to put off certain activities that could lead to greater levels of engagement with faculty and peers. Carole Leste Law as cited in Dews & Law (1995) writes about the push-and-pull within her own family and her life at college:

“At home I could never get myself to talk about books or ideas that never intersected with the lives of my mother, brother, and cousins and extended family. To talk about my studies seemed ridiculous and stuck up at best in a context that seemed as mistrustful of academia as academia was condescending of it. No one in my family ever wrote a college paper, no

one ever tried to enroll in classes that were closed, no one put together a degree program, and more to the point, no one ever cared about such things. So you better believe I kept my mouth shut there too” (p. 23).

These challenges are usually the most difficult for institutions to identify because they typically result from unspoken cultural expectations and social mores (Housel & Harvey, 2009). The process of renegotiating relationships between family and friends, of “testing cultural ties and family codes of unity” (Jehangir, 2010) is agonizing for many FGCS, who come to college with hopes of making their communities proud and creating lives that are better and more secure than the ones their parents lived. Yet often the clash of their two worlds results in an existence that leaves them on the fringe of both the academy and their home world (p. 43). For some first-generation students, this cultural disjunction or transition is a sense of survivor guilt (Piorkowski, 1983 as cited in Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012), whereby they feel guilty about leaving their parents and friends behind, often in less comfortable surroundings and with less hope for the future. Balancing relationships, expectations and cultural transitions mean that first-generation students experience college life differently than their non-first generation peers (Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012). First-generation students often straddle the typically working-class home culture and the middle-and upper-class academic culture. Housel (2009) describes her own experience as a first generation college student and how managing two cultures were frustrating.

The stress of managing two cultures was especially frustrating during my college days, when I met classmates who took for granted an upbringing that often included family vacations abroad, museum and symphony visits, music camps, and familiarity with international cuisines.

These experiences from first generation college students conform to a quantitative study by Kuh (2005) that drew on a national survey database of 3,000 undergraduates from across the nation who completed the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ). They compared first and second generation college student’s engagement and intellectual development in college. Among

the many findings that compared first and second generation college students, what Kuh found “especially problematic” were first generation college students attending institutions where the predominant racial, ethnic, or religious cultures differed from their own where “they could encounter a unique set of adjustment challenges” (p. 290). These adjustments as Kuh stated or what we may call cultural disjunctions is relevant to the many characteristics facing first generation college students and may hinder the relationship forming process with faculty.

Cultural Capital

According to Ward, Seigel & Davenport (2012) cultural capital is the key factor in shaping the experience of first-generation students. Cultural capital was first described by Bourdieu (1973) with persons of different socioeconomic status. With respect to college students, cultural capital is the value a student gains from their parents that supports and assists them as they navigate the college experience and seek higher social status and greater social mobility (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995, as stated in Ward, Seigel & Davenport, 2012). London (1989), notes that the lack of cultural capital leaves first-generation students without an accurate sense of what they must do to be successful in and out of class and is often a precursor to lower academic achievement and failure to attain a degree. David Onestak, director of counseling and student development at James Madison University, compares first-generation students to athletes always playing an away game. He states “for a minor-league baseball player on a long road trip, the unfamiliar bed, lack of home cooking, unusual daily routines, absence of local supporters, and unfamiliar ballpark surroundings can be a source of stress and impediment to success on the field” (Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012).

Of the many variables that are linked to the lack of cultural capital such as applying to schools, locating financial resources, understanding college terminology, or locating campus

resources; establishing social connections and relationships with faculty and peers also appears to play a pivotal role. Ward, Siegel & Davenport (2012) state that there are many factors as mentioned above “that affect the level of connection students feel to their institution, and perhaps none are as important as the interactions students have with faculty” (p. 30). A study by Kathleen Cushman (2007) of 16 first-generation students from across the United States that talked about identity, class, and what helps them succeed confirm Ward, Siegel & Davenport’s claim. Cushman stated that her participants made it past the many barriers by forging social networks. These relationships included both social and academic elements. Cushman continues to say that because “parents of first-generation students can’t draw on their own college experiences for advice and reassurance, these students need guidance from other caring adults” (p. 47). Furthermore, Cushman says that when faculty members “reach out to first-generation students, they can provide not just academic coaching, but also a crucial life lift in confidence” (p.47). Tinto (1999) suggests that college programs that link students and faculty in some way beyond impersonal classes make it more likely that first-year students will persist.

Factors that Contribute to the Success of First-Generation College Students

As much of the prior research demonstrates, much of the focus is on retention and drop-out factors for first-generation college students. In addition, much of the background on first-generation college students seems to be framed from a deficit perspective (i.e. lack of resources, parental influence, lower grades, etc.). In contrast, a phenomenological study conducted by Hand & Payne (2008) described the success rather than the failures of 16 first-generation students from a major rural Appalachian university that sheds light on the factors that were central to their success at this largely rural, poverty stricken, low college rate of attendance, region of the U.S. According to this study which utilized interviews, focus groups and member checks, the emerging

findings for first-generation student success at this particular university were home culture and family, financial concerns, significance of locus of control, relationships and emotional support, and communication of information. Hand & Payne (2008) suggested that it is crucial to note that each of these factors interact with one another often in casual relationships (p. 8). As described in their research findings, of the 16 students that participated, two eventually dropped out of college due to a “lack of money” (p. 14). These were the same two students that had the most deficits in other areas. In particular, Hand & Payne mentioned the lack of significant encouraging relationships as playing a key factor. Both exhibited high internal motivation, but the lack of other resources was too overpowering and they were not able to persist. According to the study, money alone is not the determining factor. The crucial issue is if the other resources will “tip the balance” enough to enable the person to succeed (p.14). What is common in Hand & Payne’s study and is abundant in the majority of research on first-generation college students is what Hand and Payne (2008) find as managing financial concerns, communicating information, and family life. According to much of the literature and what is widely accepted is that these factors play a critical role in either the success or failure of students (Choy, 2001; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004, Jehangir, 2010, Engle & Tinto, 2008, Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012, Woodside, Wong & Wiest, 1999, Bean, 2005). What is less examined is what Hand & Miller-Payne (2009) described as significance of “locus of control” and relationships and emotional support. Here, Hand & Miller-Payne describe internal locus of control as a student accepting responsibility for their own actions, realizing that their academic achievement is under their control (p. 10). Bean and Eaton (2001) assert that “where locus of control is internal, we expect students’ motivation to study and to socialize to be high” (p.8). When Hand & Miller-Payne (2009) asked the first-generation student participants, many now in master’s programs or others

wanting to pursue Ph.D.'s, what it takes to be successful in college, invariably they gave responses such as "determination", "focus", "motivation", and "knowing your goal".

Interestingly, the respondents never cited external factors like luck, good teachers, or enough money as their motivation. As one student summed up, "You have to do it for yourself". Hand & Miller-Payne (2009) also cited that many of the student participants had friends that dropped out due to lack of money or a difficult family life, but they all agreed that ultimately the responsibility was their own. The student's ability to regulate their own learning and master the art of setting goals, creating strategies to reach the goals, and monitoring their own progress was instrumental in their success at college. With each of these students, it was also evident that relationships and emotional support played a major role in their persistence in college. Tinto (2012) claimed that students were less likely to drop out when they were integrated academically (academic and intellectual needs met), and socially (meaningful relationships with faculty and other students established). Because the students interviewed in Hand & Miller-Payne's study were members of Student Support Services (SSS), they all belonged to a group. They found that several of the students relied on SSS network of relationships to provide the emotional support they needed. Three of the students in particular made extra effort to "get to know" the professors so that they would not be viewed as "just a number". Another student recommended, "If you can pick out one of the professors that you would think you'd enjoy getting to know, I would suggest you do it". The point is that most of these students in this study had a support system or relationships, but was primarily informal. Most of the students relied on informal interactions on and off campus for their emotional support. This interaction was with family members, a mentor, and a counselor, faculty outside the classroom, old friends from high school, classmates, dorm mates, church friends or work associates (p.10). This study shed light about how first-generation college

students maintain internal locus of control or what we might call “taking responsibility for your own action” or “student focus”. However, what is less obvious is how this effort, focus, controls and responsibility is induced considering all the deficits attributed to this population. According to findings from the study conducted by Cotten & Wilson (2006), students’ responses about motivation to succeed in college were intricately tied to the establishment of relationships with faculty. Consider the following statements from students interviewed in their study:

“Establishing a relationship with a faculty member can be costly – it puts a certain amount of responsibility on you. Once you’ve established a relationship, you can’t slack off; you’ve got to maintain performance” (p. 500). “When you have a personal relationship, or personal interaction, it makes you want to give 100% and do your best – you don’t want to let this person down” (p. 500).

These students interviewed did not, for example, suggest that discussions with faculty outside of the classroom led them to be forward thinking about future careers that could depend on their performance in college; nor did they suggest that discussion with faculty outside the classroom stimulated their intellectual interest in learning or discovery. Rather, the students in Cotten & Wilson’s study indicated that they were motivated to increase the effort they applied to their work in order to please, or avoid disappointing, a faculty member. As one student in their study explains:

“One of the reasons I don’t really approach my professors is because if I do, they get to know my face. Then, when they see me in class, they know me as the guy who always sleeps through lecture and they may be less inclined to help me in the future”. (p.501)

It was also notable that students in this study described these efforts as “costly”. According to Cotten & Wilson (2006), this fact may explain why students avoid actions that might increase their self-imposed work effort, or they may prefer to avoid the risk of not living up to someone’s perceived expectations.

Organizational and Environmental Factors

The environment can have many different forms and meanings. It can be familial, cultural, and social circumstances of a person's life before college (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). In college, the environment can be the type of institution in which a student is enrolled, lives, interacts, and learns. These institutions also can be quite different. The bidirectional relationship that exists between students and their institutions becomes complex when student characteristics are found to be incongruent with the mores and values of the institution. Consequently, students whose characteristics are different from campus norms may be more likely to experience more difficulties than those whose characteristics are a better match with the institutional values (Harris and Nettles, 1996). While non-first generation students expect that such institutional structures, mores and values exist for socializing and partaking in the spirit of college, FGCS may question the absence of these structures for themselves. For example, according to Kuh and Whitt (1988), colleges and universities commonly create work settings consistent with bureaucratic models of organizing by placing faculty and staff in relatively insulated roles marked by position titles and affiliations with specific structural units such as the School of Business, the College or Arts and Sciences, or the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics (p 36). Structuring an institution of higher learning into these working environments influences who is likely to interact with whom. Kuh and Whitt argue that these hierarchical arrangements shape differential interactions among faculty and students. Over time, those new to the system begin to integrate their own needs and goals with the institution's needs and goals in a manner compatible with norms, values, and roles they perceive to be appropriate and desirable (p. 38). John Hope Franklin is quoted in an interview for the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (Bliwise, 1993-94, p. 70 as cited in

Harris & Nettles, 1996) on campus integration as saying: “You drive on any major university campus today, and you will see fraternity row. It’s lily white; oh, maybe the odd black, its lily white. Imagine a black walking down fraternity row anywhere and confronting that all-white, arrogant, exclusive institution- it must be one awful experience.” This experience is just one of many examples where student characteristics may be different from the institutional environment.

DEEP Project

The Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project which Kuh et al. based their book titled “Student Success in College” (2010) document noteworthy performances in postsecondary settings in 20 institutions that meet the challenges of the 21st century. In contrast to the common bureaucratic institutional models that are common as asserted by Kuh and Witt earlier, these institutions have created organizational and environmental factors that have promoted environments and organizational models that have promoted educational enrichment. The selection of these institutions came from four year colleges and universities that participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) between 2000 and 2002. From this pool of more than 700 institutions, 20 institutions were flagged that had both higher-than-predicted student engagement results and higher-than-predicted six-year graduation rates. That is to say, these schools had arguably “added value” to the student experience in that their engagement scores were better than expected on the five NSEE clusters of effective educational practices which included level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student interactions with faculty members, enriching educational experiences, and a supportive campus environment (p. 11-13). The 20 institutions selected were, Alverno College, California State University at Monterey Bay (CSUMB), Evergreen State College, Fayetteville State University, Gonzaga University, Longwood

University, Macalester College, Miami University, Sewanee, University of the South, Sweet Briar College, University of Kansas, University of Maine at Farmington, University of Michigan, University of Texas at El Paso, Ursinus College, Wabash College, Wheaton College, Winston-Salem State University, Wofford College. According to Kuh et al. (2010), what these institutions do to foster student success is of particular interest, as those are practices over which a college or university has some direct influence. That is, if faculty and administration use principles of good practice to arrange the curriculum and other aspects of the college experience, students would ostensibly put forth more effort (p.9). This focus on “more effort” is notable given the previous studies conducted by Cotten & Wilson (2014) and Hand & Miller-Payne (2009) that specifically address that faculty-student relationships have a direct impact on inducing effort. The question also lies whether organizational and environmental factors contribute to this effort and are programs and policies at institutions fashioned to encourage such interactions.

According to Kuh et al. (2010), many colleges claim to provide high-quality learning environments for their students. As evidence, schools point to educationally enriching opportunities, such as honors programs, co-curricular leadership development programs, federally recognized support programs such as TRiO that includes eight programs to serve and assist low-income individuals, first generation college students or individuals with disabilities, or collaboration with faculty members on research projects. Too often, however, such experiences are products of serendipity or efforts on the part of students themselves – the first component of engagement. Moreover, for every student who has such an experience, there are others who do not connect in meaningful ways with their faculty and their peers, or take advantage of learning opportunities. As a result, many students leave school prematurely, or put so little effort into their learning that they fall short of benefiting from college to the extent they should (p. 9-10). The

types of contacts students have with faculty were measured by the NSEE survey which included six factors. (1) talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor, (2) discussing ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class, (3) receiving prompt feedback from faculty on academic performance, (4) working with faculty members on a research project, (5) working with faculty members on activities other than coursework, and (6) discussing grades or assignments with an instructor. (p. 207). It is important to note that DEEP colleges and universities were categorized as generally more responsive to students' needs, both in and out of classrooms (p. 207). For example, at the University of Michigan, academic departments at Michigan increase contact with students by sending electronic reminders to students about academic functions. At Evergreen State College, new students are acculturated about the importance of getting to know faculty and being known by faculty. Its view book declares: "Social life...begins in the academic community" (p. 208). At Longwood, students reported that they could acquire letters or references from 10 to 15 faculty members if they asked (p. 209). According to Kuh et al. (2010), institutions listed had administration and environments that promoted socially catalytic spaces, had accessible and responsive faculty, involved students in campus governance that participated in policymaking and decision making which according to them facilitates student-faculty interaction as well as student learning and satisfaction. At Macalester, The Campus Center facilitates student-faculty interaction by promoting that faculty eat together with students in the café. Some students occasionally dine at faculty members' homes. The college encourages this hospitality by providing funds to reimburse faculty for food costs (p. 210). On Wednesdays and Thursdays at the University of Maine at Farmington, faculty members can eat lunch free at the dining hall when escorted by a student. These are examples of how organizational factors and space can be designed and programmed to increase faculty-student interaction. Furthermore, some of the programs in these

institutions fostered meaningful student-faculty interaction through mentor programs. For instance, at California State University at Monterey Bay (CSUMB), a Hispanic Serving Institution, the university enrolls a significant number of migrant students and first-generation college students. There, they have developed a Faculty Peer Mentor Program that is designed to foster interaction between professors and first-generation students. Kuh et al. (2010) stated that first-year students particularly those who are the first in their families to attend college, tend to be intimidated by faculty (p. 212). Developing relationships with faculty is, however, essential for many students to feel comfortable seeking necessary information about class work and other aspects of college (p. 212). Other areas noted by Kuh et al. (2010) noted that what these DEEP schools had in common were strong academic advising departments, undergraduate research and the use of electronic technologies. To the extent possible, DEEP institutions attempt to connect students with faculty members in their department early in their college career and create innovative advising structures for student-faculty interaction. At Ursinus College, all students are required to complete an Independent Learning Experience (ILE), which may be in the form of undergraduate research projects. The ILE resulted from discussions among students, faculty and administrators about what students considered their most meaningful learning experiences (p.214). This type of requirement acknowledges the educational relevance of experiential learning and each academic unit determines what type of experience is most appropriate for its majors (p. 215). At CSUMB, they use, and promote technology such as email or other interactive features of course management software to promote regular interaction between faculty and students. One administrator at CSUMB stated that “Some students are too timid to come to office hours. They may pour their heart out over email, and sit silent in class. As a learning community we can acknowledge different styles of participating in the community” (p. 217). This is another example of how institutions can leverage

technology to facilitate student-faculty interactions, and according to Kuh et al. (2010) can be especially useful with students who are intimidated by the idea of speaking up in class, those who cannot spend much time on campus, or those for whatever reason may not feel comfortable meeting face-to-face with a faculty member.

All students who transition to college are going to experience differing adaptation periods where they will need to navigate the college environment, organizational structures and expectations. As noted by Kuh et al. (2010), there is no singular blueprint for student success. There are many roads to becoming an educationally engaging institution (p. 20). The absence of such a blueprint and the fact that many roads lead to student success are, in fact, good news for those who desire to enhance student engagement at their own institution (p.21). Though the missions, operating philosophies, and organizational and structural characteristics of DEEP schools vary, all have developed complementary policies and practices tailored to the school's mission and students' educational and social needs, interests, and abilities (p. 62). The following will explore several key environmental and organizational factors that have emerged from literature and theories that affect the socialization process of first-generation college students.

Independence vs Interdependence

American universities emphasize and promote cultural norms of independence (Fryberg & Markus, 2007; Kim & Devine 2002). Stephens, et al. (2012), followed 84 students who participated in a lab study on physiological responses during academic tasks. Before their scheduled visit, participants received a list of activities to avoid prior to their session due to potential cortisol effects (e.g. exercising). Two different welcome letters were used to manipulate the university's culture's focus on independence versus interdependence. After the participants read the messages, they gave a five minute speech about their college goals. The purpose of the speech was to assess how the

welcome letters affected students' psychological responses while engaging in a common academic task. Participants were told that the speech would be recorded and evaluated by a university committee and were given two minutes to prepare. To index the degree to which the college culture is experienced as aversive, they measured participants' cortisol levels and the emotional content of their speeches. They found that once admitted, first generation college students experience greater challenges adjusting to universities compared to non-first generation students. They proposed that this adversity stems from a "cultural mismatch" between the mostly middle-class, independent norms institutionalized in American universities and the relatively interdependent norms that first-generation students are socialized with in working class contexts before college. Compared to middle and upper class contexts, working-class contexts offer limited material resources and fewer opportunities for choice, influence, and control. As Orbe (2008) points out when at home, the individual social identity tension is best understood as a struggle between independence and interdependence. Both opposing poles are important and necessary for healthy self-concepts and adaptation to college. First generation students have a need to create distance between themselves and their family members, yet they also must maintain some level of closeness (p. 84). Orbe (2008) continues to describe this struggle when students return home with a more individualistic sense of self and are confronted with family members who do not accept their new sense of independence. They are caught between trying to be independent individuals, but also see themselves as inextricably linked to family and community (p. 86). FGCS understand, and appreciate, how their success is interconnected with that of their extended family; this, however, is contrasted with needs of independence. As a result, these contexts often require individuals to regulate their behavior according to interdependent norms, such as adjusting to others' needs and being part of the community (Stephens et al. 2012). This mismatch between the independent

norms prevalent in American universities and first generation college students' primarily interdependent norms can signal to these students that they do not belong and can also undermine their academic performance (p. 2). Compared to non-first generation college students, this mismatched environment creates a frustrating and perplexing dilemma of the university requirement to "do whatever they want". These independent cultural norms can be viewed as one important source of the middle-class cultural capital that helps students navigate college environments (p. 4). Because FGCS struggle to confront a largely independent setting as offered by universities, their everyday activities, including interactions and communication with faculty may be minimal or non-existent.

Social and Academic Integration

Many first generation college students have an omnipresent fear of being in an environment for which they have no frame of reference and in which they sense they may not belong (Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012). Even the most polished and urbane college student traverses some uncharted territory at the early stages of his or her college experience; that is, even the most thorough preparation may not account for all eventualities or the law of unintended consequences (Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012). Now imagine the student in question is the first in the family to attend college; the first to step outside of the social comfort zone and travel a different road than his or her parents; and the first to worry about deciphering a syllabus and interacting with faculty and advisers (p. 26-27). A five-minute informal conversation outside the classroom between a faculty and a FGCS may seem like a passing moment to faculty or others, but it might have a profound influence on whether or not that student decides to stay at or leave the institution at the end of the first year (p. 31). Academic integration is achieved by means of more formal interactions with faculty, staff, and peers that

are often related to educational concerns and academic content. An example of this can be found at Loyola Marymount University where a program was created called First To Go that helps first generation college students adjust to college life during their first year. They pair a FGCS with a faculty or staff mentor which generates a support network that prevents first-generation students from remaining in the shadows, uncertain of what they are supposed to do or how to do it (Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012). Social integration is achieved through strong affiliations within the college social environment, including less formal interactions among faculty, staff, and peers (Nora, 1993 as cited in McKay and Estrella (2008). An example of this could be informal discussions between faculty and students at a cafeteria or hallway. One study identified relationships with faculty and peers as being among the five major indices of academic and social integration (p. 359). Because of their lower academic preparedness, inadequate cultural capital, and insufficient academic and social integration, first-generation students may approach critical academic and social tasks during college with lower levels of confidence than their non-first generation counterparts (Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012). One of the most popular theories that encompass social integration is Tinto's integration framework (1993).

Tinto posits that students are more likely to remain and succeed in college when they become connected to the social and academic fabric of the institution they attend. Tinto's central idea is that whether a student persists or drops out is strongly predicted by their degree of academic and social integration. Academic integration occurs when students become immersed in the learning that takes place in the classroom such as grades, personal satisfaction with subjects, and identification with academic norms and values, and identification with one's role as a student. However, social integration according to Tinto happens when relationships

occur outside the classroom such as how many friends do you have, personal contacts with faculty and staff, or are you personally enjoying being at the institution you are attending. Tinto also posits that there are both formal and informal systems within institutions that can encourage both the academic and social integration. What is not easily recognized in Tinto's model is empathy between faculty-student contact and the idea of self-efficacy. In other words, are students motivated to succeed through relationships with faculty and staff, and what does this look like? How does this happen? What is clear is that involvement matters. As many researchers have pointed out (e.g. Astin, 1984, Pascarella, et al. 2004) the greater the integration, the greater the likelihood students will persist. In a study conducted by Kim and Sax (2009) that studied student-faculty interaction in research universities, students whose parents attended college were more likely than students whose parents have not attended college to assist faculty with research for course credit, communicate with faculty by email or in person, and interacted with faculty during lecture class sessions (p. 443).

Relationship Forming Process across Institutional Types

Where first-generation students attend college is equally important to all the other major patterns and deficits usually attributed to this group. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2000), 54.9% of all students in a two-year institution are first-generation. Therefore, the majority of first generation students begin their studies at a community college and on a part time basis (Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012). Because of their unique mission to serve a wide variety of students, including those with inadequate academic preparation, community colleges typically offer a welcoming environment for students who are less prepared to succeed, including a wide range of remedial courses and support services (p. 27).

One institutional segment that serves large proportions of first-generation students is Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs). These institutions, which comprise Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), have a legacy of providing increased access to some of the nation's underserved students and often have innovative practices and strategies to support stronger student success (Harmon 2012). It is important to note that MSI's can be 2-year or 4-year colleges or universities. Although many institutions host programs and initiatives that foster student-faculty interaction through academic and social support activities, for institutions that serve large numbers of first-generation students, these initiatives carry a larger significance. For example, in a study conducted by Schmidt et al. (2011), the number one recommendation of the student experience at Tribal Colleges was that personal relationships with faculty are critical for addressing the needs of first generation college students (p.51). This was particularly true for cultures in which oral histories and storytelling traditions are particularly strong as with Native Americans.

A statistical analysis report published by the National Center for Education Statistics (1998) compared first generation college students with their non-first-generation counterparts and included an analysis of students' academic and social integration. It measured the representation of students' involvement in and adaptation across institutional types. Social integration as discussed earlier was a composite based on student responses regarding how often they went places with friends, staff, or had contact with faculty outside of class. According to the study, when the average social integration scores were examined, among all students, first-generation students showed a lower average level of social integration than non-first-generation students. For example, in public 4-year and private, not-for-profit 4-year institutions, first-

generation students had lower average index scores for social integration (24.8) than student whose parents held a bachelor's degree (34.3). First-generation students in public 2-year institutions also scored lower than non-first-generation students. There were no measurable differences, however, between the average social integration scores of first-generation and other students at private, not-for-profit and other less-than- 4-year institutions. These differences demonstrate a significant statistical significance in the social integration levels of first-generation college students and their non-first generation counterparts.

Table 1 below addresses social integration levels by first generation status and institutional type as cited by the National Center for Education Statistics (1998).

Percentage distribution of 1989–90 beginning postsecondary students according to social integration levels in 1989–90, by first-generation status and institution type

Total	Integration index		
	Low score	Moderate score	High score
	28.6	48.4	23.0
First-generation student	37.8	45.5	16.7
Not a first-generation student	19.0	52.4	28.6
Parents have some college	22.0	55.5	22.5
Parents have bachelor's or advanced degree	16.9	50.4	32.7
Public 4-year			
Total	15.1	55.1	29.8
First-generation student	21.5	53.7	24.8
Not a first-generation student	11.6	56.3	32.1
Parents have some college	14.4	57.1	28.5
Parents have bachelor's or advanced degree	10.0	55.8	34.3
Private, not-for-profit 4-year			
Total	9.2	42.1	48.7
First-generation student	17.4	41.8	40.8
Not a first-generation student	5.8	42.4	51.8
Parents have some college	9.5	45.4	45.1
Parents have bachelor's or advanced degree	4.3	41.3	54.5
Public 2-year			
Total	40.6	46.6	12.9
First-generation student	48.3	42.2	9.5
Not a first-generation student	28.8	55.0	16.2
Parents have some college	29.1	59.0	12.0
Parents have bachelor's or advanced degree	28.7	51.9	19.4
Private, for-profit			
Total	39.7	46.7	13.6
First-generation student ¹	38.5	46.9	14.6

Not a first-generation student ¹	38.1	47.0	14.9
Parents have some college	36.9	49.4	13.7
Parents have bachelor's or advanced degree	40.1	43.0	16.9
		Other less-than-4-year²	
Total	29.8	49.5	20.7
First-generation student ¹	30.3	51.6	18.0
Not a first-generation student ¹	24.5	50.4	25.1
Parents have some college	23.0	54.6	22.4
Parents have bachelor's or advanced degree	26.1	46.1	27.8

¹Values for totals may not be within range of subgroup values due to missing cases on the subgroup variables.

²Includes students enrolled in private, not-for-profit 2-year and less-than-2-year institutions and public less-than-2-year institutions.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1989–90 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94), Data Analysis System.

