

Perceived Stress and Sense of Belongingness in First-Generation College Students

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Generation in college associates with academic performance. First-generation college students tend to obtain lower grades relative to their continuing-generation counterparts, but the underlying causes of this remain poorly understood. To examine perceived stress and sense of belongingness as potential causes, we are having college students complete a survey including demographic measures and the perceived stress, social assurance, and social connectedness scales. Preliminary analysis suggests that none of the psychosocial factors evaluated vary by generation in college. However, it is worth noting that the perceived stress mean score is higher among first-generation college students, a trend that might become significant once we reach our target sample size.

Previous studies demonstrate that first-generation college students are more vulnerable to stress and more likely to feel like they do not belong in the college environment. Moreover, it is well-established that increased stress and a lack of sense of belonging are both predictive of poor academic performance. Thus, it is essential to further investigate the relationship between generation in college and these psychosocial factors. With the large population of first-generation students entering higher education, it is becoming increasingly important to ease their transition and acclimation to the college setting.