According to Housel and Harvey (2009), regardless of the differences across institutions, researchers repeatedly find that FGCS enter college with more potential barriers to achievement than non-FGCS. In order to understand the dynamics and process of the interactions between first generation college students and faculty, one must first understand how communication is delivered, why, by whom and is it well received. In Cotten and Wilson's (2006) study, students generally perceive interactions with faculty to be beneficial, but they also indicated that bad experiences do occur (p 501). For instance, one student noted,

“No matter how you talk to some faculty and no matter how you try to get their help, they make you feel like an idiot. And it's their demeanor, it's the way that they speak to you, it's the tone of voice that they use, and it's the hurriedness of their body language. Like, you're wasting my time, you're in my space, get out. Or, you know, they just make you feel like you're a number and you're completely unimportant” (p. 501).

Students also reported uncertainty about whether faculty are interested in interacting with them outside the classroom (and in some cases even inside the classroom). One student summarized this point,

“I want to know if the faculty really even want to converse with us. That's what I want to know. Do faculty want a relationship? That's a good question” (p 503).

Other students suggest that faculty “always appear rushed” and that they do not have time to interact with students (p.504). Besides relationships with faculty, another recommendation given by Schmidt et al. (2011) which is equally important was to keep colleges small to build community and identity and encourage relationships.

Institutional size and Setting

Institutional size and setting may also play a factor in the relationship forming process between faculty and first generation college students. Chickering and Reisser (1993) argued that educational environments exert a powerful influence on student development. One of their seven key factors included institutional size. They argued that “as the number of persons outstrips the opportunities for significant participation and satisfaction, the developmental potential of available settings is attenuated for all” (p. 41). According to a study by Cotten & Wilson (2006), students indicated that large, lecture hall classes hinder interactions with faculty (p. 505). Waldeck (2006) states that a professor’s ability to know their students is linked to small class sizes, an aspect of personalized education that many colleges promote. In a meta-analysis of studies examining the effects of class size on student learning outcomes, Biddle and Berliner (2002) concluded that small class sizes are most important for students not yet socialized to the university learning environment (as cited in Waldeck, 2006). Tied to institutional size are student-faculty relationships or what Chickering and Reisser (1993) call their second factor. They postulate that extensive and varied interaction among faculty and students facilitates development. Students need to see faculty in a variety of situations involving different roles and responsibilities. Such interaction leads students to perceive faculty as real people who are accessible and interested in them beyond the classroom. An example cited by Ward, Siegel and Davenport (2012) state the elite residential campuses like Williams College, Swarthmore

College, Washington and Lee University may be more likely to pay personalized attention to all their students. Overall, students may find it easier to seek out the help they need or may find it easier to communicate with faculty. On the downside, such campuses may leave first-generation students feeling awkward and inferior socially among fellow students and faculty who often come from more advantaged backgrounds. Conversely, first-year students attending larger, public institutions like Indiana University or Penn State are more likely to find many students like themselves and, socially, may feel less like a “fish out of water”. Big campuses, however, are harder to navigate for any newcomer, and it is easy to drown without being noticed (p. 29).

DEEP Schools as previously mentioned by Kuh et al. (2010) not only embrace where they are located, but they have fashioned learning settings on and off campus to achieve their educational purposes. They have created spaces that enhance and complement their commitment to student engagement and success (p. 93). For example, Macalester designed work space in its new science building with faculty offices opening into an atrium filled with tables and chairs for group study. Faculty offices “seem to spill out into hallways, making it easy to engage in impromptu discussions with students and other faculty members (p. 209). At Wofford College, they surrounded the language lab with faculty offices and also placed comfortable couches and chairs near faculty offices in the new science building in an effort to increase the time students spend with faculty (p. 209). According to Gruenwald (2003), DEEP schools make themselves “special” because they are “place conscious”. It is also important to note where institutions are located may face unique challenges as is the case of my study in a small rural region of Washington State. According to the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO, 1992), institutions in rural communities face unique challenges due to their remoteness, low population density, and dependence on a particular industry.

The economics of rural areas tend to rely on a single industry such as agriculture; the whole region may decline due to the changes in that industry. The GAO (1992) asserts that educational opportunities are instrumental to the revitalization of rural areas in order to create a highly skilled work force or to provide training for workers to upgrade their skills or transition to a different industry. According to Hand & Miller-Payne (2008) who studied first-generation college students in the highly rural area of the Appalachian region, statistics reveal a direct link between educational achievement and economic development. As is the case for many rural areas including the aforementioned Appalachian region, challenges of poverty, low rates of white collar employment, and low rates of college attendance may usually be the norm (Hand & Miller-Payne, 2008). Furthermore, Hand & Miller-Payne describe what is called “localism”. In their study, they describe localism as “cultural place-boundedness”. In other words, people wanted to stay in the same area where they grew up (p. 5).

Analysis of Body of Literature

An expansive body of literature has investigated student-faculty interactions. Much of this literature expands on the frequency and outcomes of interactions between faculty and students, but gaps still remain on understanding the dynamics and nature of these relationships. In exception would be the study of Cotten and Wilson (2006), but it did not account for the specific growing segment of first-generation college students that arrive in college with a host of barriers that other students may not encounter as noted in much of the literature. In addition, despite the many years of research, very few have addressed the faculty side of the relationship and how or what reciprocal benefits faculty may or may not attain from these interactions. As I examine the variety of literature pertaining to first generation college students and their relationships with faculty, I see three areas that need to be addressed: (1) qualitative analysis, (2) self-efficacy/empathy and (3) institutional uniqueness.

Qualitative Analysis

Among the qualitative analyses that exist, the focus is on the cause and effect rather than determining the phenomena. For example, it is understood that relationships between faculty and students are a significant factor. The greater question lies in how do we get there? In a quantitative study conducted by Kim and Sax (2009), they examined the effects of student-faculty relationships on a range of student outcomes (i.e., college GPA, degree aspiration, integration, critical thinking and communication, cultural appreciation and social awareness and satisfaction with the college experience that varies by student, gender, race, social class, and first generation student status). Their finding revealed differences in frequency of student – faculty interaction amongst these range of students. In general, the research was in line with other noted scholars that have studied student development through a quantitative lens, (i.e. Astin, 1984; Tinto 1987) that emphasize that more contact between students and faculty enhances students’ development and learning process. Kim and Sax state that Astin’s Involvement theory (1984) and his I-E-O (Inputs-Environment-Outcomes) framework suggest that students are more likely to learn and develop when they invest more time and energy to meaningful college experience. They also contend that since Astin’s involvement concept is clearly operationalized, it is “easily and reliably” measured by quantitative survey items (p. 439). This study focused on frequency of student-faculty interaction yet fails to explain the quality and nature of the interaction. What does this contact look like? How does it happen? What about the faculty? How do they benefit? How does this progression take place? In other words, much of the studies fail to address the “human side” of the interaction. Hand and Miller-Payne (2008) and Cotten & Wilson (2006) are a couple of the exceptions.

Hand and Miller-Payne's qualitative study of 21 first-generation students in an Appalachian institution in a highly rural region confirmed the notion of self-efficacy and internal locus of control. However, according to the study, most of the participants excelled academically in high school, with some in the top 10% (p.12). The students interviewed showed no indication of being challenged academically and thus is difficult to make a generalization of the characteristics facing the majority of first-generation college students as well established in higher education literature. Cotten & Wilson's study utilizing nine student focus groups with a total of 49 students provided in-depth knowledge of faculty-student interaction. Although the findings could be generalized across all student types, it is not apparent whether these findings would be consistent specifically for first-generation college students that arrive to campus with the same barriers generally recognized across all literature. First-generation students present new challenges to colleges and universities nationwide, particularly recognizing the challenges that are unique to this specific growing student population. It would be imperative that further research into the dynamics and nature specific to first-generation college students and faculty relationships contain more qualitative studies that focus on qualitative narratives rather than quantitative studies that generally focus on cause and effect. It is also important to note that not all interactions with faculty outside the classroom are acceptable. Meyers-Hoffman (2014) explains that in his study of faculty-student interactions, some students cited that time alone with faculty members may be inappropriate, especially involving interactions of a sexual nature. In addition, socializing with faculty at a bar or at a campus party, and participating in certain types of financial transactions were also cited by students as boundaries that should not be crossed (p.16).

Self-Efficacy & Empathy

Bandura (1994a) as cited in Weibell (2011) defined self-efficacy as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (p.1). People with “high assurance in their capabilities” (p. 1):

1. Approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered
2. Set challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them
3. Heighten or sustain their efforts in the face of failures or setbacks
4. Attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills which are acquirable
5. Approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them

In contrast, people “who doubt their capabilities” (p. 1):

1. Shy away from tasks they view as personal threats
2. Have low aspirations and weak commitment to goals they choose to pursue
3. Dwell on personal deficiencies, obstacles they will encounter, and all kinds of adverse outcomes, rather than concentrating on how to perform successfully
4. Slacken their efforts and give up quickly in the face of difficulties
5. Are slow to recover their sense of efficacy following failure or setbacks
6. Fall easy victim to stress and depression

Bandura (1977a, pp. 191, 195-200; 1994a, pp. 2-3) as cited in Weibell (2011) described four main sources of influence by which a person’s self-efficacy is developed and maintained: (a) performance accomplishments or mastery experiences; (b) vicarious experiences; (c) verbal or social persuasion; and (d) physiological, or somatic and emotional, states. In the case of the study by Cotten and Wilson that studied students and faculty interaction, verbal or social persuasion appeared to be the key factor that affected the student’s perception of self-efficacy. According to Weibell (2011), it is “a way of strengthening people’s beliefs that they have what it takes to succeed”. Verbal or social persuasion can provide a temporary boost in perceived ability. When it is effective in mobilizing a person to action, and their actions lead to success, the

enhanced self-efficacy may become more permanent. Bandura states in Weibell (2011), “people who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given activities are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise” (p. 2). This increases their chances of success.

According to Terenzini, et al. (1994), regardless of race or ethnicity, gender, age or institution attended, no theme was more persistent than the need for students’ self-esteem in its many forms: self-confidence, a sense of being in control, pride in oneself and what one does, respecting oneself and being respected by others, etc. Furthermore, Terenzini, et al. also indicated that most of the students identified someone who had clearly cared for them. This sense of caring for students is also vastly understudied. Cushman’s study (2007) as previously mentioned, found that 16 first-generation college students “need a guiding hand”. A student summed it up this way as she described an additional boost that came from the warmth of the professors in the Italian course: “My Italian professors were encouraging. They tried to make me feel comfortable; they told me, you can do it! Little things like that, for me, made a big difference” (p. 47).

By examining misunderstandings of caring, a fundamental source of students’ alienation and resistance becomes apparent (Valenzuela, 1999). In order to examine the empathy that happens in its essence between faculty and students, a qualitative study that examines the intricacies of this dialog needs to be apparent and is lacking in most literature. According to Valenzuela, schools not only fail to validate their students’ culture, they also subtract resources from them, first by impeding the development of authentic caring; and secondly by obliging youth to participate in non-neutral, power-draining type of aesthetic caring (p. 109). It is this dynamic of caring that oftentimes takes place between the student and the faculty that many times go

unnoticed. This concept of empathy was also lacking in Tinto's model of social and academic integration. If involvement is a central mechanism for student success as most research suggests, this route or progress to involvement is poorly mapped especially for FGCS which often forego or delay this interaction with faculty (Terenzini et al, 1994).

Institutional Uniqueness

My final critique of the literature is that most of the research fails to account for the uniqueness of certain institutions that are in continuous change and may be quite different from each other. Most research generalizes all institutional types and environments. A small liberal arts university situated in a rural setting with a large first generation student population and a high percentage of women, minorities and working class students may be quite different than a large research university in an urban setting where the dominant majority is white and middle to upper class. Therefore, findings may not be generalized across all institutions and therefore case studies specifically focused on a bounded institution, may fill a larger void for similar institutions than those studies that are more general. For instance, Kim and Sax (2009), suggest that undergraduates in small, liberal arts colleges benefit from more frequent interactions with faculty-both in and out of class-while those attending large research universities may have more difficulty gaining access to faculty (p. 439). Kim and Sax utilized a quantitative approach and measured frequency of the interactions. Their study improved a knowledge base of the conditional effects of student-faculty interaction but left a research gap from a qualitative point of view that describes these interactions in detail. Every institution is unique with its own characteristics of setting, environment, physical characteristics, mission and vision. But according to Kuh, et al. (2010) what effective schools do well is use their settings to educational advantage by creating engaging spaces for learning. They maximize educational potential of

their natural and physical resources on campus and in the local region. In addition, campus facilities, including residence halls and gathering places are in tune with the academic mission of the campus (p. 106). An example of taking advantage of physical resources is Sewanee's vast, isolated mountaintop. These 10,000 wooded acres is an impressive educational resource that is used for faculty-student engagement at Sewanee. They call this area "the Domain" and it is a laboratory for teaching, research, and recreation, especially in environmental studies, forestry and geology. Among many other things, they utilize "the Domain" for first-year orientation programs and the Outing program which coordinates recreational trips such as hiking and boating (p. 94) with faculty and students. Ursinus College redesigned space and added large tables, chairs, and laminated whiteboards to create "interaction areas" (p. 95). It is imperative that institutions adapt their surrounding and campus environments in creative and educationally purposeful ways. A noteworthy suggestion about adapting environments for educational advantage comes from Kuh, et al. (2010) which states that buildings, classrooms, and other physical structures should be adapted to "human scale". Living units, classrooms, and meeting spaces should be kept small to the extent possible (p. 108).

Theoretical Context for the Socialization Processes (Conceptual Framework)

I present here an initial framework based in the literature on postsecondary participation and first generation students. The primary goal is to provide a framework that describes the dynamics of faculty-student relationships through the lives and experiences of first generation college students and faculty at a single, 4-year private liberal arts university located in a rural region in Washington State.

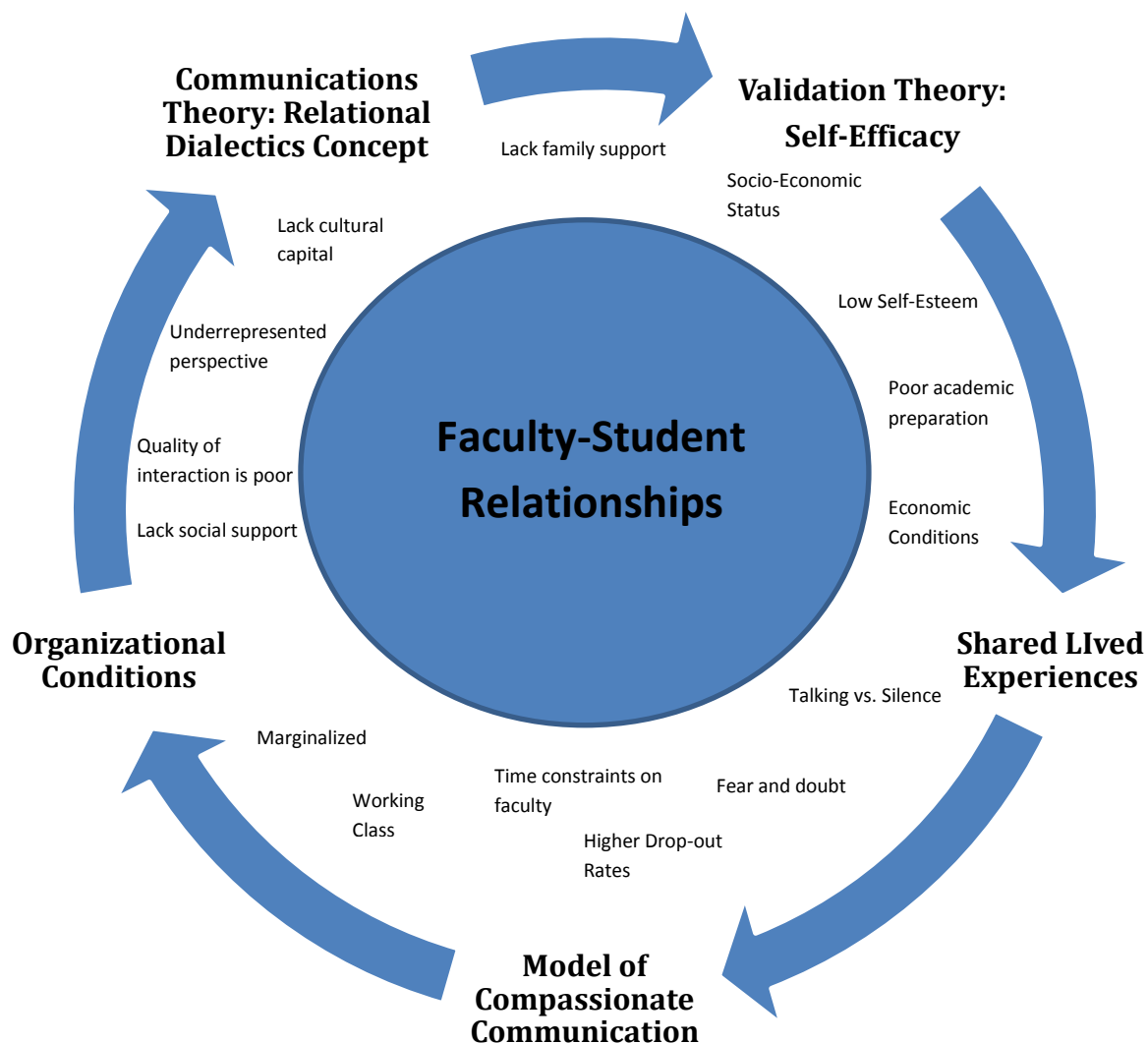
Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014), explain conceptual framework as the main things to be studied — the key factors, variables, or constructs, and the presumed interrelationships among them (20). Wolcott, (2005) expands on this by using the term, "The

Art of Conceptualizing” and states that no purposeful inquiry can proceed without conceptual underpinnings of some sort (170). For this particular study, the presumed interrelationships between faculty and students as Miles, Huberman & Saldana note is paramount for my study to address barriers that are often over-studied among postsecondary researchers. As stated before, Pike and Kuh (2005) found first generation college students to be less likely to form relationships with other members of faculty. My conceptual framework addresses these barriers associated with establishing faculty-student relationships specific to first generation college students, as well as providing theories that may guide my work.

The following conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1 describes five theoretical frameworks that enhance faculty-student relationships, and the major focus role that this often understudied area can have on addressing barriers that are common among first generation college students as it relates to faculty-student relationships. The five theories and concepts that I propose work together in unison in establishing faculty-student relationships. The five theories and concepts include (1) Rendón’s Validation Theory (1994) which is the proactive affirmation of students, (2) Communication Theory: Relational Dialectic Perspective (2014) which assert that relationships are a give-and-take process in constant motion, (3) Model of Compassionate Communication (2003) which addresses communication skills that strengthen our ability to remain human, even under trying conditions, (4)the value of Mutual Shared Lived Experiences, that which gives attention to “subjectivity, intuition, emotion, and personal experience” (Rustom-Jehangir, 2010, p. 56), and (5) organizational conditions that may shape student-faculty relationships as mentioned earlier in the literature review. These five theories and/or models are posed as strengths and work together to establish value-added, mutual benefits for both first generation college

students and faculty. Please see figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework:
Faculty-Student Relationships



Validation Theory: Emotional Support

Supporting or validating “weak” students or engaging students’ life experiences is viewed as hand holding or irrelevant to the “academic” goals of the class (Rustom-Jehangir, 2010). Rendón (1994) challenges these notions of education. Laura Rendon (1994) introduced validation theory with particular applicability to first generation college students. As originally conceived, validation refers to the intentional, proactive affirmation of students by in-and out-of-class agents (i.e. faculty, academic affairs staff, family members, peers) in order to: 1) validate students as creators of knowledge and as valuable members of the college learning community and 2) foster personal development and social adjustment (Rendón , 2011).

In her study, they were initially looking for emergent themes related to college student involvement, given that the scholars were employing Astin’s theory of involvement as the study’s framework. As the study progressed, two revelations became apparent: 1) there were stark difference in the transition to college between first generation college students and non-first generation college students. According to Rendón, at some point, FGCS suddenly began to believe in themselves as capable college learners not so much because of their college involvement as Astin suggests, but because some person(s) in or outside of college took the initiative to reach out to them to help them believe in themselves and in their innate capacity to learn (Rendón, 2011). For example, when students were asked when they knew they could be successful, they did not typically cite instances of getting involved in college, rather they spoke often with “excitement” and “awe” about the reassurances and validation

they received from individuals they encountered in college (i.e., faculty, advisers, and counselors). According to Rendón, students expressed that this was the first time someone had expressed care and concern; the first time someone made them feel that their prior life experiences and knowledge they brought to college were valuable (p. 15). These validating experiences according to Rendón’s study were as follows:

1. Faculty took the time to learn their names and refer to them by name.
2. Faculty ensured that the curriculum reflected student backgrounds
3. Faculty shared knowledge with students and became “partners” in learning.
4. Faculty told students, “You can do this, and I am going to help you.”
5. Faculty and staff served as mentors for students and made an effort to meet with them outside of class such as in patio areas, in cafeterias, and/or in the library.

Rendón states two types of validation: academic and interpersonal. Academic is achieved by means of more formal interactions with faculty, staff, and peers that are often related to educational concerns and academic content. An example of this was stated earlier in the First to Go program at Loyola Marymount University. For the scope of my study which places the lens on the relationship between faculty and students, Rendón’s interpersonal type is magnified. Here, interpersonal validation occurs when in-and out- of-class agents take action to foster students’ personal development and social adjustment (Rendón, 1994). In a validating classroom, the instructor affirms students as persons, not just as students. Faculty do not detach themselves from students. Rather, faculty build supporting, caring relationships with students and allows students to validate each other (p. 19).

The theory of validation also has six elements that directly and indirectly

focus on the student-faculty relationship. The first places the responsibility on the faculty to initiate communication and contact. FGCS will likely find it difficult to strike up a conversation with faculty or advisers because they will feel uncomfortable asking questions, and/or will not want to be viewed as “stupid” or “lazy” (p. 17). So according to Rendón’s theory, it is important for faculty to “reach out” to students as opposed to expecting students to initiate the conversation. Second, whomever the student turns to for validation, the affirming action should serve to confirm that the student brings knowledge to college and has the potential to succeed. The third element is to validate on a consistent basis. This allows FGCS to feel more confident about themselves and their ability to learn. The fourth element is that validation can occur in and out of class. This means that validation in the form of communication between faculty and FGCS can happen anywhere and at any time. Fifth element is to not view validation as an end, but rather as a developmental process that begins early and can continue over time. Finally, Rendón says that validation is most critical when administered early in the college experience. This makes sense because research shows that most FGCS drop out after just one year of college (Stephens, et al. 2012; Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012).

The need to connect on a social level with faculty and staff may appear simple, yet for first generation students, this can become quite a challenge. Rendón’s Theory of Validation parallels Bandura’s Theory of Self-Efficacy (1994). Here Bandura states that verbal or social persuasion also affects one’s perception of self-efficacy. It is “a way of strengthening people’s beliefs that they have what it takes to succeed” (Bandura, 1994a, p. 3). Verbal or social persuasion can provide a temporary boost in perceived ability. When it is effective in mobilizing a person to action, and their actions lead to success, the enhanced self-efficacy may become

more permanent. Bandura says: “people who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given activities are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise” (p. 3). Rendón (1994) argues that nontraditional students are more likely to become involved when others from the institution invite their involvement. According to Cotten & Wilson (2006), students need active and consistent encouragement in order to be reassured that their inquiries are welcome and that they will be taken seriously (p. 508). In my proposed conceptual framework, Rendon’s Validation Theory which encompasses much of Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory, much like my other three theories and models are inter-woven between all facets of faculty-student relationships. FGCS in general may seek validation from faculty that may merely signal that it is “ok”. This reassurance may be pivotal in FGCS’ motivation to continue college.

Cotten & Wilson (2006) also posit that interactions with faculty have a social impact for some students. A student commented by saying,

“When you have a personal relationship or personal interaction, it makes you want to give 100% and do you best---you don’t want to let this person down”.

According to Cotten and Wilson, these remarks indicate that the link between student-faculty interactions and student performance is effort. They go on to say that what is less obvious, however, is the dynamic that induces effort on the part of the student (p. 500). Rustom-Jehangir comments on students sense of belonging and comfort that extended beyond the classroom. For example, she states that Davu a FGCS expressed how his composition instructor influenced his confidence in the writing process. She goes on to say that central to these one-on-one interactions was not so much being told how or what to write but rather the process of dialoging with an instructor who gave merit to his core ideas and helped him develop and own his writing (p.135).

Communication Theory: Relational Dialectic Concept

As mentioned earlier, there is an expansive body of education literature pertaining to first-generation college students, the vast majority focusing on student outcomes. What is less significant is the body of literature in the communications field and the role that communication plays in the dynamics of faculty-student relationships.

Relational dialectics is a concept within communication theory which was introduced by professors Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery in 1988. Relational dialectic theory focuses on integration-separation, stability-change, and expression-privacy (Baxter, 1990 as cited in Lowery-Hart & Pacheco Jr., 2011). According to Lowery-Hart and Pacheco Jr. (2011), as FGCS negotiate their place in college, they must minimize their interactions with peers, professors, and others. Students in their study shared that they would go to class and then leave because they did not understand the “college experience” outside of class and these students had not yet established peers to help them negotiate this dialectical tension (p.59). FGCS experiences may reflect relational dialectic theory because they are situated in the margins, despite being in the same campuses and classes as their peers. Lowery-Hart & Pacheco Jr. (2011) posits that FGCS are forced to negotiate their place in college which minimizes their interactions with professors. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) approach dialectical tensions as opposing forces which allows recognition of people in relationships as being pulled in many different directions that cannot be resolved.

Lanham (2012) used 4 focus groups interviews with a total of 16 FGCS. The study was an analysis of dialectical tensions experienced by first generation college students. The FGCS in this study reported they often have to compromise friendships, time with their families, and time

with their parents in order to gain a sense of stability in their lives. Furthermore, while families played a role in support, they were not able to provide them with support regarding topics such as navigating college, understanding concepts in the classroom and learning how to use the online database system. In addition, participants in the focus group found teachers to be most helpful in their efforts to succeed, and that feelings of isolation began to develop because they struggled to create a balance between autonomy and connectedness, and the “role of the student became very lonely” (p.64). According to Lanham, while words of encouragement provide moments of support, the other forms of support, the kind of support you can only get from those who have experienced college first hand, generally do not come from home. As Ward, Siegel & Davenport (2102) point out, many factors affect the level of connection students feel, and perhaps none are as important as the interactions students have with faculty. According to Bean (2005), these relationships represent a point of connectedness within the campus community, leading to self-confidence, loyalty, fitting in, and remaining enrolled.

Model of Compassionate Communication

Rosenberg’s (2003) compassionate communication is founded on language and communication skills that strengthen our ability to remain human, even under trying conditions, trains to observe carefully, and to be able to specify behaviors and conditions that are affecting us. It is important to realize that this type of communication is central to the trying conditions experienced by many first generation college students. To emphasize, Tinto (1993); Harrell & Forney (2003); Pascarella & Chapman (1983); Terenzini (1980) as cited in Housel & Harvey (2009), found relationships and emotional support, both formal and informal; have been identified as playing a major role in students’ persistence in college through greater academic and social integration within an institution (p. 48). Moreover, first generation students as noted

by many scholars resist this type of communication therefore not taking advantage of developing key characteristics for student success. In an excerpt from Rustom-Jehangier (2010) a student named Ana reflects on a close relationship with her advisor. She states:

“I remember especially my advisor – I remember feeling a different kind of connection with her. You know, it was more...I don’t know...not on such a professional level. I mean, it was still professional, but I think that I warmed up to her a little better because it was more personal and I felt comfortable coming to her with issues. And I remember the writing professor, he was so hilarious and he was just an easy guy to talk to , you know, and I think they put a lot of time and effort into teaching us, because we were a community and because I just feel like we were a special group, you know, and it made everything special” (p.127).

It is this type of experience with a special faculty or advisor, that even after years later, one may recall. Even though this experience may not necessarily be realized at the moment, it takes time and a process to realize that the relationship was special. Rosenberg also highlights that compassionate communication does not always happen quickly, but rather is a process (Hao, 2011). Valenzuela (1999) calls this “the art of initiating a relationship” (p. 99). By the same token, this process is complex, subjective and is difficult to ascertain. In Cotten & Wilson’s study (2006), students reported that social interactions with instructors provide performance-based motivations to learn (p. 511). They contend that once a personal connection has been established, students note a desire to please their instructor and to avoid disapproval. This desire induces greater effort and improved performance on the student’s part (p. 511). The question lies in how this personal connection happens. According to Hao (2011), compassionate communication contains the following four components: observation, feeling, need and request.

First, observation allows participants to establish common ground by not judging or evaluating and remaining open to clarify behaviors and conditions that are affecting us (p. 93).

Second, compassionate communication expresses one's feelings and asking ourselves if we are hurt, scared, joyful, amused, irritated, etc. (p. 93). According to Rosenberg (2003), expressing our feelings tends to increase connection between people. This enables us to identify and communicate in ways that do not imply judgment, criticism, or blame toward others. If we know that faculty-student interaction is central to student success, then expressing one-self in a way that enables this type of interaction maybe critical.

Third, compassionate communication connects our needs to the feelings we have identified. Rosenberg points out that by identifying our needs to each other, we create an understanding that allows us to move toward the process of becoming.

Finally, compassionate communication concerns a specific request; its purpose is to clarify what has been heard and/or seen; what people are feeling; and what action should be used to meet the needs without trying to motivate the other party out of guilt, fear, or obligation (p.93).

Unfortunately, according to Cotten & Wilson (2010), this type of compassionate communication is extremely infrequent. Their findings indicate that the few interactions that take place outside of the classroom between students and faculty tend to be brief, and centered on specific, course-related issues (p. 508). Similarly, Fusani (1994) found that the majority of interactions focused on coursework, and only a very few were related to personal problems or were social in nature (p. 508). Students also noted in their focus groups, that it was not enough for faculty to post office hours and presume that students will utilize them (p. 508).

Organizational Conditions

As mentioned extensively in the literature review, organizational conditions are paramount in establishing an environment that purposefully attempts to create ways that shape

the students experience in college. Examples of formal orientation activities or first-year freshmen experiences are just a few examples of how institutions create these conditions of belonging. Another example in addition to the many stated in the literature review is that of Winston-Salem State University (WSSU). They have a First Year College (FYC) program that is the centerpiece of its efforts to cultivate a supportive campus environment. What distinguishes WSSU is that faculty members teaching these sections also serve as students' academic advisors and "mentors" for the first academic year (Kuh, et al. 2010). DEEP colleges also teach new faculty about their new setting and what they can do to help students succeed. For example, at University of Maine at Farmington, a lot of time and energy is dedicated to ensure that the faculty member and institution fit is right and that potential colleagues have a good understanding of the local culture (p. 118). Here the provost "looks for individuals who seek the rural New England lifestyle, value collegial relationships with colleagues and students" (p. 118). Feelings of belonging help students connect with their institutions they attend, relationships that in turn are associated with persistence and satisfaction (p.119).

Model of Shared Lived Experiences & Reciprocal Benefits

"What happens when someone with the authority of a teacher describes our society and you are not in it?" (Takaki, 1993, p. 16). Students who are first in their families to attend college bring with them histories and experiences that have the capacity to inform and enrich the learning experience, and in doing so, make them part of the academic community (p. 31). According to Orbe (2008) creating visibility for the experiences of being a FGCS is desirable because it helps contribute diverse perspectives to the learning community; it also works to challenge structures that falsely make assumptions about students' lived experiences. Furthermore, first-generation students, like others, want to

share their experiences as a means to connect and develop relationships (p.91).

Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson (1987) found that teachers' own social origins exercise a strong influence on how they react to the status attributes of their students. In particular, low-status and minority pupils (mostly FGCS) experience the greatest difficulties in the classroom of high status teachers, who evaluate these pupils as less mature and less capable. As such, first generation students and faculty come with their own perceptions of each other and many times, this is not an area that is often talked about or expressed openly. The values and expectations of a lower-or working-class person's home life usually differ from those of their middle-class peers and professors (Housel and Harvey, 2009). A first generation college student may not understand or be prepared for the professors expectations or the academic culture. Likewise, the professor may come with their own stereotypes of first generation working class students. An attitude of openness and mutual inquiry is necessary to encourage students' participation and to develop a basic level of trust within students (Barnes-McConnell 1980) as cited in Whitman (1986).

One best practice by Frederick and James (2007) as they reflect on effective intercultural teaching and learning is to use student stories to affirm their voices, honor their backgrounds, and connect their prior experiences and previous understandings with core course concepts and desired learning outcomes. It is also important for faculty to express and initiate their own shared lived experience with students. This is an important step in creating a comfortable relationship with students. Paulo Freire's (1970) famous theory of Liberatory Pedagogy promotes among other things that education should be inclusive and honors diverse ways of knowing as well as welcoming student voice. This is best described as student and faculty having an open relationship-centered understanding that promotes this open dialogue.

Housel & Harvey (2009) recommend that faculty “show your identity to the class...and step out with the other “lower class” students who identify with statements like, “I struggled to find funding for college” or “my family is currently or has been on some form of government assistance” (31). According to Barnes-McConnell faculty should consider using their own personal stories to lend an air of intimacy to their classes. A personal story or an anecdote can make teachers more human in the eyes of their students, especially when the story or anecdote shows that even college professors stumble along the path to higher learning (as cited in Whitman, 1986).

First generation students and faculty come with their own perceptions of each other and many times, this is not an area that is often talked about or expressed openly unless shared lived experiences are present. The values and expectations of a lower-or working-class person’s home life usually differ from those of their middle-class peers and professors (Housel & Harvey, 2009). A first generation college student may not understand or be prepared for the professors expectations or the academic culture. Likewise, the professor may come with their own stereotypes of first generation working class students. For example, Housel & Harvey state that instructors use “stereotype citation” (stories about lower- and working-class individuals) to state that all lower-or working class students have poor literacy rates (27). They may not understand that students feel invalidated because they come to college and feel they will not be able to meet “the standard” set forth by what they deem as an upper class professor that can’t relate or understand their upbringing, class and culture. They continue to say that stereotyping occurs because class is often an invisible identity category. Making assumptions about who is upper class or lower class perpetuates the problem of marginalization and erases personal experience (29). Instead of stereotyping, Housel & Harvey state that institutions should create a safe place

for students and faculty to share their own experiences with each other. According to them, it is this that strengthens relationships between faculty and students and begins to break down barriers of assumptions and stereotypes. It may be challenging to break away from the social parameters of what a teacher or FGCS should look and act like, depending on the institution, however, awareness of how we represent our class is an important step for making FGCS comfortable in their new environment (31).

For many FGCS, the acknowledgement of their ideas, experiences or beliefs within the learning process has been absent or muted according to Rustom-Jehangir (2010). Creating opportunities for student and teachers to share narratives from lived experiences is a good precursor to building a sense of trust and belonging in the classroom (p.57). I argue that this form of sharing not only allows for trust, but also may be a defining factor in the faculty-student relationship process. As Rustom-Jehangir (2010) and Chang (2002) cite, “doing so can break down barriers of race, class, ethnicity, nationality and other differences and can allow students to move from superficial discussions of topics to a place of deeper engagement” (p.57). Certainly, creating opportunities for shared lived experiences also can support trust between faculty and students. Rustom-Jehangir mentions Anna, a student who spoke to the role that faculty played in modeling and supporting self-reflection. She says:

“I think because there was an emphasis put on the professors getting to know us, and that kind of empowered us to come out more and to display our characteristics more and to know what makes us mad, what makes us sad; we were allowed to be ourselves. That helped us, we were allowed to be us and to find out what worked for us and what didn’t work for us... And I learned from it, definitely learned from it.” (p.134).

Faculty-student relationships and interactions may also bring reciprocal benefits, although many times these are not understood and oftentimes go unnoticed. Furthermore, they are often understudied and many times taken for granted. Valenzuela (1999) states that

students' desire for reciprocal relationships are tempered by their experience, which teaches them not to expect such relationships. As Noddings (1984) points out, students' weak power position relative to school personnel makes it incumbent that the adults be the initiators of social relationships (p. 104 as cited in Valenzuela, 1999). Faculty need to address the benefits to verbal exchanges and that this type of dialog actually supports and benefits both parties. Because professors are products of the system they are trying to transform, shifting the campus environment to include more social-class concerns will be as educational for many of them as it is for their students. Faculty members gain the highest return on investment when their intellectual travels take them far beyond their comfort zone (70-71).

Many scholars including Paulo Freire (1970) and Henry Giroux (1988), have advanced the notion that education must transcend the "banking model", where knowledge is simply "deposited" in students' minds and faculty operate at a distance from students. These scholars posit that the banking model is oppressive in nature, exploiting and dominating students, as well as working against democratic structures that honor diverse ways of knowing and participation in knowledge production. Thus, the ultimate goal of faculty-student relationships and interaction is that both can be educated about each other and break-down any assumptions or stereotypes that may exist. In this way, higher education can expand the social and intellectual horizons of all its participants.

Summary

The conceptual framework reflects five theories and models that work together in unison that support the dynamics and processes of the relationship between faculty and FGCS. Although the theories and models addressed earlier are in essence independent of one another, when taken into account together, they support the faculty-student relationship model. Although Rendón's

Validation Theory is paramount in the relationships process, it fails to address any benefit that faculty may receive from this validating experience. It focuses solely on the perspective of the student. As Rendón focuses on validation, Baxter and Montgomery's Relational Dialectic theory (1996) focuses on physical tensions students may encounter such as stresses involved in establishing communication. As stated earlier, as FGCS negotiate their place in college, they must minimize their interactions with peers, professors, and others because they have not yet established someone to help them negotiate this dialectical tension. For FGCS, faculty play a major role in assisting students through this process because as previously noted, they usually don't have anyone else to turn to. Another model that works to support the other three theories is compassionate communication. In order to fully understand the dynamics and progression of FGCS and faculty relationships, one must understand the how, when and why. Although the other two models address the need for validation and the tensions that exist, this model addresses the "human side" of the equation of compassion and caring. This model works well with my study because it incorporates this often neglected area when it comes to developing relationships and interactions between faculty and students. In addition, one cannot speak to the relationships with faculty and students without looking directly at the organizational environment in which one is entrenched. It is undisputable that institutions of higher learning play a key role in establishing organizational structures that are adapted for educational enrichment. As stated earlier in the literature review, these include different settings to support the establishment of strong relationships between faculty and students such as adequate gathering spaces, programs that support engagement, the physical environment that communicates belonging or small intimate settings where students feel safe communicating and interacting in a safe and open manner. Lastly, the model of shared lived experiences and reciprocal benefits are essential to

the theoretical framework that addresses faculty and student relationship. Both parties come with their own perceptions, expectations and values. Sharing these differences and similarities in a safe environment is critical to both parties. Although there is research that addresses the importance of sharing lived experiences, what is not well-studied is the effect on lived experiences by faculty. In other words, relationships are reciprocal and faculty need to feel comfortable sharing their own lived experiences with the students. According to Barnes-McConnell (1980) as cited in Whitman (1986), this creates a basic level of trust within students that I hypothesize supports all of the other four models and theories discussed earlier. These five theories and concepts counteract much of the barriers that FGCS encounter. In the midst of these five theories and concepts, it is the relationships that are formed between faculty and FGCS that many times go unnoticed. Bensimon (1994) points out that “while knowledge and theories are generated from the standpoint of particular interests, locations, and life experiences, we have been schooled to believe that knowledge is objective, neutral and separate from the knower” (p.39). This type of framework of neutrality fails to address the power differentials that are at play all around campus, including the important dialogues, interactions and relationships that are formed.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This single bounded case study sought to describe the experiences that led to faculty-student relationships, which most researchers attribute to persistence and overall student satisfaction. Merriam (2009) points out that the decision to focus on qualitative case studies stems from the fact that this design is chosen precisely because researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon (p.43). This type of research was suited well for my study of first generation college students and faculty relationships in a single-bounded small rural university, and takes full advantage of my own immersion and working role in the setting of my proposed research. Stake (1981) as cited in Merriam (2009) claims that knowledge learned from case study is different from other research knowledge in four important ways, case study knowledge is:

1. More concrete – case study knowledge resonates with our own experience because it is more vivid, concrete, and sensory than abstract
2. More contextual – our experiences are rooted in context, as in knowledge in case studies. This knowledge is distinguishable from the abstract, formal knowledge derived from other research designs.
3. More developed by reader interpretation – readers bring to a case study their own experience and understanding, which lead to generalizations when new data for the case are added to old data.

4. Based more on reference populations determined by the reader – in generalizing readers have some population in mind. Thus unlike traditional research, the reader participates in extending generalizations to reference populations.

The design of this study allowed the researcher to gather data from both students and faculty about their lived experiences. This study gathered experiences from these narratives to gain insightful practices to improve the overall college satisfaction of first-generation college students. This study explored two questions central in understanding the dynamics and nature of first-generation college student and faculty relationships.

1. In what ways and under what conditions have students and faculty built relationships with each other? What do these relationships look like?
2. What faculty-student interactions, if any, result in reciprocal benefits? What are the benefits, as the participants see it?

Research Site

In qualitative research, a single case or small, nonrandom, purposeful sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many (Merriam, 2009). The case study took place at a 4-year, small-rural liberal arts private university. This institution was selected because of its large first generation student population which exceeds 90%; therefore almost any student selected at random is considered first generation. Hence, this institution provided an ideal setting for my research. This site is in a small rural area (between 1,500-3,000 students), located in Washington State, and largely serves a rural, highly diverse and underserved population. For the purposes of this study, this particular university will be called Small Rural University (SRU). The **mission statement** at SRU reads as follows:

SRU is a non-profit, independent, non-denominational, accredited institution of higher education offering undergraduate and graduate education. Its mission is to provide quality, accessible baccalaureate and master's degrees to populations that, for reasons of location, poverty or cultural background, have been denied these opportunities in the past. Within its liberal arts curriculum, SRU offers strong professional and career-oriented programs designed to enrich the quality of life for students and their communities.

According to Kuh et al. (2010), the mission establishes the tone of a college and conveys its educational purposes, whether based on religious, ideological, or educational beliefs, giving direction to all aspects of institutional life, including the policies and practices that foster student success. At SRU what is quite unique is that the mission is indirectly aimed at first-generation students that oftentimes “for reasons of location, poverty or cultural background, have been denied opportunities in the past”. At SRU, the mission embodies an enacted mission - what the institution actually does and who it serves. Kuh et al. (2010) call the enacted vision arguably the most important to student success than an espoused mission (broad, expansive that promise something to almost everyone) because it guides the daily interaction of those in regular contact with students – in classrooms, in halls, playing fields – as well as those who set institutional policy, make strategic plans and decisions, and allocate resources (p.26). Frederick and James (2007) mention SRU as a “multicultural laboratory” (p.175). Because of this multicultural setting, Frederick and James state that one of the key characteristics of an effective faculty member is one who actively values and celebrates the diverse cultures represented at SRU. They further explain that at SRU, students come to know the mission, celebrate it, and thoroughly expect to be engaged in intercultural contact and learning in almost every class.

It is important to stress that since this institution is located in a small rural area; the makeup of students and faculty may differ compared to those from a larger urban area. For instance, many of the students are non-traditional where over 50% of the undergraduate population is over 25 years of age and 75% are female. In addition, over 50% of the students are

Latino/Hispanic (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Small Rural University is considered an HSI (Hispanic Serving Institution) which is defined by the government as a non-profit institution that enrolls at least 25% Hispanic students, and receives additional Title V grant funding from the Department of Education (Title V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program). In addition it has a substantial amount of Native American students enrolled. The following table (2) provides a snapshot of this very unique and highly diverse setting.

Table 2: Small Rural University (SRU) Institutional Data	
<i>Institutional Type</i>	Private, independent, non-profit, non-denominational four-year university
<i>Diversity</i>	68% Total; 51% Hispanic, 7% Native American
<i>Economically Disadvantaged</i>	51% of undergraduates and 54% of Hispanic undergraduates are low income; 76% receive Pell grants.
<i>First Generation</i>	91% Total; 96% Hispanic
<i>Transfers</i>	54% of fall 2012 incoming students were transfer students

This data is based on IPEDS during the 2013-2014 data collection year. Source: http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/DataCenter/DfrFiles/IPEDSDFR2014_235422.pdf

The College Student Inventory (CSI) for fall 2014 also gives a statistical summary of student responses, beginning with a report of the means for all the major CSI scales. Because these data are in the form of percentiles based on a national sample, you can readily determine how students compare to the national norm (50th percentile on each scale) for this specific institution. Figure 2 provides this report for this particular institution and the data are represented separately for females, males and all students combined.

CSI Completion Date: 08/01/2014 to 09/21/2014

Primary Sample Statistics	N	%
Number of Females	88	67.7
Number of Males	42	32.3
Total Number of Students	130	100.0

Section A

Local Means on Major Scales	Females	Males	Total
Summary Observations			
Dropout Proneness	66.2	76.5	69.5
Predicted Academic Difficulty	61.4	65.1	62.6
Educational Stress	45.3	57.8	49.3
Receptivity to Institutional Help	70.4	72.0	70.9
Academic Motivation Scales			
Study Habits	55.4	45.3	52.1
Intellectual Interests	54.3	46.3	51.7
Verbal and Writing Confidence	43.9	51.7	46.5
Math and Science Confidence	35.2	42.4	37.5
Desire to Finish College	62.9	45.3	57.2
Attitude Toward Educators	58.2	53.4	56.6
General Coping Scales			
Sociability	43.8	39.8	42.5
Family Emotional Support	44.4	40.0	43.0
Opinion Tolerance	55.5	54.8	55.3
Career Closure	56.5	51.4	54.8
Sense of Financial Security	43.0	41.4	42.5
Receptivity Scales			
Academic Assistance	77.5	76.6	77.2
Personal Counseling	56.6	60.6	57.9
Social Enrichment	63.9	59.3	62.4
Career Counseling	61.1	66.1	62.7
Financial Guidance	66.4	65.0	66.0
Supplemental Scales			
Internal Validity	7.0	6.9	7.0

Note: The statistics for all scales except internal validity were computed from percentile scores. For all of the scales, the national norm is the 50th percentile. High scores indicate levels of the characteristic described in the scale name (e.g. a high score in desire to finish college means that the group was above the average in desire to finish college). The statistics for internal validity were computed from raw scores (ranging from 0 to 7).

Figure 2

College Student Inventory™ - Form B

CSI Completion Date: 08/01/2014 to 09/21/2014. Part of the Retention Management System Plus

Case Selection

My primary informants for this study included a combination of first generation college students and faculty. It is obvious why this population was chosen as it constitutes over 90% of the students that attend Small Rural University. This short term case study was done over 10 weeks that included an IRB approved existing data set (see Appendix) that was done over 16 weeks. The approval was for 16 subjects (10 students and 6 faculty). Consent was obtained to use existing data from 9 subjects (6 students and 3 faculty) and 7 new subjects were enrolled (4 students and 3 faculty). Out of the 10 students, 6 were male (5 Latino, 1 Native American) and 4 female (2 Latina, 2 Native American) where neither parent had attended a two or four-year

institution. These students were randomly selected through email invitation through the university's support office. The students were selected based on two central dimensions: first generation college student status as defined by the researcher and junior or senior status regardless of ethnicity or gender, although it is important to note that most first-generation college students at this institution (96%) are categorized as Hispanic according to IPEDS (2013). For this case study, students were identified as first-generation where both parents did not attend college. This is important to note, because research shows that if parents attended college, but did not graduate, they would still bring with them college experiences that are essential to accumulating cultural capital. Therefore, my study chose to identify students where neither parent attended college. Because I sought to discover in-depth, rich experiences between students and faculty, it was also important to select and interview students that were in college during their junior or senior years. This way, students were able to provide rich descriptions and background when they first entered college, how they navigated their time there, and experiences with faculty that I might not otherwise get with incoming freshmen or sophomores. As mentioned earlier, the only characteristic I utilized was first-generation college student and junior or senior status regardless of gender or ethnicity. As Hand and Payne (2009) explain, "First generation students are often an overlooked marginalized group, however, because they don't look different from other marginalized groups, such as Hispanics or African-Americans, they often aren't perceived as needing help and so don't get it" (p.12). As mentioned before, over 90% are categorized as first-generation college students at SRU and almost all are Hispanic (96%). I used pseudonyms for majors because the site is a small university and programs or departments may be easily recognizable. After conducting interviews with students at random through email responses, I purposely selected faculty that students identified as playing a major

role in their time on campus. It is important to note that although the majority of students are first generation Hispanic/Latino, all but one of the six faculty identified by the students were White/Caucasian. The intent was to obtain how relationships occur between faculty and students at this specific small rural university; therefore, selecting faculty after student interviews provided me with the best opportunity to gain a better perspective of how this relationship occurs and the dynamics associated with this phenomenon. Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 2009). Merriam calls this snowball, chain, or network sampling and is the most common form of purposeful sampling (p. 79). This type of sampling worked well with the faculty selected for my study.

Data Collection

The collection of data was gathered in four different ways, a) semi- structured interviews, b) non-participant observations, c) document analysis and d) field notes

Interviews

I interviewed a total of 10 first generation students and 6 faculty/staff at SRU for a total of 16 participants. Participants were asked to sign a consent form. Patton (2002) recommends specifying a minimum sample size based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study. The sample should be representative of the larger population. This is a small rural university where the sample size is similar to the rest of the population where over 90% are first-generation students. The number of participants used for this study reached a point of “saturation or redundancy” (Merriam, 2009) as responses from interviews began to form common themes and the characteristics of students were quite similar given their cultural, socio-economic and environmental background.

The interviews utilized what Merriam (2009) calls as interpretive questions. Interpretive questions provide a check on what you think you are understanding, as well as offer an opportunity for yet more information, opinions, and feelings to be revealed (98). For this study, interpretive questions were important because I needed to extract information from the respondents that elaborated on feelings, experiences and opinions. This type of interpretive questioning aligned well with my theoretical framework because the purpose was to extract “meaning” from student and faculty experiences. I carefully rewrote and evaluated my prompts with the guidance of my committee and advisor to ensure that it would elicit rich meaningful stories. I found myself seeking additional information from the participants with many follow-up questions. For example, a couple of questions and follow-ups I asked students were, (1) *tell me about a time when you were faced with a difficult situation at school. What did you do? Who, if anyone, helped you through it?* (2) *Describe your ideal professor? What characteristics do you feel are important to you?* Likewise, a couple of questions I asked faculty were, (1) *Tell me about a time, if any, you felt you went above and beyond in helping a student. Explain why you did this? How did it make you feel?* (2) *Explain a conversation outside of class with a student(s)? What do you generally talk about? Who initiated the contact and how and where did it happen?* See Appendix D for the complete interview protocol.

Due to the nature of these types of interviews, I needed to be cognizant of non-verbal cues such as tone of voice, posture and emotions that provided added perspective. I wanted to make sure these questions were open-ended. This allowed the respondent to “yield descriptive data” (99), yet I also wanted to give the respondent time to reflect and think about their own experience which yielded additional rich descriptions. Throughout the interviews, I asked for clarification and would periodically ask the respondents to elaborate on their responses in an

effort to make sure I recorded intent and meaning. There were no evidence of cultural gaps since both the interviewer and respondents (students) shared the same general ethnic background and upbringing. All of the interactions were digitally voice recorded, named with a pseudonym, and immediately copied on an external hard drive as well as separate compact discs for backup. This ensured a way for me to preserve everything that was said verbatim for analysis that also provided validity. What follows is a detailed description of the interviews and what occurred during these interviews.

Once a student responded to the email invitation, I emailed them back with my contact information to set up the interview. The student interviews took place in my office which is centrally located on campus while the majority of the faculty interviews took place at their respective office locations on campus. Each student interview lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes while the majority of the faculty interviews lasted approximately forty-five minutes to an hour for an estimated total of approximately seventeen hours. Brief notes were hand written while the audio recorded interviews were taking place. Each participant was required to sign a consent form prior to the interviews. A copy of the consent form was also given to each participant. After each interview, I transcribed the interviews using Microsoft Word and initial coding was completed while the information was still fresh. Member checks were also used (Merriam, 2009). Participants were asked to confirm accuracy of the transcript and add or delete any information to their responses they deemed necessary.

During the interviews, the researcher was trying to build their own relationship with the students and faculty while becoming an intent listener of the stories. The researcher offered open-ended questions with the purpose of digging deeper into the experiences at this institution. The more the researcher intently listened, the more students and faculty wanted shared thick

descriptions of their experiences. A thick description is defined by Merriam (2009) as “complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated” (p.43).

Non-Participant Observations

Observations will give the researcher an “at the moment” perspective that is external from interviewing students and faculty on information that might have happened in the past. According to Merriam (2009), the participant observer sees things firsthand and uses his or her own knowledge and expertise in interpreting what is observed rather than relying on once-removed accounts from interviews. The researcher had an opportunity to observe students and faculty interact in campus hallways, cafeteria, student-faculty events/activities and other campus spaces. The intent was to document student-faculty dynamics that take place in common areas on campus. These observations took place once per week for 30-45 minutes for 10 weeks of the project. These informal observations were important for my study because these natural contexts featuring at the moment real-life dynamics between faculty and students are central to my research questions. Field notes from the observations were recorded immediately after the experience to make sure what was seen and experienced remained accurate and relevant. According to Merriam (2009), “the more time that passes between observing and recording the notes, the poorer your recall will be and the less likely you will ever get to record your data” (p. 130). A total of ten non-participant observations took place, many of them in casual spaces on campus such as the cafeteria or student/faculty events. An example of an observation that occurred was between four students and the president of the university sitting at the campus cafeteria having lunch together. The researcher observed that the conversation was engaging and they sat together for over forty minutes. Moments of casual conversation and laughter as well as focused attention to each other were also observed. After the president left, the researcher

followed up with the students and the president sitting at the table and asked some informal questions. The answers were immediately recorded. It was safe to assume that students sitting at the table with the president were first generation students since over 90% of students at this particular institution fit this student characteristic. Observation template can be found in Appendix E.

Document Analysis

The documents gathered for this study included the 2004 to 2009 National Survey of Student Engagement data. In 2004, SRU used data to set a goal to improve faculty interactions with students. Data from 2004 to 2009 were analyzed and will be included in the finding section. This document was important for my study because it analyzed frequency distributions for descriptions that were relevant to my study. A few examples of descriptions included: “talked about career plans with a faculty member”, “worked with a faculty member on activities other than coursework” or “discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class”. Data from this survey were used to enhance the understanding of narratives; therefore coding was not needed. Documents analyzed at SRU that directly pertain to faculty were SRU’s Key Characteristics of Highly Effective Faculty and Measures of Faculty Success which include the Core Convictions/Preamble. According to this document, highly effective educators at SRU are persons whose commitment and dedication embody the three “key values” underlying the SRU Vision Statement:

- 1) Honoring each person’s human dignity and potential
- 2) Seeking intellectual growth and challenges; and
- 3) Celebrating the shared spiritual roots of all humankind.

Faculty at SRU identified categories of key characteristics of faculty who are highly successful at SRU. These categories can be found in Appendix H.

SRU has also recently implemented an Engagement Advisor Program. The purpose of this program is to pair incoming students with a faculty/educator to help with their transition to SRU and persistence to the second year of college through conversations over coffee every three weeks. Every month all engagement advisors will meet as a group to identify themes and consult with each other. SRU has developed a system where a budget has been established in partnership with the Dining Commons. The student and faculty show up for coffee and the Engagement Advisor Program pick up the tab. The document specifically addresses the importance of getting to know each other. It states that you should pay special attention “to get to know” your advisees including their hometown, academic interests, family situation, etc. The stated goal is “to get them talking about their transition to SRU and what issues they may be experiencing; we want to flush out inconveniences before they become problems so that you can use your knowledge of campus and colleagues to mitigate or even solve these inconveniences”. The Engagement Advisory Program can be found in Appendix I.

Other documents were also attained from programs on campus that support first-generation college students such as the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) and SRU Student Life which includes engagement in extracurricular activities that complement academic and personal goals. SRU participates in recreational leagues such as indoor soccer, outdoor soccer, co-ed softball, basketball and local races (5k, Pirate Plunder, etc.). It is important to note that these recreational leagues are always open to faculty participation. For the purpose of data analysis, documents were Xeroxed and any identifiable information was deleted.

Field Notes

The last form of data was field notes. Field notes were a constant tool used in my role as a researcher. Field notes gave the researcher “at the moment” data and provided a type of journal that allowed the researcher to describe his feelings about this study. According to Merriam (2009), reflective comments are important because they are over and above factual descriptions of what is going on; they are comments on and thoughts about the setting, people, and activities. Field notes included date, time event, location, organizer, topic and observer. Immediately after any event or informal interaction, first impressions were noted.

All field notes included the following categories.

1. Author identification
2. Setting
3. Characters
 - a. Include counts of people and their attributes (e.g. race, gender, where important, and with some caution about assumptions being made)
4. Descriptive narrative of the event

Data Analysis

The units of analysis in this study centered on the relationship forming between first generation college students and faculty, and the experiences that contributed to their persistence as students in their junior or senior year at this particular small rural university. Secondary units of analysis focus on the faculty and the perceived reciprocal benefits they receive through relationship building.

The goal of qualitative data analysis is to uncover emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings (Patton, 2002). Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of the data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read. These meanings or

understandings or insights constitute the findings of a study. According to Merriam (2009), data analysis is the process used to answer your research questions. These answers are also called categories or themes or findings (Merriam, 2009).

According to Kelle (1995) as referenced in Coffey & Atkinson (1996), the role of coding in such a conceptualization is to undertake three kinds of operations: (a) noticing relevant phenomena, (b) collecting examples of those phenomena, and (c) analyzing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures. What follows is an attempt to explain how the researcher used the data from narratives, transformed it into themes (or coded stories) from open coding, to categories and finally developing a set of findings. The goal is to gain an understanding of different perspectives and narratives that are significant among first generation college students and their relationship with faculty.

Open coding

After all the interviews, observations, documents and field notes were transcribed, and Microsoft Word was used to separate each in their own respective folder. The data was analyzed and separated into topics and categories by reading and transcribing each narrative and then coding it with a concept or idea. The researcher used the meaning of analysis as the unit of analysis for coding, and descriptions. This is important because as Merriam (2009) states, the practical goal of data analysis is to find answers to your research questions. These answers are also called categories or themes or findings (176). Using Microsoft Word, a name or phrase was linked to the concept(s).

Below (Table 3) demonstrates the open coding round. It is an excerpt from an interview by a student during his senior year as a response to the probing question about an instructor that that he feels connected with him.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis: Open Coding Round

<i>Honestly, the person that sticks out is Robert. We never got into discussions about race, class or gender. We talked about Biology... We never encountered roadblocks of you know race or class, because it never became an issue. He is just so helpful, he cares, he cares, he just does.</i>	<i>Caring</i> <i>Focused on task</i> <i>Expectations</i> <i>Helpful</i>
<i>He defeats lots of stereotypes of people who work in science. He understands, like he surprises me when he understands when I am feeling tired or feeling down or upset or when I am happy, he just knows. I would tell him about the times when I couldn't afford to come to college and he found me like \$12,000 in scholarships. I didn't have to apply for it. I just said, I am having a problem, and he found it for me. One day he said, you are going to get this money but don't spend it on anything else. And later I find a check in the mail for \$12,000 and I found out it was a scholarship and he found it for me.</i>	<i>Understanding</i> <i>Resourceful</i> <i>Doubt</i>
<i>I went to a science conference a couple of years ago, I told him I was having anxiety about presenting my work and I was having a hard time and he noticed this. When I was going to present and he was going to leave me alone, he started crying, he started crying, and I thought he was just coughing or had a running nose, but after I looked over, he was crying, because he identified the struggle I was going through. We always talk about having money for the future and supporting my family. Telling me these things and always pushing me and to do this and that and this is the reason why. Having that push but also having that emotional sensitivity and the ability to show that to me that all goes into how caring a person he is.</i>	<i>Insecurities</i> <i>Bonding</i> <i>Caring</i> <i>Identification</i> <i>Motivation</i> <i>Proud/Shared Experience</i>

Axial Coding (constant comparative process)

After the open coding of all transcripts relating to interviews, observations, documents and field notes, axial coding or what might be referred to as constant comparative analysis was utilized. The researcher took the statement from the participant responses, documents and observations and went from specific to general. Codes that did not have many excerpts were placed together with other codes until I had a preliminary list of 54 codes. An example of the preliminary codes can be found below in Table 4. The complete table of preliminary codes can be found in Appendix F.

	Family	Relationships/Interactions/Bonding	Mentorship	FGCS Struggles	Lived Experiences	Motivation/Persistence	Validation/Acknowledgement	Privilege	Communication	Culture	Compassion/Emotions/Caring
STUDENTS											
Storm	1	6	1	3	3	2	5	0	1	2	2
Wonder Woman	1	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2
Captain America	3	5	2	5	2	5	5	2	5	2	5
Thor	6	2	2	2	3	2	5	2	2	5	5
Flash	3	4	2	3	4	2	4	1	4	4	5
Batman	0	3	2	5	7	5	5	1	2	1	5

	Navigation	Culture	Time Management	Need transparency	Communication/Email/Social Media	Help	Purposeful Relationships	Crisis Mgmt.	Listening	Honoring	Intimidation Factor
FACULTY											
Cheetara	4	2	5	2	2	3	4	2	2	2	4
Iron Man	2	1	1	1	4	4	4	2	5	2	5
Black Widow	2	2	5	1	2	2	4	2	3	5	3
June Beetle	2	1	2	2	3	5	5	4	2	2	5
Rainmaker	5	1	1	1	2	2	2	5	5	5	5
Spiderman	4	2	1	1	3	6	5	4	2	1	6
TOTALS	19	9	15	7	15	22	24	19	19	17	28

Table 4 (preliminary codes, complete set can be found in Appendix F)

After the initial codes were determined and coded using Microsoft Excel, the researcher used the results and then cross-analyzed both sets (students and faculty) with the greatest co-occurrence amongst like categories. Coffey & Atkinson (1996), states that one consideration is to give priority to topics on which a substantial amount of data has been collected and which reflect recurrent or underlying patterns of activities in the setting under study (157). The themes that appear regularly, I collapsed into one overarching theme. For example, preliminary coding categories such as *Acknowledgement*, *Valuing Culture*, and *Initiative* were bounded together by the theme *Validation*. Assertions about my study will be generated through constant comparison of the core categories. As Merriam (2009) states, as you move through the data collection and if you have been analyzing as you go, you will be able to “check out” these tentative categories with subsequent interviews, observations and documents (183). She continues by saying that you will most likely be thinking in a more deductive rather than inductive mode; that is, you are now largely “testing” your tentative category against the data. For my study, I deducted

categories that do not fall in line with my study. This allowed me to narrow my categories and test them against my data.

Codes present for each participant interviewed were analyzed, along with data from observations, documents (2014 National Survey of Student Engagement, See Appendix I) and field notes that were directly attributed to the research questions. It was from this data that themes of validation, lived experiences, size of institution, cultural capital and reciprocal opportunities/personal rewards were determined. Table 5 below illustrates the five themes selected and participant interviews through cross analysis of open and axial coding.

	Validation	Lived Experiences	Size of Institution	Cultural Capital	Reciprocal Opportunities/Personal Rewards
Storm	12	12	3	13	5
Wonder Woman	8	6	4	6	4
Captain America	14	4	3	7	7
Thor	16	15	5	9	7
Flash	18	10	6	9	6
Batman	8	15	10	5	10
Isis	14	13	6	8	6
Superman	16	8	6	7	8
Green Arrow	12	10	4	5	8
Cat Woman	8	11	4	9	11
Cheetara	10	12	2	8	10
Iron Man	12	4	4	4	7
Black Widow	14	8	2	8	8
June Beetle	8	5	5	10	6
Rainmaker	14	5	6	15	4
Spiderman	6	10	8	4	8
Totals	190	148	78	126	115

Table 5 Participants and codes. This table illustrates the codes with the greatest frequency for each participant.

Matrices of the themes from the transcripts of the 16 participants were triangulated with matrices of the results from interviews, observations, documents and field notes taken by the

researcher during the interviews. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) as cited in Merriam (2009), if the data collected from the three sources are similar, then the findings can be considered to be consistent and credible.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

According to Firestone (1987) as cited in Merriam (2009) the qualitative study provides the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author's conclusion "makes sense" (p.19). Because human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews. When rigor is viewed in this manner, internal validity is a definite strength of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Rich descriptions allowed for a complete description of the phenomenon being studied. Lincoln and Guba (1985) as cited in Merriam (2009) suggest the notion of transferability, in which "the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere... (p. 224). According to Merriam (2009), the investigator needs to provide "sufficient descriptive data" to make transferability possible. The researcher used multiple sources such as interviews, field notes and observations that provided dependability, credibility and transferability. This is called "triangulation" which is the most common form of internal validity. For this study, member checking was also utilized wherein transcripts, field notes and observations were verified that they were accurate (Merriam, 2009). This ruled out any misinterpretations of the meaning of what participants said or did.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

As mentioned earlier, there are an abundance of factors that may address the large gaps that remain for FGCS in terms of learning, persistence and graduation. One of the major gaps is that of retention. It is well documented that overall data suggests that first-generation college

students are less likely to persist and less likely to graduate than their non-first generation peers (Woosely and Shepler, 2011). This is also the case at SRU given their high percentage of first-generation college students (91%). In 2014, SRU had a below average freshmen retention rate with only 68% of students staying to become sophomores which is below the national average of 72.3% and only a 19% graduation rate (college navigator, 2016). It is well noted that student-faculty interaction represents a significant aspect of the student's undergraduate development and has significant positive correlations with every academic attainment outcome: college GPA, degree attainment, graduating, and enrollment in graduate school (Astin, 1993). According to Komarraju, Musulkin and Bhattacharya (2010), knowing even one faculty member closely are likely to feel more satisfied with their college life and aspire to go further (p. 332). It would behoove SRU given its poor retention rates and similar institutions to actively foster situations where faculty and students are constantly in contact and interacting with each other.

As mentioned extensively, student-faculty interactions are an important factor of student success in college. However, we also know very little about the nature, dynamics and processes of this interaction. In other words, we don't know how best to encourage these interactions that induce effort and focus. In this context, we need to ask ourselves "what else is going on". What can researchers and practitioners learn from the processes and dynamics of faculty-student relationships? Better understanding of how and why these relationships happen can advance theory of first generation college students and inform practical program innovations. Again, given that we know faculty-student interactions play an important role in the college experience of students, it is important for universities, faculty and researchers to understand what drives these relationships and how can they help aide these interactions. This

aide may be in the form of campus safe-spaces, arranging the physical environment that encourages interactions, or programs that support faculty and students to form interactions early on. We know that students and faculty must be present in the same location for substantive engagement to occur (Cotten & Wilson 2006) therefore; it may be obvious to create spaces on campus that is safe and culturally relevant to FGCS. Abraham Maslow as cited in Anderson & Carta-Falsa (2002) says that learning happens when an individual feels a sense of safety and association with others (p. 134). Another practical innovation may be to create smaller class sizes. Furthermore, college campuses may want to set aside student spaces in specific departments on campus where students and faculty can come together.

The theoretical implication that might emerge is the consideration of reciprocal potential benefits of these interactions with each other. Understanding these benefits from a theoretical perspective may shed light about the advantages and provide both parties with information that may encourage these interactions.

Data Quality and Limitations

There are several limitations to the design of my research. This study was done over a 16 week semester. This provided for only a brief encounter in the lives of first generation college students. It may be beneficial to conduct a longitudinal study over several years that follow the lives of each participant from their freshmen year to graduation. It is also important to recognize the ethnic variation of the setting. SRU is designated as a 4-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), which means it has been categorized by the federal government as having at least 25% of the students identified as Hispanic. It also includes a large percentage of Native American students and most of the students would be considered non-traditional. Furthermore, as stated in most literature, the majority of first-generation students begin at local community colleges (Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012). A similar study at a community college or perhaps a

comparative study between a 4-year and a 2-year college may very beneficial. It might be that other universities or colleges will have different experiences to share. HU is also set in a rural, socioeconomic disadvantaged, highly agricultural area, and the experiences of these students may predominately reflect this area. The experiences may be different from participants in an urban environment or an environment that is not as diverse or challenged economically.

Despite these limitations, the protocols, research questions and strategies for approaching my study will yield important data and recommendations that can advance the theoretical understanding of the mechanisms and dynamics of FGCS and faculty. Understanding what facilitates or detracts from these relationships may have an impact in understanding the broader implications of FGCS motivation, persistence and attrition.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Data from a combination of information obtained from interviews, observations, documents and field notes were taken to provide an array of thick descriptive experiences that develops a model of what helps relationships between first-generation college students and faculty at this particular private four-year university. Findings were organized around the two research questions central to the findings:

1. In what ways and under what conditions have students and faculty built relationships with each other? What do these relationships look like?
2. What faculty-student interactions, if any, result in reciprocal benefits? What are the benefits, as the participants see it?

To support these findings, the researcher included excerpts from the interviews. It is important to reiterate that pseudonyms were used in the excerpts for persons, places and departments at the institution shared by the participants.

Five themes and eleven findings were compiled using 54 codes compiled through interviews, observations, field notes and document analysis to comprise this case study.

These five themes were identified from the participant's experiences that first-generation college students and faculty attributed to their relationship and interaction. The themes were 1) validation, 2) lived experiences, 3) size of institution/location, 4) cultural capital, and 5) reciprocal opportunities/personal rewards. Ten findings were identified by interactions/relationships between first-generation college students and faculty. These were 1)

initiation of informal conversation by faculty 2) Verbal and social persuasion by faculty during the relationship phase positively affected students' perception of self-efficacy 3) Relationships between faculty and students are enhanced when lived experiences are openly expressed between both parties 4) intimidation factor 5) college environment, a contractual vs. relational system 6) quality of the interaction 7) cultural capital deficit of first generation college students is reduced when relationships with faculty are established 8) social capital was strengthened by faculty-student relationships, 9) rewards and opportunities become apparent when relationships are established later in college career and 10) faculty take a great sense of personal pride and excitement when students succeed. Table 6 provides a summary of the research questions, themes and findings.

Research Question	Theme	Finding
In what ways and under what conditions have students and faculty built relationships with each other? What do these relationships look like?	Validation	1. First generation college students felt more willing to open up when faculty initiate the conversation. 2. Verbal and social persuasion by faculty during the relationship phase positively affected students' perception of self-efficacy
	Lived Experience	3. Relationships between faculty and students are enhanced when higher lived experiences are openly expressed between both parties. 4. First generation college students are intimidated by the perceived higher class faculty that leads

		to a lack of communication and relationships.
	Size of Institution	5. A contractual vs. relational environment. Interactions between faculty and students at this particular university are more relational rather than contractual. 6. Quality of interaction is perceived as better at this particular small university setting.
	Cultural Capital	7. As faculty and first generation college students develop relationships; the cultural capital deficit of first generation college students is reduced.
What faculty-student interactions, if any, result in reciprocal benefits? What are the benefits, as the participants see it?	Reciprocal Opportunities/Rewards	8. Social capital was strengthened by developing faculty-student relationships. 9. Students became cognizant of rewards/opportunities associated with relationships with faculty later in their college career. 10. Faculty at this particular university take an abundance of pride from student success through formed relationships.

Table (6) this table illustrates the themes and findings as a result of the data collected, coded, and organized.

Participant Summary for First Generation College Students – (pseudonyms have been used for name and majors)

Storm - was a senior at the time of the interview. She was a Psychology major. She is Native American and Hispanic and a first generation college student. Storm did not graduate

from high school. Storm was a 10th grade dropout and a mother by the age of 17. She acknowledged that her son was the main motivation for her to continue with her education. Storm received her GED and enrolled at SRU. She characterized herself as very outgoing and easy to get along with. Storm enjoyed her time at SRU and would like to obtain a job in her related field of study.

Wonder Woman – was a junior at the time of the interview. She was a Psychology major. She is a Hispanic first generation college student. Wonder Woman credits her parents as her motivation to attend college. Her parents only finished up to the 6th grade in Mexico. She went on to say that her parents pushed her to pursue education because they understood that would mean a better life and a higher paying job, although they didn't understand what college was about. When she first entered college as a freshman, she would have lunch in her car because she felt afraid talking with people. She credited several faculty and staff with helping her believe in herself and motivating her to graduate.

Captain America – was a senior at the time of the interview. He was a Computer Science major. He is a Hispanic first generation college student. Captain America was a college transfer from a large research university. He credited his parents for his desire to go to college although he did not connect socially at a larger university. He credits a faculty for marketing the program and his decision to attend SRU. Captain America stated that he felt he was just not another number at SRU and that the personality of the faculty and staff were good. Captain America would like to attend graduate school and pursue his passion for computer science.

Thor - was a junior at the time of study. He is a first generation Hispanic college student at SRU. Thor was a nursing student and chose to come to SRU because it was close to home where he could get advice from friends that were already enrolled at SRU. He credited his

mother for motivating him to go to college. Thor stated the most difficult problem about college was how to take good notes. He credited one of his professors as one of his top supporters because he can actually go and talk to her about other classes and actually got advice and help.

Flash – was a junior at the time of study. He was a first generation Native American college student at SRU. Flash was a computer science major at the time of study and chose to attend SRU. He credits a field trip sponsored by the institution to Microsoft as a leading motivator to pursue computer science. Flash characterizes himself as an introvert who likes to do things on his own. He did credit on professor who was always there for him when things got difficult at home or in the classroom. He would like to find employment developing computerized video games that are representative of his culture.

Batman – was a junior at the time of study. He was a first generation Hispanic college student at SRU majoring in Psychology. Batman is the son of migrant seasonal farmworkers. His parents were working in the beet fields of North Dakota at the time of study. He attributed the size and comfort of SRU as an important part of his success at college. He spent much time on campus and said he had a chance to personally know the majority of staff. He credited connecting with faculty as an important area for opportunities in at out of college. Batman hoped to obtain a job working with mental health patients after graduation.

Superman – was a junior at the time of study. He was a first generation Hispanic college student majoring in Business. Superman lived with his aunt and other family members. He was very engaged in clubs and other offices on campus such as the admissions office or College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). He attributed his involvement in student government as a motivating factor for success in college. Superman liked to be pushed and challenged in college and believed that setting standards and goals in college motivated him to succeed.

Isis – was a senior at the time of study and had fulfilled all her graduation requirements. She was a community college transfer. She is a first generation Hispanic student majoring in Psychology. Her biggest concern entering college was financial assistance. She was not only concerned about how to pay for college, but how she was going to also come up with money to continue to assist her parents financially. She attributed an advisor for helping her set her college and career goals. Furthermore, she credited her comfort and interaction with a particular faculty person in helping her obtain employment.

Green Arrow – was a junior at the time of study. He was a first generation college student majoring in Biology. He never saw himself going to college. He took the advice of his mother to pursue something he had a passion for. His parents were from Mexico and did not pass the 6th grade. His mother wanted him to have things that she never had and knew that somehow college was the answer. He characterizes himself as a very quiet and reserve person when he entered college and attributed this to his lack of knowledge about how to navigate college. He didn't have anyone tell him what college was like. When a professor confronted Green Arrow about how well he presented on a project, it motivated him to continue to meet the professor's standards. A big turn for Green Arrow's life during college was because he now was comfortable talking with faculty, he now had the ability to feel comfortable speaking to people even in large settings.

Cat Woman – was a senior at the time of study and had fulfilled all of her graduation requirements. She was a 45 year old Native American first generation college student majoring in English. She started college when she completed high school, but dropped out early because it was just not the right time. After several part-time jobs, she decided to go back to college. She initially was interested in science, but struggled with mathematics. She felt discouraged and it

was a professor that helped her through these challenging times. She attributed her success to the family environment at SRU.

Faculty Profile (departmental information has been omitted and pseudonyms have been used) –

Cheetara – was a faculty at SRU at the time of study and is a white/Caucasian female. Her focus at the time of study was on first-time entering freshmen. She was a first generation college student herself. She remembers the difficulties of being a first generation college student and learning how to speak the academic language. She sees herself as a faculty that does more than just “spooning knowledge”, but rather kind of like a social worker at this particular university.

Iron Man – was a faculty at SRU at the time of study, and is a white Caucasian male. He came to SRU because he wanted to teach and later realized that he wanted to teach first generation college students. He acknowledged that first generation college students come from a very small world in terms of their experience and knowledge and when they get opportunities to actually go to other places, their world expands dramatically. His experience has led him to notice that when first generation students make a decision to go to college, there are lots of attachments to that come along with that, such as culture, family, friendships and relationships that they have to accept and continue to accept as they push through.

Black Widow – shared time as an adjunct faculty and advisor at SRU at the time of study. Black Widow is a white/Caucasian female. She acknowledged that her experience was quite different than many of the first generation students she stayed in contact with. She characterized herself as outgoing and had built a lot of friendly relationships with students.

Black Widow hoped that there could be more inviting campus safe spaces where students and faculty can interact on a more personal level.

June Beetle – was a faculty at SRU at the time of study and had been teaching for four years at SRU. She is a white/Caucasian female. She acknowledged the numerous obstacles first generation college students face. She recognized that the joys of teaching came from the time she spent with first generation students whom she categorized as not being entitled. She focused on making sure that she created a safe environment where students can joke around, talk to each other, and where the class felt like “a little family”.

Rainmaker – shared time as an advisor and faculty at SRU at the time of study. She had been with the institution for over ten years. She described her time at SRU as pleasant and exciting. Rainmaker believed that students at SRU are generally proud of their school. She believed that communication and social skills were key areas for first-generation college students to strengthen. Furthermore, she believed this would help students out not only in college, but in life.

Spiderman – was faculty at SRU at the time of study, and is a white/Caucasian male. He had been with the institution for over ten years. He was a first generation college student himself and grew up in a rural area very similar to the students he taught. He never imagined growing up that he would be a professor at a university. He grew up relatively poor and education was not a top priority for his family. He attributed family perception of college and the intimidation of college to be a decisive factor for much of the failures of first generation college students.

Findings

Findings 1: first generation college students felt more willing to open up when faculty initiate the conversation

Kuh (2005) found first-generation college students to be less likely to form relationships with other students and members of faculty. Rendon (2011) adds to this by stating that the first element places the responsibility for initiating contact with students on institutional agents such as faculty, advisers, coaches, lab assistants, and counselors (p.17).

In this study, both faculty and students spoke about their experiences of communication with each other at this particular small rural university. Of the six faculty interviewed, four expressed that initiating communication with students was important. Of the ten students, six experienced faculty that initiated the conversation/relationship and in addition, felt more comfortable and confident when this occurred. It was evident through interviews and informal observations, that at this particular university, most first-generation college students came to college with a lack of interpersonal development. It was critical that faculty reach out to students to offer assistance, guidance, encouragement and support. Wonder Woman, a first generation college student at SRU reflected about her college experience and how an instructor who initiated a conversation with her and motivated her to succeed in college:

When I first entered college for the first time, I was very shy. I didn't want to talk with anyone. I guess you can say I felt afraid. I used to eat lunch in my car because I really didn't want to talk to no one. After a while, I didn't think I was going to get past the first semester. It wasn't until Cheetara came up to me one day. I had class with her, but she noticed that maybe I was not as talkative as the others. She came to me and told me, I believe in you. You can do this, and things like that. This really encouraged me and I told myself that I can do this. I began to realize that I can talk to her and she listens to me. I guess I feel like I am important to her and that makes me feel good.

Cheetara, a faculty at SRU talked about the challenges of first generation college students and the need to reach out to them:

Students simply don't know how to navigate college; they don't know what department handles what...we think that either they'd found out by now, but if they're isolated, which first generation students tend to do, they tend to isolate themselves and they don't ask questions, they're not comfortable with it. I really encourage my students to come in and talk to me, and I try to make it as welcoming as possible, not a fearful thing. So I'll reach out to a student and I'll say, what's going on with you, I notice that your grades are slipping, or I noticed that you've missed certain assignments, or I noticed you missed class. Is there anything that you'd like to talk to me about that is going on in your life? Anything that might help you? In my experience, I really have to initiate contact with my students. Most of my students are I guess not confident enough to approach me so I'm very intentional about having a persona that's warm, that's approachable. I hear this over and over from my students, they say "you always seem so happy no matter what, and I don't want to tell them that's intentional, but really developing that and being aware of what I'm projecting is crucial to my students.

Storm, a SRU first-generation college student takes this a step further and describes the importance of faculty initiating contact and being acknowledged on a first name basis:

When faculty confront me and ask me how things are going or we chit chat about the weather, or anything, that makes me feel important. It is very normal here for faculty to mention you by name. I've been here five years, and different departments, and different interactions with different faculty. I am able to connect with them on a personal level. We have lots of interaction. And I think it has helped me develop relationships on campus

and that has been a great opportunity. When the president of the university came to me and started a conversation with me and calls me by name that just makes me feel so important.

Spiderman, a faculty at SRU spoke about the importance of being human towards your students even in the midst of being firm.

I think I am intimidating, honestly. Students are intimidated by me frequently. I am loud, not on purpose, I am naturally like this. I am loud, stern, and demanding. I don't want any junk work from them, but at some point you have to make yourself human. There has been several snowball fights with students, there has been a Skittle battle where we had to clean up the classroom afterwards, but sometimes you have to do something that reminds them that you are just another person and there are things that are fun and I think that helps especially when someone like me that is loud and demanding. You have to do something that cuts yourself down and make you approachable. Establishing a relationship with a student is difficult. Sometimes the students just don't like you, and that's ok; as long as you don't allow that to color your grading or assessment of their work. If you have a good relationship with a student and if you can establish that rapport with the students, it is amazing what they will let you get away with saying. You can almost say anything about their work, like this is garbage, or you can do better than this. This type of rapport happens organically, such as when you see them outside of the classroom and you remember to say their name, or shake their hands. I start that conversation. Those are the things I try to do regularly.

The researcher observed many occasions where Spiderman would be outside of the classroom playing volleyball, throwing a football or as he stated, starting a snowball fight. The students

appeared excited, engaged and they appeared very relaxed in this environment. Through the researcher's observations and field notes, it was apparent that Spiderman had connected with students by allowing himself as he states, "being human". What was telling was that Spiderman knew the names of just about everyone he was playing with. He repeatedly shouted or addressed students on a first name basis.

Batman, a first generation college student felt that the environment lends itself to faculty and students getting to know each other:

The faculty and staff here are very friendly. That goes from the president of the university to the newest staff member. They know who I am and just that interaction here allows us to at least create opportunities to communicate outside the classroom. I know that I have the opportunity to make a comment because of the environment here which is small class sizes and definitely just the professor being comfortable with answering questions and letting the students make comments, so just the fact that I can do it here, allows me to do it.

From accounts of the participants' interviews and observations in their experiences and participation in building relationships, faculty purposefully and intently initiated contact with first generation college students helped students feel acknowledged as important and active participants in the college environment. However, the external barriers often experienced by students at this particular university create situations that sometimes hinder initiating communication with students. Spiderman provides a clear barrier of the compounding external factors confronting first-generation college students:

That's always going to be the case (no family support, no financial support, family obligations, employment considerations) here to some extent because those are precisely

the students that are mission says we should serve...educationally isolated, underprepared, that's our target population...the snowball becomes larger and larger and many times you're at a loss of words.

Rainmaker further confirms this by explaining that communication is hampered when students become apathetic to communicating:

It is very difficult many times to reach out and connect with students. I've been dealing with a few students recently and they have family problems and life problems and they won't even respond to calls or emails, or attempt to try to communicate with me. So it's not easy.

Office hours appeared to be another barrier in communications with faculty. Most students as mentioned by Iron Man are reluctant to use office hours that are formally set by the instructor.

Iron Man describes it like this:

Yeah, I'm not a real social media savvy type of guy, but office hours I rarely have anybody come in. I talk about office hours, I write what they are, every time a student e-mails me "can I come and see you?" sure my office hours are...and nobody comes during office hours..."

Another important barrier addressed by many of the respondents was the increase in the numbers of adjuncts at SRU. According to one respondent wishing to remain anonymous, she stated, "we have to wear lots of hats here on campus". "There are only 72 full-time faculty and we can become overworked". "Adjuncts get in and get out; therefore, it is very difficult for adjuncts to establish any type of relationship. It is very hard for them to make any commitments to each other".

Finding 2: verbal and social persuasion positively affected students' perception of self-efficacy

According to Bandura's Self Efficacy Theory (1977), increasing a person's self-efficacy increases their ability to deal with a potentially aversive situation. Verbal or social persuasion also affects one's perception of self-efficacy. It is "a way of strengthening people's beliefs that they have what it takes to succeed" (Bandura, 1994, p. 3). One of the more prominent findings in this study were that students felt a sense of obligation to succeed not necessarily to family, friends or the university as a whole, but rather to specific faculty who initiated a relationship. Of the six faculty interviewed, four were cognizant that establishing a relationship that entails motivating first generation college students was important. Of the ten students, seven experienced a sense of self-efficacy when faculty responded to them in a positive manner. Terenzini et. al. (1994) found that their instructor support made them feel capable of learning and instilled a sense of "obligation to succeed" (p.67). Magee (1992) suggest that students with low self-esteem who find it difficult adjusting to college academics may benefit from support (e.g. faculty, peers, family) which may lead to increased satisfaction with college and enhanced self-concept (as cited in Woodside, Wong & Wiest, 1999).

Captain America, a SRU student spoke about his experience with self-efficacy and how the professor demonstrated through actions his sense of belief in the student.

He really has this way of influencing people and he influenced me to take a shot into the program but knowing more about my professor down the road, I would see this more helpful, supportive character, and that's what helped get me here. He's so helpful, he just cares. He understands and he surprises me with how he recognizes when I'm feeling down or when I'm feeling tired, or when I'm feeling upset or when I'm happy. He was always telling me to do that, and telling me to do these things and always pushing me to to this because I need to do this, I need to do that. Having that push but also having that

emotional sensitivity and ability to show that to me, I think that all goes into how caring a person he is. One day I was at a conference with him presenting my project in Seattle. I told him that I was experiencing anxiety about presenting my work and I was having a hard time. He noticed that and as we were going to present, he started to cry. I thought he was just coughing, or he had a runny nose, but then when I looked over after a while, he was crying because he knew what I was going through. That is what gave me the confidence to move forward. He believes in me and I don't want to let him down. I have a big family, but the sad thing is that we're not tight, we're not that close and we don't see each other a lot. We get along, but it's not like we're visiting each other every weekend or it's not even maybe once a month, it's every so often, and that's hard. I definitely spend more time with my own professors than I do with my own family.

Cheetara, a faculty at SRU describes the importance of students understanding the big picture, and the constant reminders of support.

I want them to see where they can go. I want them to see themselves six years from now. I remember as a student all I could see was next week on my syllabus, and surviving until finals and one of the big motivations for college is being able to see that, you know the big picture. Why am I really here? Where am I going to be? And if they can have constant reminders of people who have been through that recently, and where they are now, I think that helps in a motivation level.

Thor, describes his experience as a college student and how he knows when a faculty person has his best interest at heart.

It's when I feel like they're happy to help me. That's when I get a rush of energy to do something. When I feel they're not like oh I have to help this kid again or something like

that. I feel like when they're eager to help me and feel like this kid actually wants to do something with his life and will actually help me reach my goals. When this happens, I feel like I've bonded with my professor. For example, one time, my instructor Cheetara came up to me and told me she believes in me. That made me feel like I could accomplish anything. She is actually one of my top supporters right now because I actually can go to her and talk to her about other classes and I actually get advice and help from her. She makes me feel comfortable like I'm able to tell her whatever I want.

Spiderman, a faculty at SRU describes how relationships are the link to being “plugged” into education.

I think having a faculty relationship on our campus given our demographics, given most of the students need developmental education, given that they are first generation students, given that a large number of them come from poverty, I believe that connecting and forming a relationship with a faculty member is vital. If you don't have that relationship, and you get to that point in your education when you are ready to give up and quit which happens a lot to students and having a faculty member who you trust, who believes in you, who motivates and pushes you and having that relationship can be the link to being plugged into the education and keep you from leaving. It is better for you to have formed a relationship with many, especially in your discipline area; you should have made good relationships with those faculty.

Green Arrow, a first generation college student explains how a professor and advisor took a liking to him and how trust builds strong relationship.

I guess he just took a liking to me ever since I stepped in his class. I got along with him well. I think the way he looks at me is really a smart young man, he sees my scores, and

he knows that I do well. He hardly calls on me in class, because he knows that I know what he's talking about. We are on the same page. We talk after class. I think he sees the potential in me, and I would like to think that is why professors are here for, to bring the best out of students and see the potential in students and pull it out of them. I think the faculty benefit from giving guidance to students so they can help find whatever they want to go into. He's so flexible, but not a dictator. He lets you express yourself in a comfortable way. I think this relationship goes above just teacher and student. It's more than just I guess friends. I really don't view it that way. I look at it as if he is helping me. It's more about that I can talk to them about anything. He is a trustworthy person. To me relationships matter a lot, because you know being from a small family, um, you know I only discuss those things with my family, because it's so close. And I think coming here and building relationships are important. Like when I first enrolled here, I met Rainmaker. We sort of hit it off. She took a liking to me and I took a liking to her. It was not even her teaching style. I saw her as a person just like me, and it made it easier to build that relationship. She always helps me research scholarships. I trust her. She has helped me so much and always encouraged me. I am not sure where I would be without her help. She really motivated me to get my degree, and I guess I owe her a lot.

Carter (2003) conducted a study of 44 low-income African youth that examined social stratification and cultural production within schools. She mentions that a significant number of those in her study shared their perceptions of problematic relationships with teachers, who they felt expected little of them and their classmates. Superman, a student describes his experience about trying to meet the professor's standards after getting to know them.

The more I got involved with faculty and they got to know me, I felt I needed to meet a certain standard. For example, in student government, my advisor tells me that I have to maintain a certain grade point average, so the standard is set high. The more faculty gave me responsibilities, the more the excitement builds. I want to do well for them because I am given a lot of responsibility and it is also very important for them that I do well.

Although it is apparent that self-efficacy is important in establishing motivation for students, Hand and Payne (2008) found in their study that if the lack of resources are too overpowering, even with high levels of internal motivation, students were not able to persist. This lack of resources that “overpower” internal motivation as Hand and Payne discuss in their study of first-generation college students in the Appalachian region agrees with much of the experiences of students at SRU. As Spiderman previously noted, *“the snowball gets larger and larger until you can’t help”*. What is also interesting is that faculty never suggested that time was an impediment in interacting with students. This may be attributed to what Iron Man calls a “small, intimate” institution. In a literature review conducted by Meyers-Hoffman (2014), she states that institutional pressures to engage in scholarly activity has created a climate which faculty feel obliged to limit their engagement in student-faculty relationships in favor of conducting research (p.14). It may be that at SRU, faculty are more accessible to students due to size of the institution along with the fact that it is not categorized as a research university.

Finding 3: relationships between faculty and students are enhanced when lived experiences are openly expressed between both parties

SRU teachers intentionally focus learning on “what they know about their students...five generations of English speaking, white migrants blend with three generations of Mexican and

Asian migrant labor families, all living among native people who have been here since time immemorial” (Frederick & James, 2007). According to Frederick and James, from the convergence of peoples, SRU inherits a “storytelling culture” (p. 176). This type of storytelling culture is supported by the university vision statement - “celebrating the shared spiritual roots of all humankind”. Furthermore, SRU’s Key Characteristics of Highly Effective Faculty and Measures of Success adopted by the faculty senate identify the following categories that support the storytelling culture:

- 1E. Understands and respects individual learners, intellectually, emotionally and culturally.
- 2A. Uses a variety of active teaching and learning strategies to interest, engage, and motivate students.
- 2E. Adapts teaching strategies to diverse learning styles.
- 2G. Designs a hospitable classroom culture and builds a collaborative community from the diversity in the classroom.
- 3C. Functions comfortably and effectively in the cultural communities served by SRU.
- 3D. Recognizes and respects each student’s multiple socio-cultural identities and teaches holistically (mind, heart, spirit, and body).

According to Housel and Harvey (2009), because being from a lower- or working class background is often perceived as devalued, first generation college students frequently find it hard to share their struggles with others. Students need support from other people in their position, especially if that person has a position of power (p.31). Rendón (2011) points out that one of the reasons that many students find ethnic studies programs so appealing is that they are able to learn in a validating classroom context. Students can nurture a community; have professors who draw out student strengths, learn about their history, see themselves in the curriculum, and interact and develop close relationships with students and faculty who reflect their own backgrounds (p.18-19). In the case of SRU, fourteen of the sixteen participants spoke about the importance of sharing experiences. Out of the fourteen participants, all ten students were encouraged to hear stories from their instructors. Even when students did not have the

opportunity to share their own experience, they expressed a desire to do so because a faculty shared their own story. Wonder Woman, a college student describes her ideal professor as someone that is close to her and understands her challenges.

When you see Black Widow you might say, what did this white woman go through? But I learned that she has an interracial marriage and she has gone through a lot, and it's a big deal. When a professor overcomes their own challenges and shares that with me, that is motivating, it doesn't matter what the challenges are. They are opening up to the classroom and me, and it triggers something up in me to open up to them about myself. I see Black Widow in the library and ask her how she's doing. She is one of my top people to write a recommendation letter. She will do anything for me. I just talk to her about life in general, how are the kids, family life. I feel like first generation students can benefit from relationships with instructors knowing that someone has gone through the college experience and guide them along the way.

Isis, a SRU student talks about an instructor who shares their own personal experience and how that is a determining factor for opening up communication with that instructor outside of class.

She had presentations when she lectured, and while she presented and lectured, she always gave personal experiences, and that helped me be able to relate to her and identify with what she is talking about and the things I am going through. This helps me connect with what she is lecturing about. It also connects me with her personally because she is opening up with her own personal life. This gives me motivation to open up with her even though her experiences are different than mine. This allowed me to have sort of a comfort level with her, and I feel comfortable talking with her. We have developed a good relationship because of this. She makes are classes be alive because it is just not

lecture and it is hands on and we are able to experience with her together. She makes us all understand each other better.

Flash, a SRU student describes a difficult time in his life and how Spiderman helped him by describing his own experiences although challenged by processing the academic material with lived realities.

I'm not a very big conversation person. When I first entered SRU, I was just scoping things out. I don't know, I mean I like face-to-face conversations and everything, but I mean you can't expect much from a professor you know who has like fifty other students from other classes. I do see Spiderman almost every day you know it's just kind of like when during my first years here, I was homeless, and so it was kind of hard you know for me. I was just kind of like you know, I was always late to class cause I'd sleep in because I was out till like three in the morning at McDonald's like studying you know, and so I'd always just tell him like man you know sorry because that was a big problem in my first years of me coming late to class and everything, so he'd try to find me some help and stuff like that. He would try to find ways I could like really just help myself and everything, and that's when he would tell me about all of his experiences and everything and yeah, you know, and that made me feel like maybe I can do this, you know, but classes just are very tough you know, so I just didn't want him to think like I needed help or anything like that, you know, I just didn't want to be a bother to him. He's just a relatable person, and he's done so well and everything and has been doing a lot for SRU, and everything like that. I just feel like he's not trying to sugar coat anything either. So if you ever just want to know something straight up, you can just go like "hey Spiderman", and ask him, because he understands you.

Spiderman, talks about first generation college student struggles and how he uses his own personal experience to connect with students.

The school system hasn't served them well and they become under-prepared to become a college student. They come in without family support to succeed in higher education. They come in without financial means to sustain themselves through and earn an education. There are so many things that are compounding, and at some point, they become overall the snowball that becomes larger and larger. You can see it happening as a faculty, you can talk to a student, identify the situation, and you can suggest they go to student services, maybe they have resources, emergency loans, and maybe they won't. But frequently you see those students leave school and they certainly feel like they don't have another choice. That's always going to be the case here to some extent because those are precisely the students that are mission says we should serve, educationally isolated, under-prepared, that's our target population. And that is why family support is so important and unfortunately for a lot of our students, they don't have family support. I think at a small campus like this, you sort of form a family on campus. I think faculty and students almost become a family in some sense. Part of forming a relationship with students and communicating with them is telling them your own story. You don't need to tell them right out of the gate, I feel like there is a moment and as an instructor, I know when the moment is right. I like to let them know that I was a 26 year old that decided on a whim to go to college because of a community college catalog showed up on my door. I commuted and went to evening classes and my story was that the first day of class for me, I took English composition and developmental math class because I placed in developmental math, and in this institution, the majority of students place in

developmental math. That's where I try to let them know that I started in the same place you did and understand the struggle to progress through the system. The reason I bring that up is to give them hope. I started where you are at, and I am where I am because I worked very hard, and I struggled through things and I did what I needed to do to become successful. I think when you tell your story you make yourself a person as opposed to elite.

Iron Man, a faculty at SRU describes that although he may not share the same first generation experiences that his students share, the more he gets to know his students, the more he can use examples that fit where his students are coming from.

You can change the reinforcement to make it more random or more steady, and a lot of my students have done work in the orchards, and so when I talk about the fixed ratio schedule of reinforcement that is like here is a filled box, I am paid for that box or that bin or whatever they use, and so there it is. They immediately can see that the rate of behavior increases because the incentive is there to get as many bins in as possible and so it's a pretty abstract concept, but the more I've got to know my students, the more I can pull examples out that actually do fit where they're coming from. These types of examples pay huge dividends when it is time for my students to open up with me and share with me about their experiences. I think learning from each other makes everyone better off in the long run.

Faculty initiating their own lived experiences became apparent in most of the findings. If faculty did not initiate or set the stage for this dialog to happen, many times students were hesitant to interact with faculty. What is even more troubling is that students appeared not as comfortable with their surroundings if they felt faculty did not understand them. This is important to note

since most students appeared to be reactive when faculty shared their story first. As Zull (2002), points out as cited in Frederick and James (2007), “you can see the value of stories for the teacher. We should tell stories, create stories, and repeat stories; and we should ask our students to do the same” (p.177). Jehangir (2010) supports academic spaces that invite this shared lived experience. “when academic spaces invite students to share a lived experience that invites a deeper more authentic understanding of their identities, students are able to lay claim to their many selves as legitimate sources of knowing” (p.547). However, it was apparent that students interviewed at times had difficulty connecting the stories of lived experiences to academics. Rather, these stories made students “feel comfortable” or as “sense of belonging”.

Finding 4: first-generation college students are intimidated by the perceived higher class faculty that lead to a lack of communication and relationships

According to Housel and Harvey (2009), if you consider yourself to be from a higher class, be aware of how you look, speak, and act in the classroom. It may be challenging to break away from the social parameters of what a teacher should look and act like, depending on your institution. However, awareness of how we represent our class is an important step for making first generation college students comfortable in their new environment (p.31). Ruth Bounous (2013) states in an article for Spark Action, that in order to serve as guides for first generation students, faculty need the time to develop a relationship with students. Relationships can be built by meeting with first generation students individually or in small groups and listening to their concerns and experiences. It is also important to be accessible to students by understanding how they form relationships. For example, Bounous (2013) states that upon arriving at a university with over 50 percent first generation students, she announced office hours and invited students to visit with her at these times. She soon noticed that very few first generation students came to the

office hours. This was also the case at SRU as most faculty mentioned that students do not take advantage of set office hours with faculty. Bounus further mentions that it took her a while to figure out that they were too intimidated by the formality of the situation. Intimidation became a common theme and topic amongst conversations the researcher had with students and faculty at SRU. Most first generation college students interviewed expressed a sense of intimidation and utter fear when approaching or communicating with faculty due to their heightened feeling of being from an undervalued class. Cat Woman, a student at SRU talks about her perception of faculty on campus and how she had to overcome what she called the intimidation factor.

When I first entered college, I was trying to connect with anyone as a Native American woman that would, you know help me through this. I had a hard time with Spiderman because he was so demanding and strict. I was you might say intimidated by him in a way because he is like an expert you know. I didn't do well in his class and ended up arguing with him a lot. I ended up taking the same course three times, and I didn't pass. I was like, this is so frustrating. So I had to switch departments that didn't require that specific class. But actually, Spiderman was really good though. He is straight forward; he tells it like it is. I might say I don't like him, and feel intimidated by him, but he tells it like it is, and I guess I can respect that. I guess when I first saw him I thought there is no way he can understand me or I guess like I didn't think I would make it, but I guess once I got to know him more, he is just, I don't know, treats everyone fair. I just didn't get it.

Spiderman talks about this relationship with Cat Woman and how he had to adjust to this specific student:

I think I am intimidating, honestly. Students are intimidated by me frequently. I want to be honest, firm and fair. I scare them a bit. I tell them they need to work hard, if they

don't work hard, I have the come to Jesus talk with them. I had a Native American student that just didn't like me. Our personalities clashed, and I am loud. Many times publicly on campus, this student screamed at me in anger and I think it's a personality issue. I have a loud emotive personality and she has a strong emotive personality and loud and boom! It was a bad mix. With her I knew I had to be intentional and I spoke with her to keep my voice down, and say positive things and not to tell her she did it wrong, but to use different phrases. Some students you can say it like that, but with her, you had to put a positive spin on everything because I think behind her loud personality, she was also very intimidated and afraid by the whole college process. The strange thing is that we have a good relationship now. She's come back and thanked me. I think she just wanted to thank me because she was able to get through college because I was a jerk. So the end result was good, but our relationship here on campus through the couple of years she struggled on campus was tough.

June Beetle speaks to the importance of making yourself human as an instructor and having intent about removing the intimidation barrier while striking a balance between respect and relationship. SRU's key characteristics adopted by faculty support June Beetle's assertion. 1D states that the faculty should be aware of key aspects of "human, intellectual and moral development". Furthermore, 3A, states that faculty should practice human diversity and practice inclusiveness as core institutional values. June Beetle says:

You have to remove the intimidation barrier, and in the Hispanic culture, the professor-student interaction can be a very formal barrier, and I don't know if that is for these students that need a lot more attention and help to get through. You need to remove that very formal professor-student interaction. You have to get to the heart of what's going

on with them so that when you have to have hard conversations, you can be like well, this is your third time you've had to miss class due to child care, let's make a decision. The reason a lot of the first generation students do not initiate conversations with faculty here is because of intimidation. You have to train them into the culture of being a college student. This isn't high school anymore, and a lot of them have no experience and they have nobody to talk to, so they start failing, they just drop off a lot of the times. When I feel like I've established a good relationship with a student, I won't consider it as a friend. I don't think I'll ever be their friend, maybe in 10 or 20 years. It is a position of importance in their lives but also of authority. So no matter what, you can't really cross over but also you can't be too rigid. So I talk to everyone about what's going on, especially when they go off the rails and they all go off the rails. First generation students at some point all go off the rails. There's very few who just slide through. It can be pretty exhausting because you have to be emotionally invested in them because if you're not, they know. These kids know. The environment that they've been raised in, they know if you're not real.

Captain America, talks about relationship building and intimidation he experienced with faculty and how this has changed over time.

When I entered as a freshman, I was totally overwhelmed. I was at a larger university, and I saw faculty as authoritative. I didn't feel comfortable there. I guess that is one of the reasons I transferred. When I got to SRU, I wanted my instructors to understand that I'm here to learn and that I accept them as an instructor, and then we can go from there. When I transferred here, I was nervous because I thought it was going to be the same way I experienced with my other instructors at the larger university, but I soon realized

that they communicate at least to my understanding at my level. This helps me to reach out to them too. I think about 99% of the instructors I come across here, it's a respectful relationship. Understanding that they're the instructor and I'm the student helps, and later on I'll reach out to them. Now as a senior, I understand that a lot better. I don't think every student understands that. I'll say, "Hey how're you doing? And hey how'd you get to where you are? Or where did you go to school? Or I liked that lecture you gave today, or what are we gonna do next week? I'll try to get involved with how they are as individuals because they're more than just teachers to me. I think a lot of students don't understand this. I know I didn't understand it when I first came here. I guess it just took time for me to realize that they are human just like me.

Finding 5: interactions between faculty and students at this particular university occur in a more natural setting such as hallways, cafeteria or open spaces.

Iron man, a professor at SRU makes the case that at his institution, it is more about informal relations rather than formal contracts with students.

I'm not real social media savvy, but my office hours are established and I rarely have anyone come in. I talk about office hours, I write what they're, and every time a student emails me "can I come and see you?" sure my office hours are...and nobody comes during office hours. Nobody stops in my office and says "Mister Iron Man, I am just not getting this, etc." The communication that happens between my first generation students is more spontaneous. They may never use my office hours, but they'll text or email, or walk with me after class to ask follow up questions. It's much more in the moment kind of stuff as opposed to "Mister Iron Man has office hours Wednesday

afternoon from 3:00-5:00 pm”. I guess this type of setup is more contractual. I would guess that in a big school, somewhat mostly because of the nature of the beast, it’s more contractual. I come in and I share what I know, you come in and you absorb what I know, you take the test on what I know, I give you your grade, see you next semester. But here, instead of a contractual relationship, as I explained in setting up my failed office hours, it’s more relational. In a big school, you might have a professor twice. They get me here 8 or 10 times for better or worse, so there is more of that opportunity to grow a relationship over time. At SRU, it’s more of we’re kind of in this together, and my job is to share what I know, but if you’re not getting it, it’s also my job to see what’s missing, what’s not there.

Frederick and James (2007) describe conversations that occur at SRU as natural every day interactions that happen in casual meetings in hallways, college paths, and in the cafeteria - that is “in naturalistic ways” (p.176). SRU’s Engagement Advisor Program is meant to address this finding in a way that connects students and faculty in a more informal manner even though the program was designed in a very purposeful manner by the institution. The goal is to get student and faculty talking. Fleming et al. (2005) says that developing an adviser-advisee relationship early in a student’s college career can remove the barriers preventing these students from coming into the advisor to ask questions and learn answers. They further state that the early formation of this relationship is an important factor in retaining students. An anonymous staff person at SRU said, “you know when students are successful here when they show up to class, ask questions, talk with faculty outside of class, know what non-faculty support services can do for them, but most of all, they believe that they belong here and realize the place does not exist without them and use that power in asking questions of others here on campus”. The Student Life department

on campus supports student involvement in extracurricular activities. There are currently 18 active clubs along with 2 graduate clubs. Each of the clubs are advised by a faculty member. Furthermore, SRU has a variety of recreational sports all designed to connect the student with the institution. Notably, all activities welcome faculty-student interaction.

Finding 6: quality of interaction is perceived as better at this specific small-rural setting as opposed to a larger urban type setting.

The National Survey of Student Engagement 2004 and 2009 Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons at SRU, and highlights the quality of interactions at this institution as compared to similar institutions. The following tables(s) 7: are active and collaborative learning comparisons between 2004 and 2009.

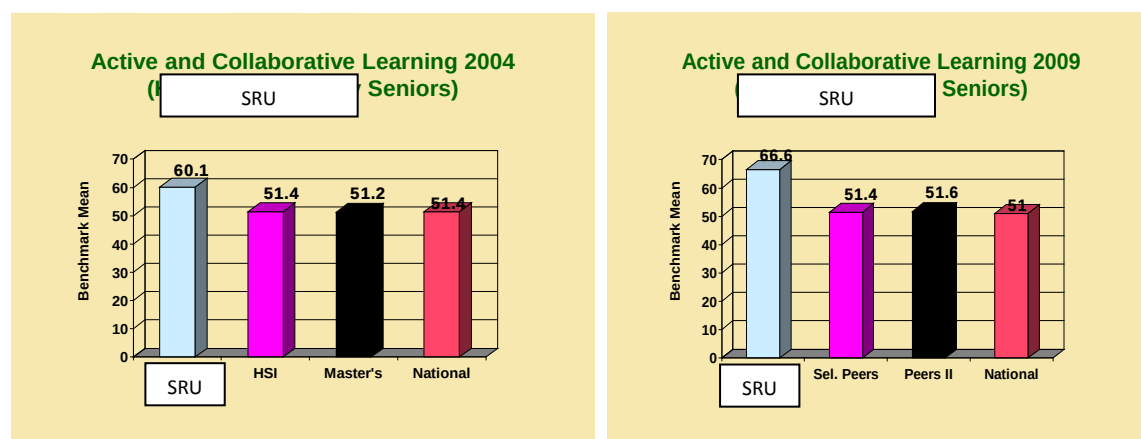


Table 7 (NSSE, 2004 and 2009, frequencies and statistical comparisons)

The Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons report presents item-by-item student responses and statistical comparisons that demonstrate patterns of similarity and differences between students and those in the comparison group institutions. The report uses information from all randomly selected or census-administered students. When analyzing the interactions between faculty and students, SRU's mean score is significantly higher than the other comparison group institutions. For example, the interaction between seniors at SRU with faculty (mean 6.2) as compared to the

Carnegie Class (5.7) is significantly higher. This difference is also evident across the board amongst advisors, staff and other peers. Table 8 below describes this and is more specific about the important details in the report that pertain to the quality of student and faculty relationships at SRU.

13. Indicate the quality of your interactions with the following people at your institution.													
a. Students	Q student	1	Poor	1	2	33	1	218	1	2,992	1	6.3	5.7 ***.44
		2		1	2	35	1	313	1	4,399	2		
		3		1	2	104	4	831	4	10,354	4		
		4		2	3	241	9	1,901	8	23,925	8		
		5		3	5	582	20	5,127	20	61,674	21		
		6		12	21	893	30	7,759	30	90,080	30		
		7	Excellent	37	64	973	34	8,639	34	98,661	33		
		—	Not applicable	1	2	11	0	256	1	3,483	1		
		Total		58	100	2,872	100	25,044	100	295,568	100		
b. Academic advisors	Q advisor	1	Poor	2	4	127	5	1,074	5	14,211	5	5.8	5.4 .25
		2		1	2	107	4	1,104	4	15,358	5		
		3		5	8	171	6	1,543	6	21,230	7		
		4		3	5	316	11	2,586	10	33,964	12		
		5		8	14	470	16	4,157	16	50,828	17		
		6		9	15	611	21	5,488	22	62,411	21		
		7	Excellent	31	52	1,034	35	8,707	34	92,729	31		
		—	Not applicable	0	0	27	1	348	2	4,288	2		
		Total		59	100	2,863	100	25,007	100	295,019	100		
c. Faculty	Q faculty	1	Poor	1	2	40	2	296	1	3,982	2	6.2	5.7 ***.42
		2		0	0	52	2	429	2	5,799	2		
		3		1	2	94	4	894	4	12,118	4		
		4		1	2	277	10	2,195	9	28,297	10		
		5		7	12	556	19	5,080	20	62,536	21		
		6		17	30	911	31	8,022	32	91,935	31		
		7	Excellent	30	52	910	31	7,754	31	86,402	29		
		—	Not applicable	1	1	13	1	162	1	2,199	1		
		Total		58	100	2,853	100	24,832	100	293,268	100		
d. Student services staff (career services, student activities, housing)	Q staff	1	Poor	4	7	156	6	1,137	5	14,489	5	5.6	4.7 ** .49
		2		0	0	188	7	1,160	5	14,492	5		
		3		2	4	224	8	1,646	6	20,907	7		
		4		3	5	414	14	2,837	11	36,933	12		
		5		6	10	557	19	4,417	17	53,082	18		
		6		8	14	550	19	4,762	18	53,853	18		
		7	Excellent	21	36	466	16	4,487	18	49,480	16		
		—	Not applicable	14	25	296	11	4,486	20	50,714	18		
		Total		58	100	2,851	100	24,932	100	293,950	100		

Table (8), NSSE 2014 Frequencies and Statistical Comparisons (nsse.iub.edu)

Comments from this same report also give qualitative credence to the quality of interactions at this university. A pseudonym (SRU) has been used to replace institutional name.

Small Rural University has provided me with an opportunity to learn and grow my own personal values. I feel free to express my views and values, and continue to learn more about myself and others from different backgrounds. I absolutely love and admire my instructors, who continue to challenge me and are always available for academic questions. I also am comfortable going to them if I have concerns or in need of advice regarding other aspects of life. I couldn't have dreamed of a better experience.

Small Rural University is really a great place for all students even for me; I get all the support I need here. At first, I was shy and I didn't know anybody here, I'm pretty sure that everybody else felt the same way about coming her too, but I realized if I want to

start my own life someday I have to work quickly as possible to be more of a person who can accomplish anything.

I love how all the professors are always available; they form such an amazing true friendship bond with their students. Would love for sports to be involved though!!

My experience at SRU is endlessly changing how I perceive the world and its people. Opportunity has been presented at every corner and I've come to gain a sense of self-respect as a reflection of the staff, professors, and students here on campus. I've come to look up to staff and mock traits of theirs that as a result have become a habit in how I present myself. SRU is truly a place for those looking to spread their wings and created a positive future for themselves and those around them.

Most of the faculty and staff at SRU care about the students and their education, but don't feel the necessity go the extra mile. However, there are a select few that will crawl through the trenches with you and do everything in their power to pull you up to the top. It's because of those few that have the passion in their hearts and have committed themselves to a life of servitude that have helped provide me a wonderful opportunity to achieve my goals. Thank you for this opportunity to share.

Batman, a first generation college student describes his experience coming from a migrant seasonal farm working background and how the size of the institution has allowed him to gain quality interaction with faculty that he feels he might not have received at a larger school.

Before I started, I knew it was a small college, but you don't really see a lot of portrayals of small colleges either in movies or television. You don't hear about them that much so I think I still had the same idea of how college is represented and just pictured big classes and a lot of activities going on. Now after being here for almost four years, it's completely different from what I expected, but I appreciate it for what it is. I'm actually happy that it's different from what I had in mind because this is a little more suitable to my lifestyle. There's not an overcrowding problem. We're not bumping into each other when we're walking around campus. It's like a small community where you kind of know at least the majority of the staff or at least half of the faculty because you might have classes with them or have had a class with them. Because it is so small here, I can

bump into professors in the hallway or cafeteria and strike a conversation with them without any appointments. I guess that is just the way it is here, it is very relaxing, and I usually get what I want from them.

Spiderman, a professor at SRU shares his opinion about the quality of interaction at a small university compared to that at a larger university.

My brother-in-law works for Vanderbilt University. He has a research lab and it is a small number of graduate students and relative to the size of the institution, he gets to develop a relationship with his students. I think here at SRU, we develop that same type of relationship. Our programs are small, so I know everyone by name. I've seen it, I've experienced it, and I always try to relate it to when I was an undergraduate. Here people talk to each other at a table, or interacting, or playing volleyball. You just don't see presidents of institutions sitting down in the cafeteria talking with students about whatever. It just doesn't happen. I think here, it is a safe environment; it is a good environment for our students. A lot of them need this environment. I think even those students capable of succeeding at a large R1 institution might not be socially ready to thrive in that intimidating environment where there is tens of thousands of students and here you can make personal connections. It is close to home and feels like home and I think that is important, it is a nice place to work as faculty because of that.

Finding 7: relationships between faculty and first-generation college students appear to assist in the cultural capital deficit facing these students

According to Ward, Siegel & Davenport (2012), the most important thing that a faculty and staff can do is erasing the cultural capital deficit of first generation students as soon and as completely as possible. They do go on to mention that although no program may ever

completely replace parental influence, it is essential to comprehensively reshape recruiting programs, faculty-student interactions, first-year learning environments, and one's own beliefs about the needs of first-generation students so that these students have a better chance at succeeding (p. 106). All ten of the first generation college students interviewed in this case study mentioned a form of mentorship, parental role, or advice that faculty and/or staff gave through a heightened sense that a relationship was forming. This appeared to alleviate much some of the cultural capital deficits facing first-generation college students at this particular university. Storm, a first generation college student at SRU talks about how a faculty person served as her mentor and how this relationship has made her determined to succeed.

We grew a relationship because he identified with me. He is from the same tribe, so I automatically had something in common with him. I shared with him that I am Chippewa from North Dakota and we still talk today. He's a great mentor for me. He made me feel like there are no excuses. He would say that what I experienced is what he experienced. He would tell me not to feel sorry about myself and I realized that he helps me and that everyone goes through things and you need to move forward. When I first came here, I thought all the faculty were privileged. You know, they are caring, but I didn't think they came with the same things I came with. They didn't grow up having to you know worry about different things. I mean I don't want to say that I grew up hungry or anything, they just didn't seem like they had to go through the same things that I went through or my peers have gone through. For example, you know, living here, you are exposed to different things like gang activity, drug use, addiction runs in the family on the reservation you know. I think because I have a good relationship with him, he is able to let me know that you know we all come with some sort of baggage and that's okay. I

guess the most important thing is to make sure I learn from him and make sure I graduate, you know.

Spiderman, a professor at SRU talks about the enormous potential of one of his students, but the lack of cultural capital in her familial setting has caused barriers for this student.

I have a first generation college student that is a freshman right out of high school. She came in with a year's worth of credit that she earned taking AP credit and community college credits in high school. I fully expect her to go to graduate school. Well in the first month of her being here, her dad came to campus to try and figure out why my daughter is not home at night. She is frequently studying in the computer lab. I think it is hard for him to identify that it's important for her daughter to excel in her studies. I think in talking with her, the way she feels, is that I know my dad thinks it's important, but he has a Hispanic male thought or stereotype of what a woman's role should be. So if you come from a family where parents went to college, I don't think that type of experience is intimidating to that type of family whereas I think to this family and this father in particular, this is all new, and it is more intimidating to the family than to the student which it is happening to.

Finding 8: Networking opportunities in the form of references, jobs, and internships were enhanced by the development of faculty-student relationships

As a result of the support they received from faculty and staff throughout their college experience, all first generation college students interviewed in this study indicated that the relationship they had with faculty and staff strengthened networks, resources, or outside opportunities in the form of jobs, internships, choosing a career or outside networks. Astin

(1993) in a study of over 200 four-year colleges and universities found that student-faculty interaction account for many positive correlations such as intellectual and personal growth. Surprisingly, he also found that student-faculty interactions have fascinating effects on career outcomes. He found that “interacting with faculty produces in student’s greater sense of identification with their faculty mentors”.

Captain America reflected on how support and character by a faculty person allowed him to see realize opportunities.

He would call me all the time, he would sell the benefits that I could get by coming to SRU and graduating with a degree and you know just really supportive and he really has this way of influencing people and he influenced me to take a shot into the program. But now that I know more about him down the road, I would see this as more helpful than I could imagine. He has a supportive and helpful character. This relationship has helped me get here, and then finding a job here. One day I told him that I was concerned that I wouldn’t be able to afford to come to school here and he found me like \$12,000 in scholarships. I didn’t even have to apply for it. All I had to do was have the courage to sit down and talk with him. I just said I was having a problem and he found it for me and then one day he said, “You’re going to get this money, but don’t spend it on anything else but school”. I couldn’t believe he did this for me. Having this relationship with him has meant the world to me and I wish I would have known earlier that it’s okay to talk about your problems and situations, because there are people that can help you know. There were a lot of times when I was here that I didn’t know if I was gonna make it emotionally, like I was on the brink of giving up for the first couple of semesters and I

really didn't have that emotional support, but what's helped me is that this relationship opened doors for me and this instructor made that like real for me.

Storm, a first generation college student describes a time when a faculty person casually talks to her about future plans that include graduate school and how that made her feel.

We definitely grew a good relationship with each other, and you know every time we see each other he asks how am I doing. We always chit-chat about weather, family, school, or anything. I have him on Facebook, and he says I see that you are getting close to graduation, have you applied to graduate school? And I'll say, well it didn't go to well. He'll respond by saying try again somewhere else. And then he'll say, is it a full ride scholarship? And I'll say no, and then he'll tell me, then don't worry about it, and try another place that will help you more. I think getting to know him in this way gives me a sense of comfort. I feel he is looking out for me and wants the best for me. I can go to him for a reference and I know he will support me. I can tell him anything and I think having this type of relationship has made me feel more confident about myself.

Thor talks about how building relationships with faculty allowed a more open way for him to express himself.

I think having that relationship with my instructor teaches me pretty much how to express myself more, and when I express myself more, it allows me to not really care what other people think. I can now go up to my professor and ask for references or if there are any internships available. Before, I couldn't do that. I think it also allows me to just focus on the goal, and it allows me to just push forward. So yeah, I think having good relationships with faculty opens up a lot of things for me. I am not afraid anymore of letting people know what I think because she knows me. I am not nervous anymore

compared to when I first came to college because something makes me feel comfortable when I am with her.

Finding 9: Students became cognizant of rewards/opportunities associated with relationships with faculty later in their academic career.

Most of the first generation college students interviewed struggled in college within the first two years. Many of the struggles dealt with navigating their way around the college environment. It wasn't until their junior or senior years when 7 out of 10 students recognized that relationships with faculty bring rewards/opportunities that they didn't first recognize. As Captain America mentioned before, he wished he would've known earlier in his college career that opening up to faculty and developing relationships were important. Captain America further describes how developing a good relationship with faculty also has academic rewards.

If I have a good rapport with my instructor, then I think they're more willing to help me learn. Having a good rapport with my professor is tremendous because they can help me and they'll be open to listen to me talk in class or outside. This rapport with faculty has made me understand how I can get my grades up, or how I can get the inside information or even help people. I mean, I've been in school quite a bit, so I have a good understanding of how the game's played, and what happens. So yeah, understanding your professor and developing a relationship gives you a huge advantage.

When followed up about specific advantages or how he mentions "how the game's played", he mentioned again, better grades, opportunities like scholarships and money.

Similarly, Batman also uses the phrase insider knowledge when describing his experience of opportunities and advantages as a result of faculty-student relationships.

The more you have this kind of insider knowledge or connections with faculty who you see every day, the better off you are. I would say if you have a good relationship or constantly interact with professors, they will kind of not favor you, but maybe give you a little heads up on how it is that you need to work, or maybe a possible internship opportunity. This has been my experience here. They will definitely push you more than the student who does not speak up or is shy. So I've learned to speak up more and talk with my professors because it is just like a lot of things in life where the more involved you are, the more informed you are, and the better off you are in what you're doing which for a student is in the class and getting good grades. I think for a student who doesn't do it as much, it is definitely shooting with a blindfold on.

Interestingly, out of the six faculty interviewed, all six responded affirmatively that strong relationships with students do bring positive results and opportunities for students.

When Iron Man, a faculty at SRU was asked to elaborate about why students who engage with him tend to do better in class, he used the analogy of a parent and child.

A big part of parenting is that the child as a baby needs the parent right there, right there, but what the baby does is it grows and it internalizes the parent. I don't need my mother right here to comfort me when I'm feeling scared. I can picture my mother, I can imagine my mother, I can hold something that is mom's, and I can kind of regulate myself, and that's what's supposed to happen and that's how we learn. So I think when that student finds a connection with a faculty member, and then internalizes that faculty member in that kind of way, they can keep themselves motivated, they can keep going, they can do better work.

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Finding 10: A sense of pride is experienced by those faculty interviewed when relationships with students are formed that lead to student success.

It became very apparent that faculty at SRU responded with an overwhelming sense of pride when students succeed. This success is emotionally gratifying to faculty when faculty are vested in the student through past interactions and relationships. Several times, emotions were part of the discussion. As mentioned earlier, Captain America reflected on how he witnessed his professor cry because he was presenting at a conference. This professor responded,

“Students are not objects, they have heart and feelings. You need to know how to talk about their feelings, and be close to them. I feel very proud and emotional when I see students have courage, and the next time, they have more courage. I don’t have time to talk about their culture, I need to know their heart, their feelings, and do they really want this? How can I help get them there?”

This emotion is not uncommon at SRU and stems from the development of relationships with students. June Beetle mentions that she feels she can make real differences with a few students, and that “trickles down in such a big way”. Iron Man says “it’s very fulfilling to have that partnership with the students, and it’s exciting to see their world expand, it’s exciting to see the critical thinking skills just blossom”.

Wonder Woman, a first generation student also reflected the emotions that came from faculty who were genuine, and having experienced this, she understands that this is important.

“I know Black Widow cares about me because I have experienced it. She cried with me when she talked about her family, and that made me feel important. It made me feel like she just doesn’t do this with anyone else. I am important to her and I matter”.

Based on the finding of this study, relationships played a key role in the encouragement and self-efficacy of students at this particular institution. It was evident that for first-generation students, it was imperative that faculty take the lead in initiating these relationships early rather than later. In addition, reciprocal benefits associated with relationships in this study were opportunities and rewards for students as well as personal satisfaction for faculty. Many of the barriers associated with developing relationships were compounding external barriers facing FGCS that “tip” the scale as mentioned in Payne and Miller’s study. Students also struggled with trying to balance academic expectations while trying to reflect and make sense of their own lived experiences and identity.

Based on this study, the profile of first-generation college students at this particular institution may be different than other institutions and some recommendations are made for further studies in the final chapter.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships and interactions between faculty and first generation college students at this particular four-year rural private university. This site was selected because of its large (over 90%) first generation student population. Ten first generation college students and six faculty were interviewed, informal observations were conducted and institutional documents were analyzed to learn more about their experiences at this institution as it pertained to relationships between faculty and first generation college students.

Discussion of Finding

The discussion of the findings will focus on the research questions and the evidence that was collected as it relates to the relationships between faculty and first generation students. The data gathered from the participants through interviews, observations and document analysis enabled the research questions to be answered: In what ways and under what conditions have students and faculty built relationships with each other? What do these relationships look like? What faculty-student interactions, if any, result in reciprocal benefits? What are the benefits, as the participants see it? Participants and observations indicated that faculty initiative, verbal and social persuasion by faculty, shared lived experiences, cultural capital deficit, and awareness of rewards/opportunities were the key experiences reported as it pertained to the development and outcomes of relationships between both parties.

As a result of this research it was evident that relationships were important to both parties. For first generation students, it was motivation from social persuasion, confidence, sense of validation, and rewards/opportunities at Small Rural University (SRU). In the same way, faculty gained a great sense of self-fulfillment and pride when relationships were established that led to student success. Furthermore, most of the relationships occurred when a faculty person

reached out and initiated contact with the student. This did not occur for the most part intentionally; rather the interactions occurred informally, outside the classroom at this particular small rural university. Endo and Harpel (1982) found that informal interactions between faculty and students have a stronger impact on more student outcomes than do formal interactions. Thompson (2001) found in his study of community college students that as level of informal interactions with faculty increased, students began to place more value on their courses and academic efforts. Cox and Orehovec (2007) identified four major types of student-faculty interactions with the most important, “functional interaction” referring to interactions “outside the classroom (as cited in Komarraju, Musulkin & Bhattacharya, 2010). SRU encourages this type of contact because it is really within its mission to do so and is part of the natural context that features real-life experiences and stories of participants – that is, SRU faculty/staff and students (Frederick and James, 2007). Endo and Harpel, including Thompson both agree that informal conversations between faculty and students provide stronger impact, and that is precisely what is found at SRU. There, conversations happen one-to-one at the cafeteria, hallways, open spaces and casual meetings as they are walking between classes. Frederick and James called this “naturalistic ways” (p.176). Interestingly, most of the conversations were not about unrelated issues to academics, but rather academic-related interactions. Cox and Orehovec (2007) explain this type of interaction as “functional interaction” which they cite as being the most important. In addition, the results of a quantitative study conducted by Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) on the role of faculty in student learning and engagement found that in general, students have more positive perceptions of supportive campuses where faculty members interact frequently with them on issues related to their courses. When referring to the major faculty interaction concepts and models of Pascarella (2004), Bean (2005), Tinto (2012), Astin

(1991), Freire (1970), Rendón (1994), Woosley & Shepler (2011), Pike and Kuh (2005), all themes were identified as direct or indirect contributors to student – faculty relationships but not all were present at the same time and neither of them described the progression of establishing relationships, or better yet, what is the best way to induce these types of interactions. Pascarella (2004) referred to a social networks perspective that college student’ relationships with faculty and staff and peers contribute to student satisfaction. Bean (2005), focused on retention issues as it relates to exchanges with others inside and outside the institution. Tinto (2012) focused more on the external supports that institutions bring that influence students’ persistence. Astin (1991) was a more general model of I-E-O (Inputs-Environment-Outcomes). Freire (1971), model looked at the external and internal oppression of the learning process. Rendon’s (1994) model of validation supported the notion that students need to be acknowledged, Woosley & Shepler (2011) focused on early integration experiences. Pike and Kuh (2005), studied engagement and intellectual development of first and second generation students. Because these models lacked cohesiveness and more importantly how interactions and relationship happen, figure 3 was developed by the researcher as a result of the findings at this particular institution. It is important to note that this figure provides only a visual of the relationship progression as a result of the findings at this specific institution and is not meant to replace the original conceptual framework, but rather add to it.

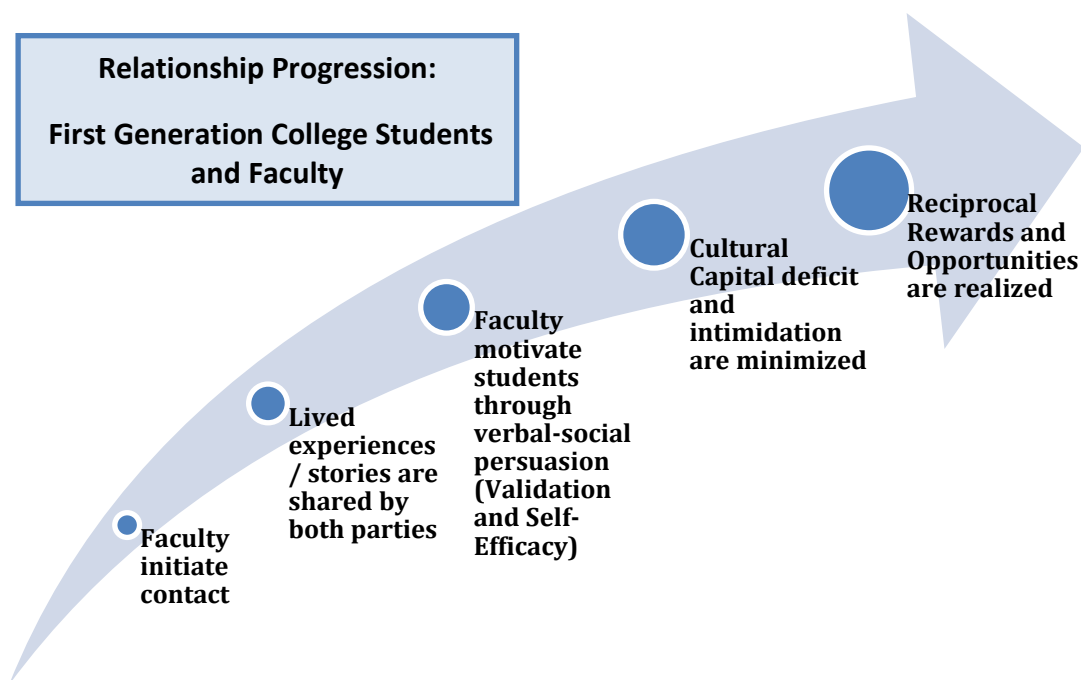


Figure 3 illustrates the progression found from the data that contributed to faculty and first generation college student relationships at SRU.

This figure adds to the conceptual framework by providing a visual relationship progression model as a result of the findings. For instance, the first important phase in the relationship progression as it relates to this particular university and specific to first-generation students is that faculty should first initiate contact as it relates to first-generation college students. This is in direct relationship to the original conceptual framework which includes validation and lived experiences. Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, et al. describe faculty-student contact as a form of validation in that it reflects faculty members' interest in students and a willingness to help students find a home in their new academic community (Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012). As much of the literature surrounding first-generation students indicates, FGCS often forego or delay involvement, and this delay means that many first-generation college students are "missing out" on appreciable benefits that come from developing key relationships (Ward, Siegel & Davenport, 2012). At SRU, they have implemented an

Engagement Advisor Program that helps pair incoming students with faculty with the intent to help them in their transition to SRU. SRU understands that initiating contact with students is paramount and this program purposefully allows this to happen.

Research question #1 – In what ways and under what conditions have students and faculty built relationships with each other? What do these relationships look like? Through interviews, informal observations, and document analysis, students and faculty in my study built relationships with each other that happened informally. That is to say in informal settings such as the cafeteria, hallways, library, outside spaces, and informal classroom settings. Students credited faculty reaching out and initiating contact as being acknowledged, a sense of importance and the first sign of the relationship process. This initiation is the first step in the introduction of the relationship progression. Faculty and students both acknowledged in this particular study that for first-generation college students, faculty reaching out and making contact on an informal basis was vital the establishment of the relationship. Rendón (2011) discusses in her study of 132 first-year students on influences of students' out of class experiences. Here, students expressed that validating experiences encompassed faculty that took time to learn their names and made the effort to meet with them outside of class such as in the patio areas, cafeterias, and/or library. Rendón further cements the initiation process by stating that the “first element places the responsibility for initiating contact with students on institutional agents such as faculty, advisers, coaches, lab assistants, and counselors” (p. 17). The second step in the progression happens when an instructor or staff member shared their own personal story. It is also important to note that this sharing of stories may be exclusive to SRU due to the uniqueness of this institution. Frederick and James (2007) state that because of the convergence of this highly diverse setting, “SRU inherits a storytelling culture” (p. 174). This is also evident in the

adoption of key characteristics of highly effective faculty and measures of faculty success as mentioned earlier. Rendón (2011) refers to this as reflecting carefully on what students are saying about what is meaningful to them. These validating instances involved faculty sharing knowledge with students and ensured that the curriculum reflected the student backgrounds. This intimate expression initially shared by faculty at SRU allows students to more openly share their own story, consequently getting to the third level of progression and that is validating the student. This affirmation was prevalent in interviews with students. Once the relationship had been initiated, faculty and students shared reciprocal lived experiences through stories and background, students felt important. Rendón (2011) through her study states that the impact of validation on students who have experienced powerlessness, doubts about their own ability to succeed, and/or lack of care cannot be understated. In other words, students need to be validated as mutual owners of the college experience. Rendón says that once validation is present, students “feel capable of learning and have a sense of self-worth”. Students at SRU explained how faculty and staff held them to high standards, and expected much from them. When faculty validated them through informal conversations that included social persuasion and motivation, students did not want to let their professors down. Through this progression, the initial intimidation and lack of cultural capital also appeared to decline. Students were more comfortable navigating their way through the college environment when these progressions took place. The above figure 4 illustrates the answer to question 1. It is important to note, that the researcher was cognizant that the size and locality of the institution became an important factor in student-faculty interactions. Due to the size of the institution, faculty and students were available to bump into each other in the cafeteria, hallways, outside activities or library as evidenced by informal observations, participant interviews and field notes. This may not be the

case in larger urban university settings. Kuh, et al. (2010) in their research of over 700 institutions say that students are more likely to flourish in small settings where they are known and valued as individuals than in settings in which they feel anonymous (p. 106). However, they do offer advice for large colleges and universities. They mention that providing small residences and classes, maintaining effective communication networks, and widely disseminating information in a timely manner, even large colleges and universities can encourage their members to get to know one another. An example is at Miami University which encompasses more than 1,900 acres, but it is designed to feel small. According to Kuh et al. most of the academic advisers of first-year students live in the same building as their advisees. As one member of the staff observed, “we have a mindset here that we’re not as big as we are” (p.107). At the University of Michigan, they place faculty offices in the residential college, allowing more frequent student-faculty contacts in the hallways, as well as at meals or in evening discussion groups (p.107).

Another interesting result of the study was that students did not mention any adjunct faculty when interviewed. Although there is a relatively small amount of full-time faculty (72) none of the adjuncts were mentioned when asked about a faculty that they felt they connected with. This may be in direct correlation with the response by the staff member who stated that adjuncts “get in and get out”; hence it becomes almost impossible to form any type of relationship with an adjunct professor. This is also consistent with findings from a study of faculty approachability by Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason, & Quaye (2010) that indicate that part-time faculty members interact with students less frequently than do their full-time peers. Their study also provided support for Eagan and Jeager’s (2008) study that lower student persistence is associated with part-time instructors as a result of these professors’ lack of

availability for student interaction beyond the classroom as cited in Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason, & Quaye (2010). Umbach (2007) supports the finding in his study that found faculty members' employment status (e.g. full-time, tenure status) has an effect on their level of interaction, with untenured or contingent faculty members less likely than their tenured or tenure-line colleagues to engage with students outside of class. At SRU, it may not be much about whether a faculty is tenured or not (SRU does not have a tenure-track for faculty) but rather if the faculty is full-time or adjunct. Here, the full-time faculty may be more accessible to students therefore are able to develop stronger relationships than adjuncts who are more focused with teaching and then leaving the college environment. Hence, students never mentioned adjunct faculty as playing a role in their interactions with faculty.

Research question # 2 – What faculty-student interactions, if any, result in reciprocal benefits? What are the benefits, as the participants see it? Both parties ultimately experienced rewards and benefits from established relationships. As illustrated in figure 4 above, the final progression is that both parties received rewards/opportunities as a result of developed relationships. Participants credited interactions and relationships with each other as providing personal rewards or opportunities. In the case of the students, the majority felt that once relationships were established with a faculty or staff member, positive outcomes followed such as better grades, job opportunities and stronger social skills that would prepare them for life in general. It is important to note that the majority of students hoped that they knew about the importance of establishing rapport with faculty earlier in their academic career. It was an “I wish I knew then what I know now” reflection for most students. Therefore, it would be important to address rewards/opportunities earlier on in the progression of relationships rather than students to become aware of the importance of establishing relationships later on in their academic career.

On the other hand, benefits for most faculty at this small rural university were more personal in nature. Faculty expressed a great sense of accomplishment and personal satisfaction when relationships with students lead to student success. As one instructor pointed out, “you have students who were really insecure and timid when you first see them to like “yeah whatevs, I’ve already been to four conferences”. This sense of pride expressed by faculty was a strong indicator that relationships with students matter at this particular small university setting.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was that relationships matter to faculty and more importantly, relationships with faculty are vitally important for first generation college students. Frequent interactions and relationships that were formed provided gained cultural and social capital for students that included reciprocal rewards and benefits.

Limitations of Findings

The limitation of this study was its focus on a bounded system of one small rural private university that predominately serves under-served, non-traditional first generation students. The sampling of this study did not include selection by ethnicity, gender or socio-economic status. The study was limited to an examination of issues related to the development of relationships between faculty and specifically first-generation college students at this particular university. Because this study was limited to this one private small four year university, its findings may be limited to its generalizability, but may still contribute to the literature in this field or to other similar or like institutions.

Recommendation for Best Practices

As a result of this study, Small Rural University as well as other similar small four-year private colleges or universities should focus their attention on:

1. **Establish intentional and purposeful driven institutional structures where faculty and staff develop relationships with students early outside of class (see findings 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9).** Through this study, it became apparent that students felt a sense of belonging, confidence and a willingness to interact with faculty when that interaction took place early in their academic career. Furthermore, it was interesting to note that quite often; this interaction was initiated by faculty outside of class informally in hallways, cafeterias, library or campus open spaces. It is also important to note that students in the study were generally not as confident to initiate the interaction with faculty. As Hao (2011) points out in his study of dialectic tensions, they (FGCS) constantly struggled with what, when, and with whom they should communicate. Their fears about communicating were wrapped around larger fears of judgment from others. Because FGCS seemed to judge themselves as lacking important understanding of college, they assumed other people would have the same harsh judgments (p. 65). Despite the consistent findings that student-faculty interactions outside the classroom contribute to a number of positive educational outcomes, research also suggests that student-faculty contact outside of the classroom is a relatively rare occurrence regardless of the topic (Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason & Quaye, 2010). Furthermore, research also suggests that little has changed over the past 50 years and that such interactions remain relatively infrequent (Chang 2005; Cotten and Wilson 2006; Cox and Orehovec 2007) as cited in Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason & Quaye 2010. In addition, what is widely accepted amongst scholars is that most first-generation students forego or delay involvement in activities and programs until after the key transition period (Terenzini et al., 1994), and

they usually have more to gain from this interaction than their non first-generation peers. Therefore, it is imperative that institutions intentionally and purposefully create early stage occurrences where faculty/staff interact with first-generation students. A good example of this is at Loyola Marymount University. Here they created a mentoring program called the First To Go Program that helps first-generation students adjust to college life during their first year. By pairing a student with a faculty member, they intentionally and purposefully create a support network that prevents first-generation student from remaining in the shadows, uncertain of what they are supposed to do or how to do it (Ward, Siegel and Davenport, 2012). Most recently, SRU has established an Engagement Advisor Program where faculty and staff are assigned as mentors early to meet informally over coffee. This is a great first step; however, Ward, Siegel and Davenport recommend that institutions be cognizant not to segment the first year college experience into a collection of programs and experiences that may not be intentionally connected and where communication missteps are natural, given the complexity of registering, enrolling, orienting, programming for many students. Ward, Siegel and Davenport relate this to an assembly line with offices designed for specific functions that “they, and only they, can and should provide; they pass the product on to the next station” (p.36). Therefore, the responsibility of proactively encouraging faculty and students to interact early lies not just with the faculty; but the entire institution should mutually be responsible in making sure programs are cohesive and connected. As Rendón (2011) notes, that it is not enough for the institution to say it offers students services. Proactive measures to actually get students to take advantage of these services must also be in place. This means that college faculty and staff must be ready to actively reach out to

students (as opposed to having them reach out to them first), be accessible, and be open to establishing close working relationships with students.

2. **Create social spaces on campus that increase accessibility of faculty and promote student-faculty interaction (see findings 5, 6).** Faculty at SRU usually interact with students in hallways, cafeteria or library thus creating interactions that occur naturally. Space on campus should be created close to faculty and department offices. As Ward, Siegel and Davenport (2012) point out, DEEP schools that demonstrated effective strategies for engagement arrange physical space to increase the accessibility of faculty that promote faculty-student interaction. They go on to state that “locating student space in greater proximity to faculty offices, students are more likely to naturally bump into faculty” (p.209). This way of creating social space with the intent of increasing accessibility to students is particularly important for institutions of higher learning that have a high first-generation student population. Students in my study were also more apt to interact with faculty when faculty initiated the contact. This is also consistent in other findings (Hao, 2011, Rendón, 2012). Therefore it is essential that administration and physical plant administrators at institutions of higher learning arrange the physical space on campus to be more conducive to student-faculty interaction where faculty may be more accessible and willing to initiate and converse with first-generation students.
3. **Recruit approachable and compassionate full-time faculty (see findings 1, 2, 3, 4, 7).** Glass, et al. (2015) notes that belonging entails more than a need for social contact, frequent contact with non-supportive or indifferent others does little to satisfy a persons’ need to belong. Social interactions that fulfill a person’s need to belong are marked by stable and enduring expressions of affective concern for each other’s welfare (Baumeister

& Leary, 1995; Reis, Collins & Berscheid, 2000) as cited in Glass, et al. (2015). Based on what SRU has adopted as their key characteristics of highly effective faculty and measures of faculty success, along with excerpts from interviews with faculty and students, it is apparent that SRU embodies and is committed to faculty that “honor each person’s human dignity and potential” as cited in their mission statement. As noted in Frederick and James (2007), a faculty member at SRU states, “students don’t care what you know as much as they need to know you care and respect them and their cultures”. The core of Rendón’s Validation Theory (1994) is authentic caring and concern. Both Noddings (1984) and Valenzuela (1999) argued that an ethic of caring can foster positive relationships between faculty and students. Noddings (1984) noted that care is basic in all human life and that is what is central to the SRU mission and vision statement.

Komaraju, Musulkin and Bhattacharya (2010) discuss in their findings that students who perceive their faculty members as approachable, respectful, and available for frequent interactions outside the classroom are more likely to report being confident of the academic skills and being motivated, both intrinsically and extrinsically. There have been many institutions that have developed programs and invested resources that attempt to enhance student-faculty interaction as mentioned earlier (e.g. Loyola Marymount’s First To Go Program, SRU’s Engagement Advisor Program, CSUMB’s Faculty Peer Mentor Program, University of Maine at Farmington’s faculty-student meal program, etc.), yet without commitment and a sense of caring and compassion from the faculty to be approachable and genuinely concerned about students, these programs may not fulfill their purpose and intent. Therefore, it is essential for institutions that have a high number of first-generation students to look at ways to hire full-time faculty that are approachable,

compassionate and committed to interact with students. Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason & Quaye (2010) state that faculty members' signals of their "psychosocial accessibility" to students can take multiple forms, some obvious (e.g. occasionally, but repeatedly, inviting students to ask questions during or after class), others more subtle (e.g. facial expressions, responding to questions in ways that reflect a genuine interest to help students learn). According to Cotten and Wilson (2006) these behaviors, in turn, may encourage students to seek such out-of-class contact with instructors (as cited in Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason & Quaye 2010). In addition, research also suggests that full-time vs. part-time status of faculty members has an effect in the level of interaction with students. Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason & Quaye (2010) indicated in their study that part-time faculty members interacted with students less frequently than do their full-time peers. This finding was also consistent with other work that questioned the efficacy of using part-time instructors (Eagan and Jaeger; Ehrenberg and Zhang 2005; Umbach 2007; as cited in Cox; McIntosh; Terenzini; Reason & Quaye 2010). They also found that this was caused by the lack of availability for student interaction beyond the classroom. These findings were also consistent with the responses from students at SRU. As mentioned earlier, no student in the study mentioned adjunct faculty as individuals they perceived as helping them navigate their way through college even though they make up the majority of faculty at SRU.

4. **Incorporate curriculum in first-year courses that allows students to be cognizant of the benefits and opportunities associated with student-faculty interactions (see finding 8, 9).** We know through research that first-generation college students who are generally unfamiliar with college norms and that often times have lower levels of self-

confidence or self-efficacy may be especially uncomfortable talking with faculty members (Cox; McIntosh; Terenzini; Reason & Quaye 2010). Yet what is often times unaddressed is that these same students don't understand why developing a relationship with faculty is important in the first place. Vianden and Kuh (2006) found that many students do not know how – or even why – to interact with faculty members outside the classroom. Data from the 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSEE) of junior and seniors suggest that, during their years at college, students may develop an understanding of the purpose and process of contacting faculty members outside of class. This finding by Vianden and Kuh is consistent from data from NSSE and is also compatible with the findings from the study of SRU. Many times students in the study understood the importance of the interactions with faculty later in their academic careers. In other words, they became cognizant of the many benefits associated with the interaction such as better grades, job opportunities, internships, or job references later rather than earlier in their academic career. The majority of the students in the study agreed that they should have interacted with faculty earlier rather than later because it was not until later that they realized the benefits. This is also consistent with the findings from Komarraju, Musulkin and Bhattacharya (2010) that students who are able to speak informally with faculty members also seem to be more likely to find the learning process more enjoyable and stimulating and gain a better understanding of how their college education could prepare them for the job market. Therefore, it is important for institutions of higher learning that have first-year programs, orientation or freshmen courses aimed at helping students navigate college to incorporate the positive benefits of faculty-student interactions so that students are cognizant of the benefits early in their

freshmen year. It may also be beneficial for institutions to invite first-generation alum to freshmen orientation or first-year programs and share their perspective on the benefits of forming faculty-student relationships.

5. **Nurture and advance self-efficacy/validation strategies (see findings 2, 6).** Bandura (1977) says: “people who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given activities are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise” (p. 3). This was consistent with the findings from the SRU case study. Students interviewed often times discussed that motivation to succeed was a result from a faculty or staff person who simply “believed” in them. Because first-generation students tend to perceive themselves as less capable and confident in their ability to adjust to the college milieu, efforts by colleges and universities to nurture and advance self-efficacy strategies could be highly beneficial to first-generation college students. According to Ward, Siegel and Davenport (2012) first generation college students experience lower levels of self-efficacy than their non-first generation peers, at both the start and the end of the first year of college (p.66). For institutions committed to the faculty-student interaction, it would be recommended that institutions nurture and advance self-efficacy through post-enrollment institutional initiatives. An example of this is at the Ozarks Technical Community College which has created a FGCS group. This group invites to its monthly meetings motivational speakers who address barriers to the success of first-generation students (Ward, Siegel and Davenport, 2012). Furthermore, it would behoove institutions with high numbers of first-generation students to provide professional development training to faculty highlighting the importance of self-efficacy and the many benefits to first-generation students. As

Lowery-Hart & Pacheco suggest, institutions should offer instructional training for professors and graduate assistants about how to effectively develop relationships with FGCS (p. 66).

Recommendations for Further Study

A longer comparison study between small rural colleges and larger urban colleges focused on relationships between first-generation college students and faculty may be beneficial. This could help faculty and professional staff identify the differences in relationships between both the type of student and university environment. Because most of the literature exists at larger two-year and four-year public universities and colleges, replication of this study in similar small rural settings at other four-year private institutions would be recommended.

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Appendix A
Internal Review Board Approval



UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

HUMAN SUBJECTS DIVISION

Date: 11/20/2014

PI: Mr. Ricardo Valdez
Graduate Student
College of Education

CC: Joe Lott

RE: Human Subjects Application #48475, "The Relationship between First Generation College Students and Faculty: A Case Study of a Small Rural Liberal Arts University"

Dear Mr. Valdez,

Human Subjects application #48475, "The Relationship between First Generation College Students and Faculty: A Case Study of a Small Rural Liberal Arts University" has been approved by the University of Washington IRB in Subcommittee EG under Expedited Category 5 & 7. The Subcommittee has determined that this research meets all the requirements for approval outlined in 45 CFR 46.111. In addition, the following waivers and determinations apply:

- The subcommittee has approved your request to waive the requirement to obtain consent for the inclusion of third party subjects during interviews and for the initial receipt of contact information for recruitment per 45 CFR 46.116(d). Because all proposed observations will take place in public places, there is no need for a waiver of consent for individuals present during observations. Written consent will be obtained from all other subjects.

This research was reviewed for engagement of the University of Washington only. Activities being performed by agents of other institutions are not covered by this approval unless otherwise noted. UW IRB approval does not eliminate the need to obtain other applicable approvals or permissions.

The approval is valid from 11/20/2014 through 11/19/2015. If you have completed the study, including all data analysis, by 11/19/2015 you will need to close out the application by submitting a Status Report. If you have not completed the project by that date, you will need to submit a Status Report requesting continuing approval six weeks before the expiration date. The Status Report to renew or close your study can be found on the HSD website.

This approval is for 16 subjects (10 students and 6 faculty). As noted in the application, you will obtain consent to use existing data from 9 subjects (6 students and 3 faculty) and will enroll a total of 7 new subjects (4 students and 3 faculty). Please note that subject number is part of your IRB-approved protocol. Over-enrollment is considered non-compliance with your IRB approval. Any revisions which need to be made to the IRB-approved protocol, including an increase to subject numbers, must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before they are implemented. This review can be requested by submitting a Modification form, which can be found on the HSD website. Non adherence to the IRB-approved protocol may be considered non-compliance and must be reported to the IRB as soon as it is discovered.

If at any time during your study an adverse event occurs, contact HSD immediately.

Note that HSD policy requires that you use copies of the stamped approved consent materials with subjects. You will find the stamped form(s) at the back of your approval packet. If use of stamped copies is not applicable to your study because you have been approved to obtain oral or electronic consent, you must use the exact script that has been approved.

Please use the IRB application number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this research, or on any correspondence with the HSD office.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at (206) 543-0098 or via email at hsdinfo@uw.edu. Thank you for your cooperation, and good luck in your research.

Sincerely,


Bailey Bell
Human Subjects Review Administrator
(206) 221-7918
bbell3@u.washington.edu

4333 Brooklyn Ave. NE, Box 359470 Seattle, WA 98195-9470

main 206.543.0098 fax 206.543.9218 hsdinfo@u.washington.edu www.washington.edu/research/hsd

Appendix B

Consent Forms

B-1 RECRUITMENT/INVITATION MATERIALS

(Email) Invitation to former course project study participants – Informed Consent

[University of Washington address]

Dear [Student or Faculty],

I am writing to ask your consent and approval to use data, that were previously gathered during interviews or observations conducted with you last year in a study I was doing for a qualitative methods course, for new analyses I am doing in my dissertation study. Because the new analytic work is part of dissertation research and seeks to contribute to the scholarly knowledge base, I need your permission to use the formerly collected information for the new research purposes.

As a reminder, the goal of the study is to examine how faculty and first generation students interact and communicate with each other. Despite the enormous amount of research on First Generation College students, little is known how relationships with faculty contribute to morale and motivation, nor how these relationships get formed, across the “divide” that may separate first generation students and faculty, who are well socialized to the academic world.

As you were aware, taking part in this study is voluntary. All information is confidential. If the results of the study are published or presented, I will not use the names of people, names of schools, or any other information that would identify participants, the school, or the district. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington at 206-543-0098.

Please review the attached consent form, sign it and return it to me. If you have any questions or concerns, please respond at your earliest convenience via email at ricardov@uw.edu or please feel free to contact me by phone (509) 961-6181.

Yours sincerely,

Ricardo Valdez

Graduate Student
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
University of Washington College of Education

B-2 (Email) Invitation to Students (NEW)

[University of Washington address]

Dear [Student],

I am writing to ask you to take part in a research study and to allow me to spend some time gathering information through interviews and informal observations between you and faculty. The goal of the study is to examine how faculty and first generation students interact and communicate with each other. Despite the enormous amount of research on First Generation College students, little is known how relationships with faculty contribute to morale and motivation, nor how these relationships get formed, across the “divide” that may separate first generation students and faculty, who are well socialized to the academic world.

I am undertaking this study as part of doctoral studies at the University of Washington. In addition, I plan to use information from this study to inform my doctoral dissertation.

In this study I hope to conduct interviews and observe activities and events on campus between November 2014 and April 2015. In order to gain multiple perspectives on relationships between faculty and students, I would like to interview you as well as five other students. Additionally, I would like to observe some informal interaction among faculty and students at on at least two occasions. I will take steps to ensure that the study is not intrusive to you.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. Participants can stop at any time, and all information is confidential. If the results of the study are published or presented, I will not use the names of people, names of schools, or any other information that would identify participants, the school, or the district. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, , please contact Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington at 206-543-0098.

Thank you for considering this opportunity. I will be contacting you shortly by phone to discuss this with you further Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by phone (509) 961-6181 or via email at ricardov@uw.edu.

Yours sincerely,

Ricardo Valdez

Graduate Student
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
College of Education
University of Washington

B-3 (Email) Invitation to Instructors (NEW)

[University of Washington address]

Dear [Teacher Name],

I am writing to ask you to take part in a research study and to allow me to spend some time gathering information through interviews and informal observations between you and your students. The goal of the study is to examine how faculty and first generation students interact and communicate with each other. Despite the enormous amount of research on First Generation College students, little is known how relationships with faculty contribute to morale and motivation, nor how these relationships get formed, across the “divide” that may separate first generation students and faculty, who are well socialized to the academic world.

I am undertaking this study as part of doctoral studies at the University of Washington. In addition, I plan to use information from this study to inform my doctoral dissertation.

In this study I hope to conduct interviews and observe activities and events on campus between November 2014 and April 2015. In order to gain multiple perspectives on relationships between faculty and students, I would like to interview you as well as two other instructors. Additionally, I would like to observe some informal interaction among faculty and students at on at least two occasions. I will take steps to ensure that the study is not intrusive to you.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. Participants can stop at any time, and all information is confidential. If the results of the study are published or presented, I will not use the names of people, names of schools, or any other information that would identify participants, the school, or the district. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington at 206-543-0098..

Thank you for considering this opportunity. I will be contacting you shortly by phone to discuss this with you further. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by phone (509) 961-6181 or via email at ricardov@uw.edu.

Yours sincerely,

Ricardo Valdez

Graduate Student
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
College of Education University of Washington

B-4 PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM: Heritage University Students [FORMER STUDY]

The Relationships between First Generation College Students and Faculty: A Case Study of a Small Rural Liberal Arts University

Investigator: Ricardo Valdez
College of Education
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
ricardov@uw.edu
Phone: 509-961-6181

Faculty Advisor: Joe Lott
Jlott1@uw.edu (206-685-9204)

Investigator's Statement

I am asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you all the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to be in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between first generation students and faculty and to make sense of how these relationships, if any, lead to increased morale, motivation and retention. I want to examine what this type of relationships look like. How are they formed? Who initiates this relationship? Where do these places of communication happen? How do they happen?

PROCEDURES

If you choose to be in this study, I would like your permission to use interview and observational data I collected from you last year as part of the pilot qualitative study (I asked for your consent to participate in the interview and observation activities at that time, but I now intend to analyze the data from that pilot study for an expanded research purpose). With your permission, I would like to use the written transcript of the conversation that identifies you by a pseudonym only. The original recording has been destroyed. If you would like a copy of the interview transcript, I will gladly provide you with one. You will not be asked to complete any additional procedures at this time.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. I have addressed concerns for your privacy in the section below. Some people feel self-conscious when notes are taken or interviews are recorded.

Breach of confidentiality is a potential risk of this research. No system for protecting confidentiality is completely secure and the information obtained from you could be inadvertently accessed or seen by someone other than the researcher.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

You may not directly benefit from taking part in this research study. One benefit of this study is the possibility of developing new insights about the nature of relationships between faculty and first generation college students. Another benefit may be the opportunity to reflect on the work and university experiences. I may use information from this study to inform faculty and administrators about the possibilities for changing campus culture and environment so first generation students feel more comfortable opening themselves up to new learning.

OTHER INFORMATION

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You can stop at any time. Information about you is confidential. I will assign you a pseudonym and code the study information. I will keep the link between your name and the numerical code in a separate, secured location until March 15, 2020. Then I will destroy the information linking your information to the pseudonym. If the results of this study are published or presented, I will not use your name, or any other identifying information.

You may refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Participation in this study will not impact your standing with your school and will not influence/damage your employment.

If you think you have a medical problem or illness related to this research, contact Ricardo Valdez at (509) 961-6181 right away. He will treat you or refer you for treatment.

Government or university staff sometimes review studies such as this one to make sure they are being done safely and legally. If a review of this study takes place, your records may be examined. The reviewers will protect your privacy. The study records will not be used to put you at legal risk of harm.

I may want to re-contact you for future related studies. Please indicate below whether you give me permission to re-contact you. Giving me permission to re-contact you does not obligate you in any way.

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact Ricardo Valdez at the telephone number or email listed at the top of this form. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington at 206-543-0098.

Signature of investigator
Date

Printed Name

Participant's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later on about the research, I can ask the investigator listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call the Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington at 206-543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____ I give permission for this researcher to use formerly collected interview and observational data in this research.

_____ I do NOT give permission for this researcher to use formerly collected interview and observational data in this research.

_____ I give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

_____ I do NOT give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

_____ I give permission for the researcher to contact me for future related studies.

_____ I do NOT give permission for the researcher to contact me for future related studies.

Signature of participant
Date

Printed Name

Copies to: Investigators' file

Participant

B-5. PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM: Students (NEW)

The Relationships between First Generation College Students and Faculty: A Case Study of a Small Rural Liberal Arts University

Investigator: Ricardo Valdez
College of Education
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
ricardov@uw.edu
Phone: 206-427-4522

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Joe Lott
Jlott1@uw.edu (206-685-9204)

Investigator's Statement

I am asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you all the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to be in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between first generation students and faculty and to make sense of how these relationships, if any, lead to increased morale, motivation and retention. I want to examine what this type of relationships look like. How are they formed? Who initiates this relationship? Where do these places of communication happen? How do they happen?

PROCEDURES

If you choose to be in this study, I would like to interview you once about your background as a first generation student at Heritage University. This interview will last no more than 30 minutes. For example, I might ask, "What were your expectations as a college student?" and "How do you see the role of the teacher?" and "Tell me about your experience with pre-college programs?" With your permission, I would like to conduct a follow-up interview that will last no more than 45 minutes. For example, I might ask, "Tell me about an instructor that made you feel more comfortable in class?" and "Where do you usually have conversations with your teacher?" "How do you feel when an instructor understands your culture and background?"

With your permission, I would like to audio tape your interview so that I can have an accurate record of our conversation. Within three weeks of the interview, I will create a written transcript of the conversation that will identify you by a pseudonym only, and then I will destroy the original recording, leaving only the coded

transcript of the interview. . If you would like a copy of the interview transcript, I will gladly provide you with one. . . With you permission, I would also like to observe interactions between you and faculty. These will be recorded as field notes. These will take place in informal settings such as hallways, cafeterias or everyday college activities. If you would like a copy of the observational field notes, I will gladly provide you with one. These observations will take place in public places only.

If you would like a copy of the observational field notes, I will gladly provide you with one.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. I have addressed concerns for your privacy in the section below. Some people feel self-conscious when notes are taken or interviews are recorded.

Breach of confidentiality is a potential risk of this research. No system for protecting confidentiality is completely secure and the information obtained from you could be inadvertently accessed or seen by someone other than the researcher.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

You may not directly benefit from taking part in this research study. One benefit of this study is the possibility of developing new insights about the nature of relationships between faculty and first generation college students. Another benefit may be the opportunity to reflect on the work and university experiences. I may use information from this study to inform faculty and administrators about the possibilities for changing campus culture and environment so first generation students feel more comfortable opening themselves up to new learning.

OTHER INFORMATION Taking part in this study is voluntary. You can stop at any time. Information about you is confidential. I will assign you a pseudonym and code the study information. I will keep the link between your name and the numerical code in a separate, secured location until March 15, 2020. Then I will destroy the information linking your information to the pseudonym. If the results of this study are published or presented, I will not use your name, or any other identifying information.

You may refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Participation in this study will not impact your standing with your school and will not influence/damage you employment.

If you think you have a medical problem or illness related to this research, contact Ricardo Valdez at (509) 961-6181 right away. He will treat you or refer you for treatment.

Government or university staff sometimes review studies such as this one to make sure they are being done safely and legally. If a review of this study takes place, your records may be examined. The reviewers will protect your privacy. The study records will not be used to put you at legal risk of harm.

I may want to re-contact you for future related studies. Please indicate below whether you give me permission to re-contact you. Giving me permission to re-contact you does not obligate you in any way.

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact Ricardo Valdez at the telephone number or email listed at the top of this form. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington at 206-543-0098.

Signature of investigator
Date

Printed Name

Participant's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later on about the research, I can ask the investigator listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington at 206-543-0098.

I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____ I give permission for this researcher to audiotape my interview.

_____ I do NOT give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my interview.

_____ I give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

_____ I do NOT give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

_____ I give permission for the researcher to contact me for future related studies.

_____ I do NOT give permission for the researcher to contact me for future related studies.

Signature of participant

Printed Name

Date

Copies to: Investigators' file

Participant

B-6 PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM: Heritage University Instructors [FORMER STUDY]

The Relationships between First Generation College Students and Faculty: A Case Study of a Small Rural Liberal Arts University

Investigator: Ricardo Valdez

College of Education

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

ricardov@uw.edu

Phone: 509-961-6181

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Joe Lott

Jlott1@uw.edu (206-685-9204)

Investigator's Statement

I am asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you all the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to be in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between first generation students and faculty and to make sense of how these relationships, if any, lead to increased morale, motivation and retention. I want to examine what this type of relationships look like. How are they formed? Who initiates this relationship? Where do these places of communication happen? How do they happen?

PROCEDURES

If you choose to be in this study, I would like your permission to use interview and observational data I collected from you last year as part of the pilot qualitative study (I asked for your consent to participate in the interview and observation activities at that time, but I now intend to analyze the data from that pilot study for an expanded research purpose). With your permission, I would like to use the written transcript of the conversation that identifies you by a pseudonym only. The original recording has been destroyed. If you would like a copy of the interview transcript, I will gladly provide you with one. You will not be asked to complete any additional procedures at this time.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. I have addressed

concerns for your privacy in the section below. Some people feel self-conscious when notes are taken or interviews are recorded.

Breach of confidentiality is a potential risk of this research. No system for protecting confidentiality is completely secure and the information obtained from you could be inadvertently accessed or seen by someone other than the researcher.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

You may not directly benefit from taking part in this research study. One benefit of this study is the possibility of developing new insights about the nature of relationships between faculty and first generation college students. Another benefit may be the opportunity to reflect on the work and university experiences. I may use information from this study to inform faculty and administrators about the possibilities for changing campus culture and environment so first generation students feel more comfortable opening themselves up to new learning.

OTHER INFORMATION

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You can stop at any time. Information about you is confidential. I will assign you a pseudonym and code the study information. I will keep the link between your name and the numerical code in a separate, secured location until March 15, 2020. Then I will destroy the information linking your information to the pseudonym. If the results of this study are published or presented, I will not use your name, or any other identifying information.

You may refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Participation in this study will not impact your standing with your school and will not influence/damage your employment.

If you think you have a medical problem or illness related to this research, contact Ricardo Valdez at (509) 961-6181 right away. He will treat you or refer you for treatment.

Government or university staff sometimes review studies such as this one to make sure they are being done safely and legally. If a review of this study takes place, your records may be examined. The reviewers will protect your privacy. The study records will not be used to put you at legal risk of harm.

I may want to re-contact you for future related studies. Please indicate below whether you give me

permission to re-contact you. Giving me permission to re-contact you does not obligate you in any way

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact Ricardo Valdez at the telephone number or email listed at the top of this form. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington at 206-543-0098.

Signature of investigator

Printed Name

Date

Participant's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later on about the research, I can ask the investigator listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington at 206-543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____ I give permission for this researcher to use formerly collected interview and observational data in this research.

_____ I do NOT give permission for this researcher to use formerly collected interview and observational data in this research.

_____ I give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

_____ I do NOT give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

_____ I give permission for the researcher to contact me for future related studies.

_____ I do NOT give permission for the researcher to contact me for future related studies.

Signature of participant

Printed Name

Date

Copies to: Investigators' file

B-7. PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM: Instructors (NEW)

The Relationships between First Generation College Students and Faculty: A Case Study of a Small Rural Liberal Arts University

Investigator: Ricardo Valdez
College of Education
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
ricardov@uw.edu
Phone: 206-427-4522
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Joe Lott
Jlott1@uw.edu (206-685-9204)

Investigator's Statement

I am asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you all the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to be in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between first generation students and faculty and to make sense of how these relationships, if any, lead to increased morale, motivation and retention. I want to examine what this type of relationships look like. How are they formed? Who initiates this relationship? Where do these places of communication happen? How do they happen?

PROCEDURES

If you choose to be in this study, I would like to interview you once about your experience teaching first generation students at Heritage University. This interview will last no more than 30 minutes. For example, I might ask, "Explain a situation outside of the classroom where you feel you contributed to student success?" and "How do you ordinarily relate with First Generation College students in particular?" and "What is the role of the faculty/student relationship in student success?" With your permission, I would like to conduct a follow-up interview that will last no more than 45 minutes. For example, I might ask, "Give me an example(s) of how you engage and motivate first generation college students in the classroom?" and "Where do you communicate with students?" With your permission, I would like to audio tape your interview so that I can have an accurate record of our conversation. Within three weeks of the interview, I will create a written transcript of the conversation that will identify you by a pseudonym only, and then I will destroy the original recording, leaving only the coded transcript of the interview. . If you would like a copy of the interview transcript, I will gladly provide you with one. With your permission, I would also like to observe interactions between you and students. These will be recorded as field notes. These will take place in informal settings such as hallways, cafeterias or everyday college activities. If you would like a copy of the observational field notes, I will gladly provide you with one.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. I have addressed concerns for your privacy in the section below. Some people feel self-conscious when notes are taken or interviews are recorded.

Breach of confidentiality is a potential risk of this research. No system for protecting confidentiality is completely secure and the information obtained from you could be inadvertently accessed or seen by someone other than the researcher.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

You may not directly benefit from taking part in this research study. One benefit of this study is the possibility of developing new insights about the nature of relationships between faculty and first generation college students. Another benefit may be the opportunity to reflect on the work and university experiences. I may use information from this study to inform faculty and administrators about the possibilities for changing campus culture and environment so first generation students feel more comfortable opening themselves up to new learning.

OTHER INFORMATION

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You can stop at any time. Information about you is confidential. I will assign you a pseudonym and code the study information. I will keep the link between your name and the numerical code in a separate, secured location until March 15, 2020. Then I will destroy the information linking your information to the pseudonym. If the results of this study are published or presented, I will not use your name, or any other identifying information.

You may refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Participation in this study will not impact your standing with your school and will not influence/damage your employment.

If you think you have a medical problem or illness related to this research, contact Ricardo Valdez at (509) 961-6181 right away. He will treat you or refer you for treatment.

Government or university staff sometimes review studies such as this one to make sure they are being done safely and legally. If a review of this study takes place, your records may be examined. The reviewers will protect your privacy. The study records will not be used to put you at legal risk of harm.

I may want to re-contact you for future related studies. Please indicate below whether you give me permission to re-contact you. Giving me permission to re-contact you does not obligate you in any way.

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact Ricardo Valdez at the telephone number or email listed at the top of this form. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington at 206-543-0098

Signature of investigator

Printed Name

Date

Participant's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later on about the research, I can ask the investigator listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington at 206-543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____ I give permission for this researcher to audiotape my interview.

_____ I do NOT give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my interview.

_____ I give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

_____ I do NOT give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

_____ I give permission for the researcher to contact me for future related studies.

_____ I do NOT give permission for the researcher to contact me for future related studies.

Signature of participant
Date

Printed Name

Copies to: Investigators' file

Participant

APPENDIX C:
Notification statements

C-1 notification for campus-based activity attendees

Ricardo Valdez is a graduate student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies in the College of Education at the University of Washington. He is conducting a research study which examines how student and faculty relationships happen on campus. The study focuses on communication, both verbal and non-verbal, and shared community spaces on campus for communication and dialog. He will be interviewing selected instructors and students as well as observing campus activities, in order to get a better sense of how interpersonal communication occurs on campus. His study is no way an evaluation of your work or the University's performance, and is not connected in any way to funding decisions or other policies affecting the University. Your participation in his study is voluntary. He may be taking notes during campus activities, but any information he records will be treated as strictly confidential, and he will not be identifying any individuals in his observational record. If you wish to be exempted from any observations, you may indicate that to him, and he will stop or if necessary, leave that activity setting. Feel free to contact him if you have any questions: ricardov@uw.edu or 509-961-6181.

APPENDIX D:

D-1. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH STUDENTS

1. How did you make your decision to attend college?
2. Who or what influenced you most to attend college? What about here on campus? Who or what has helped you most?
3. What were your expectations and reality about college?
4. When did you realize that you could succeed in college? How did this make you feel? Who or what strengthened this realization? How did this happen?
5. Did you ever have doubt about your own ability to succeed? If so, who or what helped you overcome this?
6. How has college affected you, if any?
7. Explain significant events or people that helped you in the transition to college?
8. Describe a time you were faced with a difficult situation at college. What did you do? Who, if anyone, helped you through it?
9. What is your general perception of professors? Probe: power, authority, socio-economic status, working class
10. Describe an instructor or staff member that has motivated you in college? What did they say? How did this make you feel?
11. Do you feel comfortable speaking to your professors? Who usually initiates the interaction? Please elaborate.
12. How do you know when you have developed a good relationship with a professor, if any? What about a time when you felt the interaction was a bad experience, if any?
13. Explain a time, if any, you felt uncomfortable talking to a professor? Why did you feel this way?
14. Have you ever wanted to say something to a professor in or out of class and decided not to? Explain.
15. Describe a time when a professor went above and beyond to ensure you were successful? How did this make you feel?
16. Describe a time, if any, that you felt your instructor connected with you? Why do you think this happened? What did he or she do to make you feel this way? Probe: feelings, caring, valued lived experiences, culture
17. What about an instructor, if any, that you felt did NOT connect with you. How did this make you feel? Why do you think this happened? Probe: feelings, lack of caring, power, culture
18. Describe your ideal professor? What characteristics do you feel are important to you?
19. Where do you usually have conversations with your professors, if at all? What is most comfortable for you?
20. Explain a conversation outside of class, if any, that you had with your instructor? What are some things you normally talk about?
21. Explain a time, if any, you felt an instructor cared about you? What did he or she say or do to make you feel this way?
22. Explain a time, if any, that you had an opportunity to talk with your professor(s) about your culture or background. How did this make you feel? ? Probe: feelings, culture, socio-economic status, identity.

23. Explain a time, if any, when the professor had an opportunity to explain their culture or background to you? How did this make you feel? Probe: feelings, culture, socio-economic status, identity.

D-2. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR INSTRUCTORS

1. What is your general perception about first generation college students?
2. What extra assistance, if any, do you think first generation college students need in order to succeed in college?
3. Explain a time when you perceived a student struggling. What, if any, did you do about it?
4. Describe a time you felt motivated by the perceived success of a student? How did this make you feel?
5. When you interact with your students outside of class, if any, who usually initiates this interaction? How and where does this happen? How does this make you feel?
6. How do you know when a student is fully engaged in the college culture/environment?
7. What is your thought about student/faculty interaction? How does this happen? Do you think this interaction is important? Why or why not? Please explain.
8. Describe a time, if any, you felt you had developed a good relationship with a student? How did this happen? Why do you think this didn't happen with others?
9. What characteristics do students and faculty need in order to establish positive relationships?
10. Do you think students who have developed a good relationship with you tend to do better in and out of class? Please explain.
11. How do you know if a student is going to be successful in college?
12. Explain a conversation outside of class, if any, with your student(s). What are some things you normally talk about?
13. Explain a time, if any, you felt a student connected or cared about you? What did he or she say to make you feel this way?
14. Explain a time, if any, that you had an opportunity to talk with your student about your culture, background or upbringing. How did this make you feel? Probe: feelings, culture, status, identity, comfort. Relation, trust
15. Explain a time, if any, that they had an opportunity to explain their culture, background or upbringing to you? How did this make you feel? Probe: feelings, culture, status, identity, comfort. Relation, trust.

APPENDIX E:
OBSERVATION GUIDES

Field notes will be recorded during observation with a focus on the following information:

1. The physical setting
 - a. Where is the interaction happening?
 - b. How would you describe the physical environment? (e.g., details of a room, the layout of space/room arrangements, objects/resources/technologies in the setting...)
 - c. What kinds of behavior is the setting designed for? (the cafeteria, library, hallway, open spaces, etc.)
2. Context
 - a. How did the interaction go?
 - b. Time of day? Time of year?
 - c. Reasons/goals for interaction?
 - d. Who initiated the interaction?
3. The participants
 - a. Who/m is invited?
 - b. How were they invited?
 - c. Was the interaction/meeting communicated to individuals/groups?
 - d. Mandatory or voluntary?
 - e. Who showed up and who is missing?
 - f. Who is present? Who is not there? How many people? What are their roles? Who do they represent?
 - g. What brings these people together? Reason?
 - h. What organizations/groups are involved?
 - i. What are the relevant characteristics of the participants? (e.g. gender, race, ethnicity, language spoken, age...)
4. Activities
 - a. Is there a sequence of activities that you can describe?
 - b. When did the activity begin? How long does it last?
 - c. What norms or rules structure the activities and interactions?
 - d. What or who marks the beginning middle and end of the tasks?
 - e. What collaborative tools were utilized?
5. Interactions
 - a. Are there dissenting views allowed?

- b. What kinds of relationships do you see between people?
- c. Do you see relationships between different groups of people (e.g. faculty, students)
- d. What kinds of conversations take place? Between whom?
- e. Are there silences or non-verbal behaviors that add meaning to the exchanges? Facial expressions? Word choice? Active/Passive voice?
- f. Who seems to have power in this event, if at all? How do various participants seem to respond to observable power dynamics?
- g. Who's directing/ facilitating?
- h. Who's sponsoring the meeting?
- i. How and in what ways are individuals participating?
- j. Identify one-way and two-way communication amongst participants.
- k. Tone of the meeting?
- l. What are visible relationships among participants? i.e. is there noticeable tension? Familiarity? Cliques?
- m. What interactions/activities do you observe among individuals that give you a sense of the kinds of relationships you see?
- n. What are the dynamics of those relationships? How does power play out in those relationships?

6. Personal behavior

- a. How is your role as an observer or participant affecting the scene you are observing?
- b. What do you say and do?
- c. Where we invited?

Analytical Questions:

What is the nature of the tasks?

What conceptual frameworks or worldviews were privileged in this activity?

Appendix F Preliminary Codes

STUDENTS	Family	Relationships/Interactions/Bonding	Mentorship	FGCS Struggles	Lived Experiences	Motivation/Persistence	Validation/Acknowledgement	Privilege	Communication	Culture	Compassion/Emotions/Caring	Size of College	Opportunity	Perceptions	Faculty Intimidation	Respect	Personalities	Initiative	Fear/Doubt	Trust	Academic language	Navigating College	Communication outside of class	Communication through Social Media/Email	Faculty as Parental Role	Relationships = Success	Relationships = Opportunities
Storm	1	6	1	3	3	2	5	0	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	1	2	1	2	2	3
Wonder Woman	1	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	3	3	1	2	3	4	2	1	2	4	1	2	2
Captain America	3	5	2	5	2	5	5	2	5	2	5	4	3	4	4	2	2	5	0	6	2	4	4	2	4	5	4
Thor	6	2	2	2	3	2	5	2	2	5	5	3	4	3	5	1	1	1	5	5	3	2	4	5	5	4	3
Flash	3	4	2	3	4	2	4	1	4	4	5	5	2	5	4	2	2	5	1	5	5	1	4	2	2	4	4
Batman	0	3	2	5	7	5	5	1	2	1	5	8	5	2	1	1	1	2	4	5	2	2	5	2	1	5	5
Isis	1	2	3	4	6	4	4	0	5	0	3	5	4	2	2	2	2	2	0	4	3	0	3	2	3	3	6
Superman	3	3	3	4	5	2	5	1	5	1	4	4	5	2	1	1	3	2	4	1	2	2	4	2	3	4	4
Green Arrow	2	2	2	3	1	4	3	2	1	4	6	2	4	3	4	2	4	2	2	5	4	2	4	0	3	4	4
Cat Woman	4	2	3	2	4	4	2	5	2	0	4	2	2	6	4	2	1	2	4	6	4	3	3	4	4	6	5
TOTALS	24	32	22	35	37	32	39	16	29	20	41	36	33	30	30	17	18	25	25	44	29	18	35	24	28	40	40

	Navigation	Culture	Time Management	Need transparency	Communication/Email/Social Media	Help	Purposeful Relationships	Crisis Mgmt.	Listening	Honoring	Intimidation Factor	Perceptions of FGCS	Caring/Emotions	Sense of Pride/Excitement/Fulfillment	Parental Role	Develop Trust/Comfort	Organic Relationship Building	Cultural Disjunction	White man's education	Familial Issues	Seeking student intent	Communication is spontaneous	Fulfilling faculty expectations	Faculty motivating students	Students have Fear	Fear of disappointing faculty	Size of College
FACULTY																											
Cheetara	4	2	5	2	2	3	4	2	2	2	4	4	5	4	2	2	4	4	0	6	2	4	2	4	4	4	6
Iron Man	2	1	1	1	4	4	4	2	5	2	5	2	4	5	5	5	5	4	2	7	2	2	4	5	5	5	5
Black Widow	2	2	5	1	2	2	4	2	3	5	3	5	5	6	2	6	1	5	1	4	2	5	4	4	4	5	4
June Beetle	2	1	2	2	3	5	5	4	2	2	5	6	5	5	5	4	1	2	1	5	2	4	2	4	5	5	5
Rainmaker	5	1	1	1	2	2	2	5	5	5	5	5	6	5	2	5	2	2	2	5	4	2	5	6	5	4	6
Spiderman	4	2	1	1	3	6	5	4	2	1	6	5	3	5	2	4	5	5	2	5	2	2	4	5	6	6	5
TOTALS	19	9	15	7	15	22	24	19	19	17	28	27	28	30	18	26	18	22	8	32	14	19	21	28	29	29	31

Appendix G

Research Question	Theme	Finding	Tools
In what ways and under what conditions have students and faculty built relationships with each other? What do these relationships look like?	Validation – <i>Intentional proactive affirmation of students</i>	11. First generation college students felt more willing to open up when faculty initiate the conversation. 12. Verbal and social persuasion by faculty during the relationship phase positively affected students' perception of self-efficacy	• Interviews (see protocol) • Field Notes • Informal Observations
	Lived Experience – <i>The use of stories to affirm voices, honor backgrounds, and connect prior experiences</i>	13. Relationships between faculty and students are enhanced when higher lived experiences are openly expressed between both parties. 14. First generation college students are intimidated by the perceived higher class faculty that leads to a lack of communication and relationships.	• Interviews • Field Notes • Informal Observations • Document Analysis
	Size of Institution – <i>Small, inviting environment</i>	15. A contractual vs. relational environment. Interactions	• Interviews • Field Notes • Informal Observations

		between faculty and students at this particular university are more relational rather than contractual. 16. Quality of interaction is perceived as better at this particular small university setting.	• Document Analysis
	Cultural Capital – <i>Value students gain from their parents that supports and assists them as they navigate the college experience</i>	17. As faculty and first generation college students develop relationships; the cultural capital deficit of first generation college students is reduced.	• Interviews • Field notes • Informal observations
What faculty-student interactions, if any, result in reciprocal benefits? What are the benefits, as the participants see it?	Reciprocal Opportunities/Rewards – <i>Reciprocal outcomes associated with developed relationships</i>	18. Social capital was strengthened by developing faculty-student relationships. 19. Students became cognizant of rewards/opportunities associated with relationships with faculty later in their college career. 20. Faculty at this particular university take an abundance of pride from student success through formed relationships.	• Interviews • Field notes • Informal Observations

Appendix H

Originally adopted into Faculty Handbook by Faculty Senate on May 5 and Board of Directors on June 12, 1997

Small Rural University (SRU...pseudonym) Key Characteristics of Highly Effective Faculty

And Measures of Faculty Success

Core Convictions/Preamble

Changes Adopted by Faculty Senate 3/29/2005 and Academic Affairs April 2005

Highly effective educators at SRU are persons whose commitment and dedication embody the three “key values” underlying the SRU Vision Statement: “1) honoring each person’s human dignity and potential; 2) seeking intellectual growth and challenges; and 3) celebrating the shared spiritual roots of all humankind.” Highly effective SRU educators value the intellectual life in all its dimensions: cognitive, affective, and cultural; listen to and incorporate student knowledge and experience by respecting their diverse cultures and learning styles; challenge students to explore and aspire to their full academic potential; and foster collaboration among students and faculty to form a community of engaged, reflective, mutually-supportive learners.

Together the faculty members of SRU have identified the following categories of key characteristics of faculty who are highly successful at Heritage.

1. Knowledge

- 1A. Is professionally well-prepared; is well-informed on a broad range of topics
- 1B. Provides strong, academic disciplinary content; continues to advance in the discipline; knows
current sources and resources for the discipline
- 1C. Integrates related academic disciplines
- 1D. Is aware of key aspects of human, intellectual, and moral development
- 1E. Understands and respects individual learners, intellectually, emotionally, and culturally

2. Learner-Centered Teaching

- 2A. Uses a variety of active teaching and learning strategies to interest, engage, and motivate students
- 2B. Connects discipline content to authentic, real life applications and current issues

- 2C. Identifies learning outcomes and multiple means of achieving them
- 2D. Uses frequent and multiple techniques of assessment
- 2E. Adapts teaching strategies to diverse learning styles,
- 2F. Identifies the point at which students can grow, and supports students in meeting rigorous academic challenges
- 2G. Designs a hospitable classroom culture and builds a collaborative community from the diversity in the classroom
- 2H. Integrates technology and multi-media into classroom learning.
- 2I. Encourages hands-on learning with projects, practica, or research that is relevant to students' professional development and to the needs of the community.

3. Cultural Pluralism

- 3A. Celebrates human diversity and practices inclusiveness as core institutional values
- 3B. Enlarges students' world view, respecting the many traditions underlying ethical thought and conduct by bringing cross-cultural/global perspectives into the curriculum
- 3C. Functions comfortably and effectively in the cultural communities served by SRU
- 3D. Recognizes and respects each student's multiple socio-cultural identities and teaches holistically (mind, heart, spirit, and body)

4. Communication

- 4A. Demonstrates reading, writing, quantitative, and research skills appropriate to the discipline, and provides students with opportunities to develop and practice these skills
- 4B. Models active listening, effective speaking, and oral questioning skills
- 4C. Understands and uses cross-cultural communication skills

5. Reflective Teaching

- 5A. Is an analytical, life-long learner in the profession
- 5B. Learns from students
- 5C. Welcomes new ideas; seeks to learn and improve-
- 5D. Does self-evaluation; has a professional self-improvement plan
- 5E. Has a humble, patient attitude with self and others
- 5F. Models appropriate risk taking, innovation

6. Professional Standards and Ethics

- 6A. Demonstrates responsibility to the learning community and profession
- 6B. Embraces cross-disciplinary collaboration
- 6C. Disseminates results of research or creative endeavors
- 6D. Observes the code of ethics of the profession/discipline and understands conflict of interest
- 6E. Embraces contractual responsibility
- 6F. Participates in college governance
- 6G. Is accessible to students
- 6H. Demonstrates ethically appropriate relationships inside and outside of the classroom

Appendix I

SRU Engagement Advisor Program

Purpose: Pair incoming students with a faculty/educator to help with their transition to SRU and persistence to the second year of college through conversations over coffee every three weeks. Every month all Engagement Advisors will meet as a group to identify themes and consult with each other.

Tim has been kind enough to set up a tally system in the Dining Commons to log your coffees so when you meet your student starting next week, you can simply tell the cashier that your coffee as well as your advisee's should be put on the Engagement Advisor Program tab and they will bill Student Affairs and Enrollment so you don't need to worry about coupons or reimbursement. We have budgeted for you to get coffee 5 times each term with each of your students in the Dining Commons. You and your students will be individually introduced via email and once that occurs, it will be up to you to schedule your visits with your advisees approximately every three weeks. We would ask that you consider sharing your cell number with your students as we have found that students respond much better to this medium of communication as opposed to email, but that is your decision.

During your visits, you should pay special attention to get to know your advisees including their hometown, academic interests, family situation and birth order (we will explain this more at our group meetings). Your goal is to get them talking about their transition to SRU and what issues they may be experiencing; we want to flush out inconveniences before they become problems so that you can use your knowledge of campus and colleagues to mitigate or even solve these inconveniences. In addition, please take special care to provide affirmations to your advisees whenever possible and reinforce the fact that you and many others here believe in them.

As you go through the fall and spring, please use the following syllabus to structure your visits beyond the above points:

SEPTEMBER – study skills, time management, how to seek out faculty for additional assistance OCTOBER – possible course selections

for spring, difference between social friends and study friends NOVEMBER – studying for final exams, talking about college with family

that do not have first-hand experience DECEMBER – how to stay academically sharp over winter break

JANUARY – thinking about how to balance work with school and identifying co-curricular as well as extracurricular opportunities for engagement

FEBRUARY – possible course selections for fall and thoughts about declaring a major

MARCH – maintaining friendships with those not at HU and reflecting on what worked/didn't work for them this year so that it can be enhanced/mitigated

APRIL – how to stay academically sharp over the summer

We will be in touch this week to schedule our Engagement Advisor group meetings and give you your student advisees, so we greatly appreciate your participation in this endeavor.